FRAGMENTED PATRIMONY AND THE SECTARIAN STATE: EXPLAINING IRAQ'S EXTERNAL RELATIONS 2003-2014

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ABSTRACT

This thesis sets out to explore the increasing role that sectarian identity has played in the conduct of Iraq's external relations between 2003 and 2014. While the study of Iraqi foreign policy has long informed our understanding of Middle East politics and regional rivalries, this has either been framed by reference to variants of realism or by emphasising the autocratic nature of the state and the central control exercised by the regime of Saddam Hussein. By contrast, relatively little attention has been paid to how forms of neo-patrimony have not only informed the dispensation of power internally within Iraq, but equally, how differing sectarian identities have impacted upon Iraq's external relations through person- and party-to-state relations with the outside world.

It is the link therefore between neo-patrimony and sectarian identity in explaining Iraq's external relations that this thesis examines. It frames this approach by drawing on the constructivist literature, which eschews the positivist approach associated with realism in explaining the nature of Iraq's external relations. As this thesis argues, the nature of state interests has rarely been static: state elites, even in an autocracy such as Iraq's, have to be sensitive to how such identities have shaped its external engagement. This has shaped Iraqi external relations in the past and remained a constant in explaining Iraqi foreign policy between 2003 and 2014. However, as the thesis demonstrates through extensive fieldwork, these sectarian identities became more pronounced. Freed from the control of an autocratic regime, neo-patrimonial politics increasingly determined how sectarian interests were both met and manipulated by a new political dispensation. As such, the collective idea of the 'national interest' was increasingly contested as the fault lines of identity questioned the very idea of a coherent Iraqi national interest in determining its foreign policy and external relations.

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TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

AQI	Al-Qaeda in Iraq
AJC	Accountability and Justice Commission
AJL	Accountability and Justice Law
AMSI	Association of Muslim Scholars of Iraq
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross domestic product
HRM	Human resource management
ICR	Iraqi Council Representatives
IGC	Iraqi Governing Council
INA	Iraqi National Accord
INC	Iraqi National Congress
INL	Iraqi National List
INIS	Iraqi National Intelligence Service
IP	Islamic Party
IRGC	Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps
ISC	Independent Iraqi Sheikhs Council
ISCI	Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq
IS/ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
JAM	Jaishi Al-Mahdi
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KRG	Kurdish Regional Government
MSNSA	Ministry of State for National Security Affairs
NCR	Neo-classical realism
PM	Prime Minister
PMF	Popular Mobilisation Front
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
RCC	Revolutionary Command Council
RST	Rentier state theory
SCIRI	Islamic Supreme Council of Ira
SoF	Status of Forces Agreement
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
UIA	United Iraqi Alliance

UN	United Nations
US	United States of America

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This thesis sets out to explore the idea of fragmented neo-patrimony in sectarian Iraq and its impact upon the country's external relations between 2003 and 2014. Neo-patrimony refers to the patrimonial logic imbued within bureaucracies of the state whilst sectarianism refers to religious heritage as a primary marker of modern political identity. **This thesis makes a distinction between foreign policy analysis and foreign relations. The former examines closely the mechanics and dynamics of decision-making within the bureaucracies of state. On the other hand, foreign relations refer to the actual ties between actors and their enduring characteristics**. Based on this distinction, this thesis investigates bilateral or external relations between the Iraqi state, its bureaucracies and individuals, who include both state and non-state representatives working as independent agents with foreign governments. This thesis defines these relations as person to party relations to, or, in the case of the Kurds, pseudo-state-to state relationships.

The literature indicates that wider 'social' forces, particularly those associated with Iraq's neo-patrimonial and sectarian legacies, have remained underexplored as well as providing a contextual setting. For example, Iraq's decision to invade Iran in September 1980 has been explained in large part by the fear that its Shi'a citizens would be ripe for sedition and revolt inspired by events in Tehran, following the overthrow of the Shah. As such, this thesis is more interested in how a constructivist approach can better explain the impact of neo-patrimony and sectarianism on Iraq's international relations. In particular, by examining the neo-patrimonial networks that have defined much of the history of Iraqi politics, the thesis explores how elites perceived power and the manifestations of neo-patrimony, and how this has played out in terms of the representation of sectarian interests.

1.2 RATIONALE AND MOTIVATION

The internal workings of the state, be it a democratic or autocratic regime, are often seen as taking place within a 'black box' (Blaydes, 2015). Whilst some of the input and output characteristics are known, the inner dynamics of how power coalesces and is maintained remain opaque. From a Western perspective, foreign policy is typically approached using a realist paradigm, which adopts a default position of assuming the state is a rational and coherent actor in the case of both democratic and autocratic states (Morgenthau, 1985; Waltz, 2010; Mearsheimer, 2006). Whilst this approach has been applied to Iraq, the post-2003 reality on the ground indicates a new chapter in the country's

history, which precipitates the need to extrapolate answers from a range of new, previously unexplored set of variables. Therefore, the intention in this thesis is to develop an original angle of interpretation, as there have been no in-depth studies which have considered the impact of neo-patrimony and sectarianism on Iraqi foreign policy decision-making.

In many ways, this thesis can be considered a contemporary historical narrative in that it considers Iraq's neighbours in the Middle East and other important actors further afield. Moreover, an attempt has been made to produce an original piece of work which analyses in detail the factors which have shaped Iraqi foreign policy decision-making. This was done by considering the influence of neo-patrimony and sectarianism firstly at the unit level which focuses on the internal Iraqi political situation and the impact of social norms and identities; and secondly, at the systemic level which focuses on interactions of Iraqi elite with external states. This approach was taken to determine if the decision-making process in Iraq has been one of continuity or change and to examine the extent to which neo-patrimony, as an enduring theme of Iraqi politics, has informed a particular Iraqi approach to the conduct of foreign relations.

1.3 Understanding Iraqi Foreign Policy: Literature Review

This section aims to provide an overview of the literature on Iraqi foreign policy. Indeed, a considerable amount of literature on the Middle East is available with reference to political identities. This was certainly the reality from World War II to the 1970s, when Middle East politics was dominated by the rise and fall of the pan Arab movements in addition to the early weaknesses of states, or the lack of fit between the states imposed by colonial powers. Whilst in the past, issues of identity may have been less salient, this has changed dramatically with the fall of communism and the absence of the global bipolar rivalry which previously dwarfed national idiosyncrasies. This has allowed primordial identities to affect foreign policy development in Iraq and the wider region. The literature most relevant to this thesis is summarised below:

'*Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East*' (Telhami & Barnett, 2002) is noteworthy for its clear aims and objectives. It also outlines a theoretical structure and various lines of inquiry. Moreover, the framework used in the book came as a pleasant surprise as it acknowledged the salience of domestic factors, arguing that 'scholars of the region cannot escape the salience of identity in international relations' (Telhami & Barnett, 2002, p. 2). This approach can be juxtaposed with much of the foreign policy literature on Iraq, which adheres to a realist reasoning, assuming state leaders are self-interested and driven by power politics. This approach underpins the analysis, which emphasises to a great extent the events which took place after the first Gulf War.

The authors also acknowledge the potential for multiple identities, which allows the book to discuss the foreign policies of several countries, including Iraq, whilst focusing on determinants situated at different levels. The two aims of the authors are 'to think systematically about the regional, international, and domestic forces that advance one identity over another' and to 'provide greater understanding of how identity affects foreign policy' (Telhami & Barnett, 2002, p. 6-7).

However, it can be argued that with such as broad scope of analysis, the book spreads itself somewhat thin. For example, it only briefly mentions Iraq. Moreover, at the domestic level, the Sunni, Shi'a and Kurd narratives are absent. This can be explained by the book's publication date of 2002, that is, one year before the invasion of Iraq and a few years before academics acknowledged the politicisation of identity within Iraq. Nonetheless, the book is a useful resource because it adopts and uses a consistent theoretical framework and provides a historical context, which is useful to this thesis.

'*Sectarianism in Iraq Antagonistic Visions of Unity*' by Fanar Haddad (2011) challenges the Western centric view that sectarianism can universally explain the majority of the political and social relations in Iraq. Haddad is nuanced in this regard when he alludes to a '*middle path*' which frames sectarianism as social and political drivers that are malleable. The author builds upon a premise which contextualises sectarianism as being an identity marker and not something which is explicitly religious. Nonetheless, although this may appear novel for those unfamiliar with Iraq or for academics studying the country using a typical Western prism, this is arguably the default position of the Iraqi people and those familiar with other parts of the Arab world.

Where the approach is innovative is in its attempt to focus less on the elite and more on the views of the average Iraqi to inform the analysis, which is useful since it adds to the existing literature. Whilst this effort goes beyond the elitist narrative which academics tend to rely upon when studying Iraqi foreign policy, the overall approach is not necessarily new or original.

Another weakness is the epistemological approach which relies significantly on primary data sourced from YouTube. Much of the source material is from different Shi'a political parties and is, therefore, limited in perspective, failing to capture in equal detail Sunni or Kurdish concerns. Since Kurds constitute the second largest ethnic group in Iraq and have played a significant role in the region, it can be asked why a greater amount of the book has not been dedicated to this grouping. This also undermines the book's title, '*Sectarianism in Iraq'.*

Although the author states sectarianism is something fluid, this is not a concept which is explored thoroughly, and the case is not proven. One would expect changes in sectarian identity to be highlighted based on the 'traumas and glories' model cited in the book. Moreover, where 'glorious

rebellion' and 'chosen trauma' are used, the author resorts to stereotyping, which contradicts the intended nuance articulated in the introduction. Therefore, at times the author makes the common mistake of categorising Sunnis and Shi'a into two distinct categories which are monolithic in nature, thus replicating the narrative commonly found in short news articles on the subject. For example, the author assumes Sunnis regarded the Saddam regime as being legitimate while the Shi'a were against it.

Another key question which the author fails to address is why Iraq was not broken up and federalised as per the Iraqi constitution in the aftermath of 2003, given its '*sectarian'* identity. The author states the reason for this was that it would be difficult to convince Iraqis of going down this route. It, therefore, appears the author assumes the desire for federalism and for greater independence may have been restricted to sectarian extremists. However, this thesis will argue that federalism was pursued by elite groups, which were subsequently opposed by another elite grouping who were firmly committed to persevering the neo-patrimonial status quo. A federalised Iraq would have resulted in a less favourable environment.

The author correctly points out Iraqi nationalism is not locked in a zero-sum game with Iraqi sectarianism and that these ideologies are not mutually exclusive. However, it fails to deliver in certain areas due to the broad nature of its aims and objectives, mainly because it seeks to represent the views of the average Iraqi but does not state how these are achieved. Indeed, in the absence of this type of data, it can be argued it is actually an impossible task.

Another major contribution to Iraqi foreign policy is *'Iraq, Its Neighbours and the United States: Competition, Crisis and the Reordering of Power'* (Barkey et al. (eds.), 2011). The strength of this book is linked to the number of specialists who have contributed to it. It focuses mainly on the systemic impact of unit level determinants. Although the authors do not mention their epistemological or ontological stances, they tend to view the Iraqi state as a coherent actor on the world stage; subsequently, it can be inferred the authors did not consider Iraq foreign policy as being internally challenged or explicitly fragmented. Indeed, the book appears to want to avoid this topic in addition to ideational notions, which means terms such as '*sectarianism'* are rarely mentioned. This means that, similarly to other publications, the authors fail to discuss non-material ideational constructs and the way in which these have influenced elite decision making.

Another issue is the publication date, which renders the resource only partially useful. Thus, the text typically reflects the dynamic and fluid nature of events on the ground through active verbs which describe Iraq as 'emerging', and not 'emerged', proving to be a limiting factor in terms of the analysis. Inevitably there are political predictions in the book which turn out to be incorrect. For example, the

author was writing her chapter on Syrian-Iraqi relations during critical phases of the conflict when the outcome of the Syrian uprising was difficult to predict. Subsequently, the ideational alliance which developed between Baghdad and Damascus, and which this thesis will explore, is not discussed.

Although the book highlights the heightened sectarian cleavages following the 2003 invasion, the Shi'a ascendency and the identification of external patrons such as Iran, it fails to discuss the critical impact of major events both at the unit and systemic levels, for example, the role of terror groups such as JAM and the impact of the surrounding countries on the decision-making process of the Iraqi elite. Whilst the finer details of ongoing events may have been difficult to predict, the culmination of these events constituted milestones which impacted Iraqi foreign policies and the policies of other states in the region. These shortcomings highlight the need for authors to ensure they focus on a time period which has a beginning, middle and end.

The authors of '*The foreign policies of Middle East states*' (Hinnebusch & Ehteshami (eds.), 2014) are well-known Middle East specialists and have developed a very useful resource. They cover the major states in the Middle East, including Iraq, and use a blend of realist and constructivist thinking to investigate foreign policy based on two modes of analysis – domestic determinants, which are present at the unit level, and international factors, which are present at the systemic level. These factors are investigated and their impact on the state behaviour and international politics are analysed. Each chapter is authored by different individuals, who successful employ a coherent framework which focuses on three logically arranged headings, foreign policy determinants, foreign policy making and foreign policy behaviour. The authors highlight the factors which have impacted Iraqi foreign policy and identity by linking these to historical events at the time of the creation of the state.

Despite the usefulness of this book, there are issues which need to be highlighted. Firstly, all major countries of the Middle East are reviewed, in addition to Turkey and Iran. This leaves limited space to discuss Iraq in detail. Moreover, to compound matters further, the chapter on Iraq is coupled with Lebanon and is split between the pre and post 2003 periods, with the analysis jumping between both countries. This means the narrative on Iraqi foreign policy rotates between the Sunni, Shi'a and Kurds, but also Hezbollah, Syria and Iran, which unnecessarily complicates the issues and makes them difficult to untangle.

The book provides only limited insights into the post 2003 elite mode of thinking because major events such as the elections, the consolidation of power under Al-Maliki's rule and the rise of other elite actors such as Moqtada Al-Sadr are not discussed. Indeed, it is surprising to see why Iraq did not receive its own chapter given the prevalence of such seismic events taking place and the strong sectarian tendencies which went on to inform Iraqi foreign policy decision-making.

'*Iraq from War to a New Authoritarianism'* (Dodge, 2012) considers Iraq's future by attempting to answer three questions: firstly, can Iraq avoid sliding back into civil war? secondly, will Iraq evolve into a law governed Arab democracy? And thirdly, will Iraq pose a threat to its neighbours? One of the main strengths of the book is the input provided by many Iraqi experts, such as Fanar Haddad, Phebe Marr and Sami Zubaida. The author keeps a narrow focus and scope based on the above three questions. This means the content, although similar to other books which use the same historical narrative, successfully avoids reiterating the conclusions of other writers.

Nonetheless, the book approaches Iraq through a typical western centric positivist tradition and, therefore, misses much of the explanatory power provided through other perspectives, such as constructivism. Whilst notions such as sectarianism are discussed (and are arguably impossible to ignore in Iraq), the book does not do justice to these types of ideational factors and their significant impact on the decision-making process of the elite.

For example, he discusses why the relations between Damascus and Baghdad suddenly changed. However, this is simply put down to Iranian pressure, the threat of attacks on Iraq and threat of Sunni Islamists acquiring positions of power. Whilst a threat to Al-Maliki's 'preciously built autonomy' (Dodge, 2012, p. 194), which would be better explained as a threat to neo-patrimony, is mentioned, the ontology which binds Iran, Syria and Iraq has been left unexplored. Thus, the book tends to explain elite decision-making as being pragmatic and rational. Moreover, although the book acknowledges that the Iraqi borders have become meaningless, the relationship between Iraq and its neighbours is discussed very briefly, which is surprising since it acknowledges the interference of foreign countries.

Another major weakness of the book is the absence of primary data gained from interviews. This means, quotes embedded in the book made by the elite are likely to have been made in different contexts relative to the aims and objectives of the book. This degrades the academic value of the book.

'*How Conditions of State Weakness have Influenced Iraqi Foreign Policy Production 2003-2013*' (Younis, 2014) examines the impact of state weakness on Iraqi foreign policy between 2003 and 2014, using a constructivist framework and focusing on the social contract theory to explain Iraq's internal weaknesses. The thesis uses models derived from weak African states but introduces a new agenda which attempts to understand the relationship between state weakness and foreign policy production. These weaknesses are said to be so profound, they form significant foreign policy determinants, thus impacting elite decision makers. Each chapter of this thesis deals with a specific issue and its impact on the Iraqi foreign policy trajectory.

The literature discussed in the thesis is focused on African case studies as opposed to those of the Middle East. This approach is justified by the author; however, it does seem bizarre given the ideational factors which constructivism can be used to explore, for example, identity, culture, religion, language and a shared history, and which are surely more aligned with Iraq's neighbours. For example, the author quotes Clapham, who argues that African states have failed to articulate and pursue an inclusive vision of the state, leading to a proliferation of threats by internal actors, who feel underrepresented or victimised by the state. Nonetheless, it can be argued that the majority of Middle Eastern states also behave in this manner. In a similar vein, analogies which the author uses, such as the elite making decisions based on regime survival, can also be directly juxtaposed with Middle East states. Moreover, the author does not make the connection between foreign and domestic policies, attributing these mainly to regime survival. However, this thesis will go on to argue that decisions were not solely aimed at regime survival but much loftier aims involving the preservation of neo-patrimony structures.

The author interviews a number of participants, some of whom are named, the most notable being Ayad Alawi and Hoshyar Zerbari. However, two issues can be raised with the methodology. Firstly, the list is extensively Kurdish in makeup, which indicates first-hand accounts from Sunni and Shi'a participants are lacking. Moreover, apart from the two aforementioned persons, the remaining individuals were not elite foreign policy decision makers. Nor is its clear how they were involved. This means there is a possibility the aims and objectives of the thesis are not being fulfilled based on primary sourced data. These limitations and potential impact on the qualitative analysis have not been discussed.

'*The Making of Foreign Policy in Iraq: Political Factions and the Ruling Elite'* (Gulmohamad, 2021) is commendable in its approach and scope. It attempts to directly take on the challenge of explaining how the Iraqi political elite has attempted to formulate relations with the international community. The author uses a significant amount of primary source data, arguing that Iraq does not have a coherent foreign policy; rather, it is stated that Iraq has multiple sectarian-based foreign policies, which are controlled by the Shi'a and Kurdish elites from their respective centres of power. Moreover, the author argues that Iraqi foreign policy is multi-layered and that there are different foreign policies emanating from the bureaucracies, including the prime minister's office, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In other words, foreign policies are being pursued by political parties and not just state or de facto state institutions.

The author argues that the culmination of these factors has led to an incoherent foreign policy. For example, the author identifies the quota system imposed on the government as one of the leading

causes for Iraqi foreign policy being fragmented. However, he also acknowledges the situation could have been far worse if the system was not in place. It could have resulted in complete Sunni ejection from the political process.

Although the book uses the traditional identity markers throughout, it does offer nuanced insights and does not assume these markers are homogenous. It acknowledges intra-sect factions which have distinct foreign policy preferences. Thus, the author differentiates between pro-Iranian Shi'as, such as Al-Maliki, and those who seek to reduce Iranian influence in Iraq, such as Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani and Al-Sadr. However, when it comes to discussing key foreign policy decision makers, the analysis is not as rigorous. For example, the author mentions Al-Maliki's dual foreign policy, one of which involves non-interference with other states, on the one hand, and turning a blind eye to Iran's recruitment of Iraqi Shi'a to fight in Syria, on the other. However, besides the standard sectarianism narrative, no new analysis or conclusions can be derived from this work, meaning it tends to repeat the same mantra found elsewhere.

Moreover, it does not make much mention of the US, which it claims had very little influence after the 2005 parliamentary elections. To justify this, the author could have addressed the notion of a disinterested US which was unwilling to govern Iraq, a salient topic which is completely ignored. Another topic which was not addressed was why the elite made sectarian-based decisions and how this complemented broader elite strategies, that is, neo-patrimony, and then provide a theory which would justify the rationale and motive.

Nonetheless, although this book has shortcomings, it can be argued that it is the most comprehensive book on Iraqi foreign policy to date because it accounts for both domestic and international determinants and focuses solely on Iraq. Moreover, due to its academic rigour, it is highly suited for this study and can be used as a springboard, allowing this thesis to go beyond its findings and derive new conclusions.

In addition to the above, there is research which had focused specifically on northern Iraq and Kurdish foreign policy. This includes the works of Carl Dahlman (2002), which focuses on the ethno-political, historical and physical geography of northern Iraq, which is situated between Syria, Iran, Turkey and Arab Iraq. This author refers to the Kurdish north as a 'pseudo state', as it has many typical state features while lacking international recognition. In addition to being somewhat outdated, this journal article is not primarily concerned with foreign policy and ethnicity but does mention some of the more important diplomatic initiatives pursued by the Kurdish elite before the 2003 invasion.

James Harvey (2010) authored a PhD which focuses on the pre 2003 Kurdish government ruling a de facto state. In addition to viewing the government in Baghdad separately, the author rejects the view of KRG having a singular purpose, existence or categorical meaning (2010, p. 10) which is a key concept and premise this thesis is built upon. Instead, he argues the Kurdish mindset was impacted by the 'variables of geopolitical location; the localized interpretation of identity, sovereignty, historical experience, ethno-politics, and the contracts of political power which surround it' (2010, p. 10).

Another study on Kurdish Iraq was undertaken by Matan Chorev (2011, p. 27-41), who crucially notes that internal and external factors which have contributed to the Kurdish regions attaining almost complete autonomy. For example, at the systemic level, references are made to 'external patrons', whilst at the unit level, Kurdish identity and the KRG's public relations campaign called the 'Other Iraq' are discussed.

In a similar vein, Yaniv Voller (2013), carried out a systematic assessment of Kurdish foreign policy and addresses the topic in detail in several chapters, arguing that the Kurds attaining international legitimacy was a primary driver of Kurdish foreign policy making. He also accepts the premise of domestic politics influencing foreign policy decision making, thus acknowledging the potential influence of non-material factors. However, similarly to other works of this nature and scope, ideational factors are not explained or analysed in great detail.

These resources and others like them are useful when attempting to acquire insights into Kurdish perspectives; however, they do not discuss how internal and external drivers are linked to and impact foreign policy decision making.

There are also several works which indirectly provide insights into Iraqi foreign policy. They include the works of Mohammed Shareef (2010). This PhD thesis explores George W. Bush's policy towards Iraq whilst trying to determine if the policy was a departure or aligned with traditional US foreign policy practice. This and other similar works are used sparingly in this thesis because they are not primarily concerned with Iraqi foreign policy. Nonetheless, it does provide insights into the decisions of the Iraqi elites and facets of the US occupation, Saddam Hussein and the Kurdish disposition through historical analysis.

Based on the above, the literature can be categorized in a dual manner. That is, it approaches Iraq using a state or society centric approach. However, these approaches cannot sufficiently capture the historical narratives of Iraq and the wider Middle East. In n most cases, they view Iraq's evolution as a state in a manner synonymous with Western societies. Nonetheless, where this thesis converges with

the existing literature is in regarding the acquisition of rents and corruption as wider problems linked to governance and viable state building in the Middle East.

In addition to the above, a further layer of categorisation can also be applied. Firstly, there are the works which address Iraqi foreign policy indirectly, which comprises the bulk of the literature, and, secondly, there is the literature which directly addresses Iraqi foreign policy and its determinants. The former includes writers such as Shareef (2010), whilst the latter includes Korany and Dessouki (2010), Dawisha (2011), Haddad (2011), Hinnebusch and Ehteshami (2014), Younis (2014) and Gulmohamad (2021). The themes which these authors cover include systemic and unit level determinants of Iraqi foreign policy linked to:

I. Internal cleavages
II. Bureaucratic fragmentation
III. Impact of the Coalition Authority and elections
IV. International and regional players

The findings of the literature review are summarised in Appendix A.

The literature typically mentions sectarianism and, in some cases, its influence on Iraqi foreign policy. However, this section has demonstrated that there are no academic works which prioritise and rigorously explore Iraqi foreign relations whilst considering neo-patrimony and sectarianism. Moreover, as noted, this thesis does not focus on the processes used by the elite to formulate foreign policy; rather, it prioritises neo-patrimony and sectarianism and its impact on the formulation of foreign and bi-lateral relations based on person-to-state and political party-to-state relations.

1.4 CORE THEMES ADDRESSED

Based on the above literature, it can be argued Iraqi foreign policy lacked coherency because of the divergent views of the elites and the sectarian groups they represent. Based on competing interests this has produced what some scholars refer to as 'sub-optimal outcomes' (OECD, 2014). However, very little is known about the actual processes that informed foreign policy in Iraq in this period, let alone how those processes were influenced by a context in which the very identity of Iraq as a coherent state remained contested. This thesis, therefore, attempts to shed light on this academic lacuna by analysing Iraq's foreign policy as it emerged from a decade defined by war, conflict and sanctions.

The core themes addressed throughout the thesis are framed by continuous reference to the often-turbulent history of Iraq as a state, its fragmented nature, in which neo-patrimony and sectarianism have often been seen as enduring themes, and how this legacy has shaped the attitudes of Iraqi elites and indeed ordinary Iraqis in terms of how they relate to their external environment. As noted, this thesis seeks to achieve its aim by adopting and developing a constructivist understanding of the social and political dynamics that have shaped the conduct of Iraqi foreign relations. As such, this is not a work that grapples with the bureaucratic battles or debates surrounding the groupthink that has so shaped and influenced the more traditional understandings of foreign policy analysis in the West. Indeed, such models have a limited explanatory power in helping to understand how interests are formed based upon what this thesis terms constructed loyalties.

The available literature, therefore, does not address the process of foreign relations in neo-patrimonial and sectarian states. This indicates a significant void of scholarly works since most foreign policy literature focuses on decision-making in coherent states. In short, there is no positivist or interpretivist theory applicable to foreign policy decision-making where the identity of the state is being contested by groups of actors (based on sectarian interests as opposed to ideological positions) in control of different state institutions and the net influence of this reality on foreign policy decision-making.

These points challenge the validity of commonly used tools in international relations and foreign policy analysis, such as the rational actor, organisational behaviour, government politics, groupthink and poliheuristic theory. This thesis does not use these approaches, moreover, this explains why the terms foreign relations and bilateral relations have been commonly used instead of foreign policy. Foreign policy typically relates to the process of decision-making concerning the inputs and interests of the bureaucracies whereas this thesis frames external relations as the result of person-to-state and party-to-state relations with foreign states. While the aforementioned models have an obvious utility in the

positivist tradition (which dominates much of the foreign policy analysis literature) they do not adequately capture the complexity or chaos that is the Iraqi system since they have yet to incorporate neo-patrimony and its other manifestations, that is, sectarianism and the often resulting state fragmentation, which influence the political competition between political elites as they seek to shape the parameters of foreign policy.

The claim to originality of this thesis thus centres upon it being one of the few works which has consciously linked a constructivist framework to the idea of neo-patrimony in explaining the foreign policy trajectory of a weak or fragmented state – in this case, Iraq. The point here is there is no objective Iraqi foreign policy. Moreover, Iraqi foreign policy has been determined by versions of neo-patrimony and sectarianism, notions which cannot be explained through a realist framework. This sets the study apart from the positivist tradition of understanding the behaviour of states, a distinction that is developed further in Chapter 2.

1.5 Research Questions

As noted, a constructivist approach will be used for understanding Iraq's domestic and external relations since 2003. Indeed, the framework developed in chapters 2 and 3 poses broader questions concerning state sovereignty, state authority and how Iraqi elite perceived themselves. As such, the core research question that this thesis seeks to address is as follows:

- What was the role and impact of neo-patrimony and sectarianism on the conduct of Iraqi external relations between 2003 and 2014?

This main question is answered by addressing four subsidiary questions:

- Who and what defines interests in the sectarian fragmented state of Iraq?
- What has been the impact of neo-patrimony and how has this rearticulated Iraqi politics along sectarian lines?
- What has been the role of state and non-state actors in Iraqi foreign relations and Iraqi foreign policy formulation?
- How do elites, making up the political power centres, secure patronage?

1.6 Methodology

The material that informs the core argument of this thesis was acquired through a collection of non-numerical and numerical data, that is, using quantitative and qualitative methods respectively.

Primary sources of qualitative data included statements collected through (mainly) face-to-face interviews from participants working with state bureaucracies, in addition to written documents, audio recordings and observations linked to perceptions of the influences upon Iraqi foreign policy. In particular, interviewee feelings, thoughts and views were key to providing insights and complemented the quantitative data. This allowed objective measurements to be emphasised through the illustration of data using a graphical format. The key aim of this exercise involved determining the relationship between independent variables and interviewees. This was achieved by analysing participants' responses and placing them within Iraq's contemporary historical narratives. Interview questions were designed to ensure that interviewees could speak at length on the issues being explored. The author found that this was best achieved by asking compound questions which invited the interviewee to develop answers beyond confirming a question. This was also driven by cultural knowledge and understanding that semi-structured questions, whilst useful, did not necessarily elicit full discussion. As a result, the research findings presented in graph form best capture the information provided.

Based on this interpretive approach, the thesis has focussed on the 'what', 'how' and 'why' of Iraqi foreign policy. The qualitative and quantitative nature of the data was used to interrogate the research question and enhance existing findings (Colleen, 2009).

Moreover, the approach of combining quantitative and qualitative methods in this thesis is another point of originality and was based on the influential framework developed by Greene et al. (1989), which consists of the following:

I. Triangulation: correspondence, corroboration, convergence of results from several techniques. Whilst using this method, the emphasis was placed on achieving corroboration between the qualitative and quantitative data.
II. Complementarity: this approach attempts to clarify, illustrate, enhance and elaborate on the results from one method with those of another.
III. Development: this approach is used to support further development of the results, where the development may be construed to include implementation and sampling, in addition to measurement decisions.
IV. Initiation: this approach attempts to locate contradictions and paradoxes, new perspectives of frameworks, the recasting of results and questions from one method with those of another.
V. Expansion: this approach attempts to extend the range and breadth of enquiry by utilising different techniques which generate multiple lines of inquiry.

(Greene et al., 1989)

In short, this approach is justified since the qualitative data produces knowledge concerning shared beliefs, social structures and behaviours of different ethnic groups. Whilst this approach is less controlled and more interpretive, it will be contextualised through the quantitative analysis, which should reduce the researcher's personal biases and any potential influence on the results. Moreover, the quantitative analysis provides insights concerning the causes of key phenomena by focusing on neo-patrimony and sectarianism. Moreover, the study has been carefully crafted which means it should be replicable by other researchers whilst focussing on the same variables.

1.6.1 Primary and secondary sources

Although the contemporary nature of the research meant there was no access to sensitive material within the Iraqi government archives, the thesis has exploited a large quantity of primary and secondary source material, including:

I. Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with open end questions with key personnel, such as:
    - The former Prime Minister, Nouri Al-Maliki
    - Ibrahim Ja'fari, Ex-prime minister, ex minister of foreign affairs
    - Hoshyar Zebari, deputy prime minister and finance minister, previously Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2003-20014
    - Dr Sheltag Aboud al-Mayah Senior Da'wah, party member, ex Basra Governor
    - Dr. Mohammed Haj Hamoud, senior Iraqi diplomat and former Ambassador and head consultant at the Foreign Ministry.
    - Zaid Ezzedine Mohammad Nouri Iraqi Ambassador to Abu Dhabi UAE.
    - Dr Abbas K. O. Abbas, counsellor at Directorate of International Organizations and Cooperation – Disarmament Affairs.
    - Members of parliament, including Mrs Etab al-Duri, member of parliament of the Iraqi Coalition
    - Academics, including Yayha al-Kubaisi Iraqi commentator and writer for the Iraqi Centre for Strategic Studies,
    - Kurdish elite such as Arkan Rasheed Marouf, economics advisor to the Prime Minister's office (Kurds Islamic Party),
    - Chnar Saad Abdulla (PhD in Sociology, Salahddin University), KDP Central Committee member)
    - Dr Yousif Mohammed Sadiq, Iraqi Kurdistan Parliament Speaker (Gorran the Change Party)

- Religious and tribal leaders, such as Alsheikh Mohammed Baqir Alsuhil Bini Tamim, Sheikh Mohammed Fateh Aljanabi, head of the Aljaanbi tribes (Alanbar Province), Alsheikh Abdul Qader Alnail, a Sunni tribal leader, Sheikh Abdul Malik Alsaad Grand Mufti of Iraq's Sunni Muslims, Sheikh Abdul Razzak Alsaadi Sunni preacher and lecturer in Islamic Sciences in the University of Amman in Jordan
- Former Saddam regime elites such as Ugla Abid Saqr, former member of the RCC (previously on the US's most wanted Iraqi playing cards)

II. Access to public records which are still available in Iraqi archives, the statements of key administrative figures made in press conferences, interviews, speeches and reports compiled by the government. All of these depositories offered a rich resource for this study.

III. Statements from Iraqi officials and international diplomats. Many current and previous high-ranking international officials have given insights into their experiences and, through published works, have provided valuable information from an insider perspective. It is expected these statements will confirm each other on the nature of the debates, decisions and discussions undertaken.

IV. Secondary sources of information, including published works, such as those in newspaper articles, news magazines and other media outlets. Furthermore, published literature in the form of books, such as '*The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*' by Hinnesbusch and Ehteshami (2014), '*The Foreign Policy of Arab States*' by Korany and Dessouki (2010), '*The Middle East in International Relations*' by Halliday (2005), and the '*Republic of Fear*' by Al-Khalil (1989) proved useful in developing this thesis. However, these works had clear shortcomings since they use limited primary source data or are dated and are thus incapable of providing insights concerning inputs which shaped foreign policy. Other books and published articles were also consulted, including those written by leading academics in the field.

Using a combination of the above-mentioned resources, this thesis set out to provide a deeper scholarly understanding and appreciation of why and how bureaucratic decisions were made and how they defined Iraq's external relations since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003.

1.7 THESIS STRUCTURE

In addressing these questions, the thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 outlines the different theoretical paradigms which traditionally have been used to explain state behaviour, notably realism, its origins, contemporary development and variations. While noting

its rich intellectual tradition in the broad discipline of international relations, the chapter also explores its limitations, not least in explaining domestic variables that have shaped approaches to foreign policy, which cannot be captured by reference to the external environment alone. In particular, identity politics has remained a largely underexplored facet of state behaviour, and yet in the Middle East, contested identities remain crucial to understanding the external behaviour of many state-actors as they seek security. By contrast, a constructivist approach allows for identity politics to move beyond mere context for understanding how and why certain elites contest the very idea of the national interest and the policies to be pursued: indeed, constructivism becomes the very essence of that understanding.

Following on from this, chapter 3 develops further the framework for this thesis by establishing a theoretical link between patrimony and how it fits into the constructivist approach. This involves explaining patrimony and how it has impacted upon modern states. It also discusses its more contemporary manifestation, neo-patrimony, and, in Chapter 4, how it has come to shape politics and influence the foreign policy decision-making processes of the political elite examining how and why neo-patrimonial structures developed under the regime of Saddam Hussein and the legacy of these structures in post 2003 Iraq.

Building upon this analysis, Chapter 5 looks more closely at the nexus between neo-patrimony, sectarianism and tribalism in the political development of Iraq. It demonstrates how this reinforced rather than diluted the power that sectarian interests increasingly played in policy formation in a succession of Iraqi governments post-2003.

Chapter 6 and 7 present the qualitative and quantitative field data (respectively) acquired from field trips to Iraq and Jordan. More specifically and according to the constructivist framework outlined in chapter 3, Chapter 6 focuses on presenting the unit level data acquired from research participants working in key Iraqi ministries such as the Ministry of Defence and the Interior Ministry amongst others. This chapter was used to present participants' responses in the form of feelings, thoughts and behaviours. This data was then organised along different themes. The main objective of this chapter, conducted entirely in Arabic, was to determine the extent of neo-patrimonial politics felt by each group and demonstrate how and why the bureaucracies of the state became sectarianized.

Chapter 7 focuses on presenting the systemic level data and built on the key themes of the previous chapter. A mathematical formula was used to convert questionnaire answers into mathematical form which allowed the quantitative data to be illustrated graphically. Questionnaire responses were then analysed from a constructivist perspective whilst contextualising events taking place in the wider

Middle East. The questionnaire consists of 11 questions and aimed to establish a link between foreign policy decision-making, neo-patrimony and sectarianism.

Chapter 8 investigates the intimate connection between the Iraqi elites and foreign states and provides additional examples of person-to-state and party-to-state relations. It also discusses how these states went about setting about their own agendas on Iraq.

Finally, Chapter 8, the conclusion, summarises the key points and main arguments of the thesis and the contribution made to the understanding of contemporary Iraq and the perceptions it has of its foreign relations.

2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The foreign relations of Iraq can be considered a difficult subject for theoretical analysis because one has to consider a broad range of actors situated at the state, sub-state and non-state level. Therefore, the paradigm which this thesis adopts must be able to account for determinants at these levels, that is, the domestic political and sectarian competition within Iraq, and the regional environment which influences behaviour towards Iraq. The choice of theoretical approach will be rooted in a wider understanding of state behaviour. Thus, this section will critique three paradigms – realism, bureaucratic politics and constructivism whilst highlighting their strengths and weaknesses.

2.2 REALISM

The understanding of state behaviour has long been dominated by realist frameworks which have at best diluted and at worst ignored the role of domestic factors in the articulation and pursuit of foreign policy objectives. Indeed, while the bloody history of the modern Middle East can be explained by recourse to a Hobbesian world view, denial of identity as a driver of state behaviour – be it religious, tribal or sectarian, or a combination of all three – is for many the essence of understanding regional politics across the Middle East and North Africa. This explains why more recent work on sectarianism and securitisation has been used to explain inter-state relations throughout the region (Mabon & Ardovini, 2017).

Realism as a theory is an old, broad and vibrant intellectual tradition, whose key tenets can be found in the earlier works of writers such as Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes (Walt, 2002, p. 2). However, 20th century realism, known as classical realism, emerged as a response to the idealist paradigm which ascended in popularity following World War I. Idealists and realists viewed international relations very differently. The former arguing it is possible to build peace to prevent another world war by emphasising commonality between nations (Jervis, 1999). Whilst idealist achieved major goals such as the founding of the United Nations in 1945, it was the realist school of thought which greatly influenced post-world war thinking through the works of classical realists such as Morgenthau, John H. Hertz, Aron Raymond and George Kennan.

Morgenthau wrote from the onset of the Cold War and was influenced by bipolarity and nuclear weapons. He is regarded by many as the progenitor of the classical realist tradition and is arguably the most well-known, having authored his seminal work, '*Politics Among Nations',* in 1948. Realism set out the intellectual foundations for an activist's understanding of international relations which is

based on considerations of power (Herz, 1950). As the 1950s unfolded, realism would appear as one aspect of the "end of ideologies" proclaimed by sociologists such as Daniel Bell or Seymour Martin Lipset (Guilhot, 2010).

From this, it is possible to conclude that power is the central theme which delineates politics as being independent and states as rational actors intent on pursuing national interests. This foundation allows for the construction of a rational theory of international politics. The focus on power and interests marks the development of realism as a theory, including variants such as neo-realism, which focuses on the structure of the international system, and, more recently, neo-classical realism, which recognises the importance of domestic variables. However, this theory does not consider ideological preferences or motives, religious beliefs or the morality of decision-makers; nor does it consider internal politics as intrinsic to how states act in the international arena. It can be argued the core realist assumptions such as a state behaving in a coherent manner break down when applied to Iraq. Fortunately, other perspectives are available, such as the bureaucratic politics model offered by Allison and Halperin (1972).

2.3 Bureaucratic Politics

In the context of foreign policy, bureaucratic politics can be defined as being one-dimensional battle for power at the executive level whereby, one 'may, at best, respect the crafty gamesmanship of certain players, but underneath there is a fundamental unease with the idea of bureaucrats operating in self-consciously political ways' (Preston & Hart, 1999).

The use of the bureaucratic politics model can be useful when understanding Iraqi foreign policy due to the consociational distribution of political power within the state. That is, the power distribution between actors and parliamentary coalitions which control different state bureaucracies and then go on to advance their own foreign policies.

The bureaucratic politics model has broadened the scope of decision making over many decades; however, it has received a significant amount of criticism which can be categorised in three different ways, comprising the centrality of the president, the salience of national security interests and the applicability of this American model to other national settings.

Proponents such as Rosati have stressed the importance of the president as being the most important decision maker in a government (Rosati, 1981). The president assigns key personnel to positions within the executive branch, determines who will have access to power and prevents other options and plans being implemented in the game (Krasner, 1973). Therefore, 'the ability of bureaucracies to

independently establish policies is a function of presidential attention' (Krasner, 1972). Based on this criticism, the strategic interaction and bargaining of the elite are not as important as the president.

The second category of criticism argues that national security interests are generally accepted throughout the bureaucracies of the state (Rhodes, 1994). So, although personal interests and character, as well as organisational traits matter, in the end, 'national security interests are usually predetermined and generally accepted' (Freedman, 1973). This set of criticisms emphasises the state as a being (or close to being) a unitary actor with agreeable national security risks and interests.

A final category of criticism is that the model can only be applied to the political system of the US and cannot be generalised to other regions (Freedman, 1973). This is premised on the availability of documents through US laws which allow scholars to access material and have the ability to conduct interviews with key actors. Moreover, democratic systems are deemed to be more open to scholarly investigation as opposed to authoritarian states.

Whilst this thesis acknowledges the utility of bureaucratic political model, it argues against its suitability based on the above criticisms. Concerning the first criticism, the Iraqi political establishment, unlike the US one, does not have a preeminent actor who has the ultimate say in systemic level matters. This has been demonstrated through divergent foreign policies emanating from Baghdad and Erbil and those pursued through person-to-state and party-to-state relations. In other words, Iraq does not allow the opportunity to test whether the existence of a final decision maker validates the bureaucratic political model. As related to the second set of criticisms, it is argued that the national security interests of Iraq are not a given. In other words, although different actors within the regime push and pull for their own stance on a given issue, this is based on sectarian allegiances and interests which are divergent and often diametrically opposed. Consequently, Sunni, Shi'a and Kurds view neighbouring states in the region very differently. Moreover, the scope of this theory is also restrictive because this thesis acquired data from both state and non-state actors and not only from those working within state bureaucracies.

In terms of the third set of criticisms, in comparison to the US establishment, the Iraqi government structure and manner in which it operates can be considered to be on the other end of the spectrum in terms of regime setting and type. Although it is possible to secure interviews with key personnel with the right connections, throughout the research period, the mainly Al-Maliki governments consolidated power whilst also reducing transparency and becoming less accountable. This means the three generic criticisms available in the literature can be directly applied to Iraq and can be shown to be valid very easily.

However, it can also be argued that the bureaucratic politics model was never designed for nor accounts for person-to-state or party-to-state relations, which this thesis will explore. Moreover, religious identity and sectarian affiliation are important criteria in determining who was recruited into the state bureaucracies. Whilst bureaucratic politics are configured around a demographic political system, patronage and religious affiliation are filters through which the external environment can be viewed in Iraq.

Therefore, as a western construct, bureaucratic politics does not fully capture these more varied dynamics that have informed how the Iraqi elite came to understand their external environment. This is why this thesis looks beyond bureaucratic politics and refers to Iraq's external environment as a term that captures this distinction of how patronage determined particular relations. Moreover, at the regional level, the US exercised enormous influence in the immediate post 2003 period on Iraq's external relations. If sovereignty is taken to mean the unhindered exercise of foreign policy, clearly Baghdad had no such control. Therefore, external relations suggest two elements: i) the importance of understanding sectarian differences and the use of patronage in the pursuit of its interests and ii) that the pursuit of those interests is conditioned by the continued influence of foreign states and how they view their own regional interests.

Finally, foreign policy and foreign policy analysis are primarily located in the positivist tradition. By deliberately using a constructivist approach, this thesis highlights how patronage and sectarianism can shape an understanding of the external environment that does not fit easily with the literature on foreign policy decision making as it has been traditionally conceived.

2.4 CONSTRUCTIVISM

This paradigm is located in the critical tradition of political philosophy and emerged in the later 1980s to challenge the positivist assumptions that underpin much of the realist and liberal traditions. However, constructivism has been regarded with a great deal of scepticism by mainstream scholars (Hopf, 1998). With its emphasis on the idea of subjective norms which define how identities are shaped and formed, it offers perspectives on how internal dynamics affect foreign policy outputs.

Rather than being just a reaction to the 'real world', constructivists argue that such perceptions are, by necessity, inter-subjective and reflect an often-complex interplay between norms and values far removed from the objectivity used by realists to explain and understand the nature of power in international relations. At its core, constructivism is part of a post-modernist, philosophical tradition which can be traced to the 1960s. As noted, it 'challenged the objectivist's roots of science and the post-enlightenment belief in a knowable world' (Witkin, 2013, p. 35). It provides a reflective approach

to understanding foreign policy decision-making and can be traced to two historical developments. Firstly, it has been linked to what Beck et al. (2003) termed 'reflexive modernity', a notion used to refer to the heightened awareness of the inherent ambiguities and limits of social and technical progress, an awareness dating to the 20th century.

While linking constructivism to 'reflexive modernity' can be debated, it can be directly related to the end of the Cold War simply because one of the most cited articles on constructivism explicitly cites this event (Wendt, 1992). The use of constructivism provides alternative understandings of several key themes in international relations theory, including the meaning of anarchy, the balance of power, the link between state interest and identity, the elaboration of power, and the prospects of change in world politics (Hopf, 1998).

Constructivists believe the world is moulded and developed through social interaction between people and states via the structure of their environments. More formally, there is a process of mutual constitution between agency and structures. For example, instead of assuming all state actors pursue the same goals, constructivists explore how these interests are constructed through environmental interaction depending on a variety of social norms and discourses. Constructivists argue that states do not always act in ways which can be easily explained by realist assumptions on how world politics works. Rather, a greater focus is put on the relationship between interests and identity and the way ideas can shape interests and vice versa. Therefore, constructivists assume interests, identities and ideas are based on a complex relationship that eschews the reductionist approach of positivism, which posits a single causal link between ideas and interests (Wendt, 1992).

Constructivism's core concepts include deliberation, discourse (practices that give meaning), norms, persuasion, identity and socialisation, and it has been readily applied to debates from globalisation to international human rights (Erik, et al., 2007).

Like realism, constructivism has different branches, which range from those which 'reject scientific-style theorizing and stress the interpretive nature of social science and other sciences' to ones which permit the use of empirical theoretical insights and natural science-like insights when attempting to explain the dynamics of international relations (Chernoff, 2008). In particular, constructivism can be divided into three main branches, comprising systemic, unit-level and holistic constructivism.

2.4.1.1 Systemic constructivism

Wendt is perhaps the best-known academic of systemic constructivism and, similarly to Waltz, has developed a systemic theory and brackets unit-level processes which define his version of constructivism as state centric. Wendt (1999) justifies this state-centric approach, arguing that 'since

states are the dominant form of subjectivity in contemporary world politics this means that they should be the primary unit of analysis for thinking about the global regulation of violence'. Therefore, 'the possibility of systems theory, of whatever kind, assumes that the domestic or unit and systemic levels of analysis can be separated' (Wendt, 1999, p. 13). It can be argued that Wendt has adopted a systemic manner of theorising because of his desire to demonstrate that state identities and their interests are endogenous to state interaction and can differ depending on that interaction, instead of being fixed and exogenous, as Waltzian neo-realists propose. Moreover, it should be noted the constructivist argument is contingent mainly on the assumption that the structure of the international system is mainly social as opposed to material. This approach is the primary ontological difference between neo-realists and constructivists. Wendt argues: 'the ontology of international life is idealist and holist' (Makinda, 2000).

2.4.1.2 Unit level constructivism

This approach can be considered the inverse of systematic constructivism, an approach which has been adopted by Peter Katzenstein. It stresses the domestic political domain, that is, 'the relationship between domestic social and legal norms and the identities and interests of states', and what they reveal about these identities and interests' (Wendt, 1999, p. 200). Constructivists of this branch argue there is a need to critically examine the 'domestic determinants of change … since this is the place where national preferences are born, and international practices are produced, reproduced and transformed' (Adler, 2002, p. 110). This means international politics from a unit level perspective is a sphere of interaction which is shaped by actors' practices and identities.

2.4.1.3 Holistic constructivism

John G. Ruggie and Friedrich Kratochwil epitomize holistic constructivism and argue for a unified analytical approach which considers 'the relationship between domestic social and legal norms and the identities and interests of states' (Reus-Smit, 2005). This approach challenges the separation of systemic and unit-level structures and attempts to reconcile the above two approaches to encapsulate the range of factors affecting identities and state interests. Kowlowkis and Kratochiwil (1994) argue that social and corporate identities should be investigated using 'a unified analytical perspective that treats the domestic and the international as two faces of a single social and political order' (2005, p. 199). These constructivists 'focus on how domestic and international social phenomena interact to shape the states' behaviour in the international relations' (Zehfuss, 2001). This perspective focuses on how domestic and international social phenomena interact to shape state behaviour in international relations (Reus-Smit, 1999, p. 200). Based on this approach, foreign relations' behaviour is the consequence of interaction between domestic and international identities.

While both identities interact with one another, resulting in new definitions of the 'self' and the 'other', changes in the corporate identity brought about because of domestic factors have an impact on international identity and vice versa. This goes on to cause other states to reassess their interests based on the new identity (Bozdağlıoğlu, 2007).

As such, this thesis emphasises the importance of domestic identity, culture and the impact of normative structures. These structures can be noted throughout the brief history of modern Iraq, where it has been demonstrated how domestic factors have led to the construction of new identities following seismic changes, such as the end of Ottoman rule and British occupation, the establishment and removal of the monarchy, secular Ba`thism and, in 2003, the establishment of a democratic Iraq. Whilst these occurrences have affected Iraqi identity endogenously, Iraqi identity has also been influenced exogenously through the Sunni Arab states and Shi'a Iran.

2.4.2 Identity and culture

Whilst ethnicity and nationalism have received widespread attention in mainstream international relations theories, issues such as culture, religion and race, (and their consequences) have generally been ignored. Whilst the concept of identity has always been fluid, Brubaker and Cooper identified five key uses for the term, that is, (1), a basis for social or political action, (2), a collective phenomenon indicating sameness amongst group members, (3), a key feature of the collective 'selfhood', (4), a product of political or social action, or (5), the productive of competing discourses (Lebrow, 2008).

Constructivism has attempted to deal with these matters because identity forms the core upon which constructivism understands social phenomena. Constructivism assumes an *a priori* position on identities which are capable of affecting state practices and influencing domestic and international affairs (Hopf, 1998). One of the main by-products of identity politics is the return of differences between perceptions of state interest, which is in contrast to realist perceptions. For example, a single state can be viewed differently based on its identity and the way in which it behaves with others. State behaviour is contingent upon norms, which can be defined by as, 'a standard of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity' (Katzenstein 1996, p. 5). Wendt distinguished between two types of identities that were imperative for international affairs: 'type identities', which categorises similar types of states, for example, autocratic, democratic or Islamic'; and 'role identities', which are relational and unique, arising out the dyadic relationships between countries, for example, 'ally' or 'enemy'.

Thus, identity can be used to explain how Israeli national identity affected foreign policy with regard to the Hezbollah threat in 2006. While realism can be used to understand this conflict, it has also been argued that the decision to go to war occurred within the setting of a specific understanding of the

Israeli self-articulated by Kadima. This included ideas of vulnerability combined with the narrative of the 'Fighting Jew'. The decision to go to war was grounded in a vision of the Israeli self, which emphasised identity, Jewishness, history and family, all of which were 'existentially' threatened. By framing the Hezbollah threat in this manner, aggressive policies were accepted by the population and were enacted in Lebanon (Tidy, 2012).

If state identity is capable of informing a state's foreign policy, it is natural to assume different patterns of behaviour will emerge across different groups of states with different identities and interests (Neumann & Welsh, 1991). Identities have a deep-rooted meaning for each state and also offer an understanding of other states. Thus, identity can provide insights into interests, nature, motives, likely actions, attitudes and a state's stance on a given political situation. The expectation of multiple identities in world politics theorised by constructivists is based on openness to local historical contexts. For example, concerning nuclear weapons, constructivists would argue these weapons illustrate a state's commitment to their constructed social purpose, namely maintaining of power and prestige, that is, identity, dominance and interests, rather than being necessarily a rational response to a perceived external threat. Moreover, Wendt (1995) illustrates the social construction of reality when he explained that 500 UK nuclear weapons were less threatening to the US compared to 5 North Korean nuclear weapons. These perceptions are not contingent on the weapons (the material structure) themselves but on the meaning attributed to the material structure, that is, the ideational structure. In other words, a shared understanding or inter-subjectivity depends upon agent interaction and social context.

The potential for a single state to assume multiple identities significantly broadens the horizons of world politics (Pasic, 1996). Through contemplating the differences between states, it becomes possible to define states using terms which go beyond great power and non-great power or democratic and non-democratic descriptors. Whilst these labels are useful, constructivism attempts to go beyond this by providing other meaningful groupings based on identity by providing a method of uncovering features related to domestic culture, society and politics, which impact state identity and go on to affect international relations.

Recent history has shown there can be serious consequences for states which ascribe one identity to a state over another. Multiple identities can also be associated with a single state and are used by others to determine if a state is a friend, an enemy or a threat (Barnett, 1995). For example, Barnett (1993) argued that Iraq viewed Saudi Arabia as 'Arab' and not a 'sovereign state', implying Saudi Arabia would not allow US troops into Arab territory. However, if Iraq viewed Saudi Arabia as a sovereign state, in a realist world, it would have expected Saudi balancing against Iraqi actions in Kuwait,

allowing US military intervention. On that basis, it should have been deterred (Barnett, 1993). However, if multiple identities can be assumed by a single state, which constructivism allows, the neo-realist world is smaller than alleged.

Identity refers to the 'similarity and uniformity of general and fundamental features' or a 'meaning-making process based on a cultural feature or a continuous vague set of cultural features' and can be considered a source of meaning and experience for people (Costales, 2001, p. 22). Moreover, identity is an understanding between groups based on their expectations of others and describes a relationship between different people. However, collective identity can be difficult to define and can even be understood negatively. For example, in Iraq, people are referred to as Sunni and in this context, neither Shi'a nor Kurdish; this has allowed ordinary Iraqis to delineate themselves from others and associate themselves with people living in other states. Identity informs the behaviour of actors (Karimifard, 2012); therefore, understanding identities is vital for the purpose of analysis. In Iraq, identity has been forged through social interactions and has been constructed and deconstructed multiple times. Identity plays a significant role and is capable of informing a state's external relations. Norms and values inform identities in the context of domestic and international politics and 'constitute agents in the sense meant by constructivists, providing them with new understandings of interest/identity' (Checkel, 2001).

The significance of constructivism in clarifying the impact of identity is straightforward since it can link motives and interests, attitudes and roles of actors at the unit and systemic levels. One of the key features of identity is culture, which consists of values and norms. Culture informs actors about their interest and roles and explains why international norms are defined as 'collective expectations about proper behaviour for a given identity' (Jepperson et al., 1996, p. 54). Thus, focusing on culture is a useful tool. Geertz (1973, p. 5) famously defined culture as 'the webs of significance (man) himself has spun'. This suggests culture is the central prism through which reality acquires meaning (Guzzini, 2005). Since culture makes up an important part of identity, it is also constructed and thus linked to political and economic motivations and interests. Since norms provide guidance and rules to only a given identity, the potential impact of culture to shape meaning for decision-makers cannot be denied.

The topic of culture is a relatively new concept in international relations theories however, it has been stated in the context of multinational operations, cultural interoperability is as important as technical interoperability (Hlatkya & Breedeb, 2016). Katzenstein (1996, p. 17) stated that for realists, 'culture and identity are, at best, derivative of the distribution of capabilities and have no independent explanatory power. For rationalists, actors deploy culture and identity strategically, like any other resource, simply to further their own self-interest'. Since the topic of culture has been avoided by

mainstream international relations theories, sociological approaches have filled this vacuum and examined the state as a social actor, positioned within social conventions and rules which shape identity and make up the backdrop of the 'national interest' whilst underpinning motivations.

Culture entered the domain of international relations in the early 1990s following the works of scholars including Onuf (1989), who wrote *'The World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations',* and Lapid (1996), who wrote '*The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory*', as well as Katzenstein (1996). Wendt's '*The Social Theory of International Politics'* (1999) is perhaps and the most well-known early work to have developed a constructivist ontology which specifically deals with the role of culture in politics (Guzzini & Leander, 2006).

Culture is relevant to this thesis in three different ways. Firstly, it has the ability to guide and enable collective action and is used by actors to interpret their contextual interests and situations; 'epistemic communities' generate shared interpretations which help identity interests (Alder & Haas, 1992). Works which have been written in this vein include Ling (1994) and Johnston (1996), who demonstrated the impact of Chinese culture on Maoist strategy and state violence, Kier (1996), who showed the impact of culture on French post-war military doctrine, and Herman (1996), who analysed the influence of new thinking on Soviet foreign policy.

Secondly, social norms based on cultural features have been shown to influence the coordination of action, and it has been argued cultural norms can be decisive when decision-makers are faced with options which appear equally as appealing. In other words, actions are only understood when juxtaposed against the background of cultural norms which provide additional meaning. Not only are cultural norms ethical guidelines, but they also facilitate the pursuit of goals, the justifying of actions and the criticising of assertions. Proponents who have written in this vein include Price and Tannenwald (1996), who commented on the role of social norms on the regulation of chemical weapons, Risse-Kappen (1997), who described the re-emergence of the UN after the Cold War, Klein (1990), on the internal politics of NATO, and Koslowski and Kratochwil (1994), who wrote about the ending of the Cold War.

Thirdly, the literature shows socialisation processes have impacted social (systemic) interactions. For example, Wendt (1999) stated that the three 'cultures' of world politics are contingent upon a state identifying with one another as a friend, rival or enemy. This means the interests of a state come from a constructed representation of the relationship between oneself and the other. Proponents who have written in this vein include Barnett (1996), who commented on the formation of alliances in the Middle East, Duffy and Lindstorm (2002), who described the mobilisation of mass constituents in the Serbo-

Croatian conflict, and Berger (1996), who outlined the role of identities in Japanese and German national security policy.

Collectively, these arguments assume that social rules fundamentally influence the coordination of actions. This approach, therefore, recognises the importance of identities and culture and how these are informed by norms: 'Norms . . . either define (or constitute) identities or prescribe (or regulate) behaviour, or they do both' (Katzenstein, 1996, p. 5). Cultural arguments about norms contend that agents' deliberation over the appropriateness of conveyed norms influence collective action.

2.4.3 Norms

Norms can be defined as 'shared conceptions' (Bernstein, 2002) and 'a standard of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity' (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998) and can be used to provide standards of 'good' and 'bad' behaviour. In '*Rules, Norms and Decisions'* (1989), Kratochwil explains how rules and norms make up practices that in turn enable meanings which function as 'guidance devices' (1991 p.-). In comparison, beliefs and ideas do not require a distinct association with actor behaviour or an attachment to value judgements. Norms are used in society to promote 'correct behaviour' and justify state actions. Following institutionalisation, norms are contingent upon established values and beliefs which constrain some actions whilst legitimising others (Katzenstein, 1996). The process of state identity formation is continuous and, therefore, norms are typically reassessed. This leads to a reshaping of conceptions based on identity and norms in the context of actual events and through state-to-state interaction (Wendt 1992).

Norms are not static, but, instead, should be viewed as being dynamic and capable of change. By investigating norms and how they influence actors, the conditions through which norms become central can be identified. Finnemore and Shikkink (1998) investigated the norms of women's suffrage and laws of war and formulated the 'norm life cycle' (see Figure 2.1)

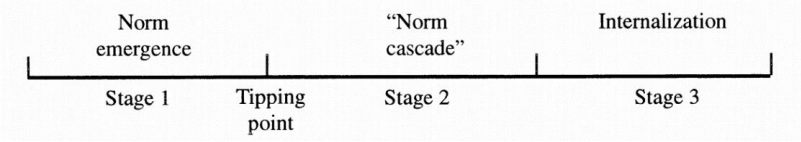


Figure 2.1: Norm life cycle (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998)

Norm-driven behaviour is made up of two parts, which together form a self-reinforcing cycle. The first processes occur at the unit level, focusing on the nature of the internal normative structures and examining the impact of domestic social discourses on the construction of foreign relations. The second set of processes occur at the systemic level, and are caused by the confrontational normative environment, which can radicalise the existing identity.

Following the 2003 invasion of Iraq, sectarian norms emerged more prominently, and people began to question themselves: Who am I? Who are the others? What is my identity? At the communal level, individuals thought about their relationship with their neighbours and questioned their safety. Events such as the Samara Mosque bombing led to a tipping point, resulting in the radicalisation of identities. At the bureaucratic level, sectarian identities become salient in the dispensation of power as elite decision makers were impacted by ideational factors, which went on to influence Iraqi foreign relations.

The result of the tipping point is a cascade of norms associated with radicalism. Identities people held of themselves, and others quickly changed: first Sunni and Shi'a coexisted in the same neighbourhoods. However, attitudes changed, which enabled one group of people to hate another. This was then followed by an acceptance which allowed people to work against each other indirectly and then by them joining the militias and engaging in violence.

In stage 3, as cleavages became more apparent, sectarian groups acquired external help. They, in turn, become influenced by their backers. Their norms became further internalised and radicalised because of systemic pressures, such as the Sunni world against the Shi'a world. This internal fragmentation weakened the Iraqi position on the world stage and allowed foreign interference in Iraq's internal affairs. The cycle was then repeated.

Based on the above, this thesis argues it is possible for norms such as identity and culture to inform foreign relations. By default, this means it is necessary to assess the ideational factors of elite actors engaging in foreign relations. The manner in which norms play a part in the interplay between international actors is schematically represented in Figure 2.2.

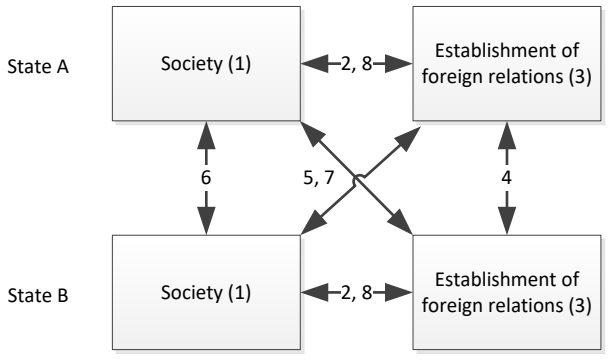


Figure 2.2 Impact of norms on foreign relations (adapted from Liland, 1993)

The norms found within a given society (1) are significant since the characteristics they make up comprise the norms framework (2) in which foreign relations operate. This means the norms of a society can be interpreted as a key building block of foreign relations. Moreover, established norms

feed into the formulation and organisation of norm-based policies and are a priority for those engaged in developing foreign relations (3), which can be termed norm-based diplomacy between states (4). This allows relations between states to be more amicable since it is easier to predict the course of action a partner is most likely to take. It should be noted that norm-based foreign relations can function as a foreign policy resource; that is, the norm-based interchange between nations (6) yields power for some countries. Foreign norms may impact and have an effect on the actors engaged in foreign relations (7) and subsequently act as agents for foreign states in their own societies (8) (Liland, 1993).

2.5 FRAMEWORK SELECTION

Since constructivism can focus on ideational factors such as culture and frames international relations as social relations, it is useful for the purpose of this thesis because of the presence of multiple Iraqi identities and their impact on foreign relations. Wendt argues that domestic values can lead to the construction of a social collective identity in a state and states can constitute collective identities and interests by interaction with other states (Smith, 2000). Whilst this approach is suitable for states with a mainly monolithic national identity, it should be noted that in Iraq, a collective identity has not transpired, and national interests based on state interaction with the outside world have not occurred in a manner which represents all sectorial interests. Proponents such as Wendt tend to minimise or overlook the importance of contesting identities in the overall formulation of state identity, which risks the possibility of oversimplification. For Wendt, the state is the agent and has no room for other agents and state identity (and its construction) is restricted to state-to-state relations. However, as post-2003 Iraq has shown, sub-state identity has played a significant role in Iraqi internal affairs, and it is these identities which have governed its external relations.

This explains why this thesis uses norm-based, holistic constructivism (and not Wendt's soft constructivism) because it can be used to differentiate between the identities of domestic agents and allows this thesis to treat them in a sub-national manner. As noted, the formation of identity at both the unit and systemic levels is a perpetual process, where the 'self' and 'other' is constantly defined and redefined. New iterations of corporate identity can be impacted by as well as affect the formation of identity at the international level. In Iraq, this has resulted in the resetting of state interests with Shi'a, Sunni and Kurdish interests. Moreover, norm-based, holistic constructivism includes norms in agent-structure relations. These norms result in rules and can be considered ontological elements which are equally important and provide a co-constitution between structure and agent (Onuf, 1989) since they provide guidance for human behaviour, thereby making shared meanings possible.

Thus, by applying a norm-based, holistic form of constructivism, this thesis emphasises domestic identity and the constructive role of normative structures on Iraqi foreign policy preferences. The Iraqi identity structures originate with a plethora of factors, but mainly include Islamic history: the Sunni-Shia split and political Islam, political conceptions concerning religion and the state, contemporary history, including the formation of Iraq as a modern state, and the post-2003 Shi'a acquisition of Iraq and democracy. It can be argued that in recent times, Iraqi interests and identity have become more exogenous to the international system than endogenous mainly because the political elite has come to rely on external backers to maintain their neo-patrimonial structures within Iraq.

Adopting this framework allows this thesis to utilise constructivist assumptions, whereby material structures can be viewed within a wider context. Wendt (1995) argues: 'material resources only acquire meaning for human action through the structure of shared knowledge in which they are embedded'. For example, Iraq's relationship with Saudi Arabia and Iran cannot be simply explained by realism since the 2003 invasion did not compel Iraq to rebalance. Moreover, Baghdad did not seek to undermine Iranian influence in the region or even curb Iranian activities within its borders. This was a significant change from Saddam's foreign policy, which was that of a revisionist state seeking hegemony in the region. This justifies why the foreign policy behaviour of Iraq must be understood in its discursive sense, that is, an institutionalised way of thinking given the context of the environment.

Whilst adhering to a norm-based, holistic form of constructivism, this thesis seeks to address the core research question through two layers of investigation: a systemic level analysis which focuses on the country of Iraq as a state actor in the wider international system facing top-down pressures from international actors; and a unit level analysis of Iraq which focuses on society. This examines the influence and impact of two distinct norms, neo-patrimony and sectarianism as bottom-up pressures, which have permeated through society and impacted Iraqi leaders, including politicians and religious leaders, as well as other government and non-government actors.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed realism, bureaucratic politics and constructivism as potential paradigms through which this thesis can be framed. Realism argues that the international system is anarchic in nature and can be abstracted and divorced from a state's socio-political considerations. It also assumes the state to be a central, unitary, rational actor, with the dimension of security being paramount. Although realism has a rich tradition, it cannot explain domestic constructs such as identity and norms and how these notions inform states such as Iraq. It should also be noted that Iraqi foreign relations can be described as being sectarian in nature, thereby discounting the very interests realists see at the core of foreign policy. So, whilst realism does not explain domestic state behaviour,

this chapter has attempted to demonstrate actor identity and outcomes are inherently linked. Iraq can be described as a state fragmented along ideological lines, one which has been impacted by religious and cultural clashes. Using rationalist approaches would risk ignoring these dynamics, leading to limited comprehension and the formulation of incomplete conclusions.

Other approaches have been used to explain the behaviour of internal actors which have informed state behaviour. Foremost among these has been the discipline of foreign policy analysis, which has largely challenged the idea of the state as a unitary rational actor. In particular, bureaucratic politics has been used to explain how, despite their best intentions, foreign policy outcomes rarely match the initial intentions of decision makers.

Bureaucratic politics frames policy making as a joint endeavour with many stakeholders within state bureaucracies, each vying with the other for resources and power (Rosenthal & Kouzmin, 1991). However, although the bureaucratic politics model may provide a near perfect evaluation of US bureaucracy and foreign policy making, it cannot be directly applied to Iraq because of the unique historical legacies linked to external and internal notions of identity, culture and purpose. Moreover, this thesis does not emphasise the mechanics of foreign policy analysis and how this plays out in typical foreign policy tools; rather the emphasis is placed on Iraqi identity and cultural settings.

In the US, the bureaucracies are shielded from the outside world so there is no need for the model to assign external forces with a significant value. This thesis goes on to argue that the opposite is valid; that is, external factors have permeated through and have become significant drivers underpinning the distribution of power within state bureaucracies and foreign policy decision making. Moreover, in addition to the general criticisms of the model which has been shown to be valid, specific criticisms based on the unique nature of this thesis should also be noted. That is, the model does not account for person-to-state or party-to-state relations.

Constructivists view the knowledge of politics as a form of social construction, where understanding is filtered through subjective experiences and understandings that belie the certainties of the positivist tradition. Within all strands of constructivism, ‘greater weight [is given] to the social – as opposed to the material – in world politics’ (Checkel, 2008, p. 72). The belief that reality is socially constructed leads to a greater emphasis placed on identity and norm development and the role of ideational power relative to other paradigms. Constructivism emphasises the role of social norms and identities in constructing international politics and determining international relations outcomes and is used to uncover the causal link between actor identities and norms and their external relations.

Constructivism can be categorised based on the scope of its analysis as systemic, unit level and holistic. The latter approach acts as a junction between systemic and unit-level analysis since it attempts to bridge the gap between the domestic and the international. This can be done by explaining how identities and norms are established and their impact on interests. Identities play multiple functions in societies, such as those in the Middle East, informing individuals about who they are and who others are, and providing guidance concerning interests when faced with choices within a given domain with respect to other actors (Hopf, 1998,). Since these actors occupy the bureaucracies of state, identity and norms imply preferences and choices which are acted upon that is, those charged with foreign policymaking respond according to their own identity-based interests and the identity attributed to other groups. This means the idea of sub-state actors becomes more salient when attempting to clarify the source of motivation actors have exhibited. Therefore, this thesis develops this understanding and analyses Iraqi elite integration of domestically formulated corporate and internationally driven social identities in explaining Iraqi foreign relations. Iraqi national identity needs to be problematised as a contested space, where Iraqi national identity is not contingent on state-to-state relations.

In light of the above, this thesis is built on a norm-based, holistic form of constructivism, which is arguably more suitable compared to Wendt's soft constructivism, which focuses on the state. The chosen approach investigates the role of ideational factors including the identity and norms of actors and their links to neo-patrimony and sectarianism. Each of these notions is analysed in detail in the following chapters and demonstrates the significance of multiple Iraqi sub-state identities at the unit and systemic levels. This approach offers a useful framework for examining domestic neo-patrimonial/sectarian politics and its impact on external relations.

In opposition to rationalist theories, which reduce the importance of ideological elements, a norm-based, holistic form of constructivism is used to develop a new line of thought which focuses on hierarchical superiority of societal elites. This approach is adopted because of its potential for explaining neo-patrimony. During the research period, major events affected the intersubjective exchanges, wherein communal representations of reality were moulded through neo-patrimony. This led to collective experiences constituting socially constituted 'realities'. It is these often conflicting 'realities' which are analysed in this thesis.

3 PATRIMONY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Patrimony and neo-patrimony have long been considered intrinsic to the study of politics across the Middle East and North Africa. In line with the framework outlined, patrimony can be viewed as a norm, its varied application informing the distribution of power that all too often has benefited autocratic regimes. The legacy of patrimony, often based on ethnic loyalties or religious affinity, has shaped the development of states lacking a fixed homogenous identity, on the one hand, and where state institutions have proved weak or malleable in determining the national character of the state, on the other. Nowhere has this been more pronounced than in Iraq. This chapter, therefore, provides an overview of patrimony and how it has been approached in the literature before arguing that patrimony and its more contemporary variant, neo-patrimony, have become a 'norm' in understanding the dispensation of power that has influenced the Iraqi political landscape.

The term patrimony was first popularised by Max Weber in '*Economy and Society',* where he described the relationship present between the feudal state and the feudal lord prior to European capitalism. The defining feature of this relationship was the arbitrary exercise of power by the estate owner as well as the demand for complete submission or loyalty from the subjects or tenants (Weber, 1978). According to Weber, this arbitrariness in the exercise of power, predominant in feudal societies, can be clearly demarcated from industrialised (capitalist) societies, where societal relations were freed from any type of allegiance but were formally regulated through contracts which enshrined individual rights (Ermakoff, 2011).

'The vassal was bound by his fealty to "render aid" to his lord in all things, and it was taken for granted that this meant placing his sword and his counsel at his lord's disposal' (Bloch, 2014, p. 232). This relationship between the vassal and lord further epitomises the fundamental patrimonial relationship. Firstly, it can be described as being personal because the vassal offers servitude to the lord, and the lord reciprocates by bestowing benefits and gifts provided in his name with additional favours at his discretion. Secondly, the relationship is encapsulated within statutory distinctions. The lord is entitled to behave as a patriarch, and it is expected the vassal will comply with the lord. Such an arrangement normalises the inequality between the two parties. Therefore, such a relationship exhibits the characteristic of an exchange. That is, the agent is rewarded for carrying out agency for the patriarch. However, based on the status, a clear distinction emerges between the exchanges.

Based on this premise, Bratton and Walle (1997) argued that a definition of patrimonial rule is based on, firstly, the personal character of authority, that is, the ruler embraces his subjects as if they were part of his family and, secondly, the inequality between important and non-important people.

> In patrimonial political systems, an individual rules by dint of personal prestige and power; ordinary folks are treated as extensions of the 'big man's' household, with no rights or privileges other than those bestowed by the ruler. Authority is entirely personalized, shaped by the ruler's preference rather than by any codified system of law. (Bratton & Walle, 1997, p. 61)

According to Weber, patrimonialism can be defined as a category of traditional authority, where rule is solely based on personal accountability to the sovereign, without a clear demarcation between public and private and having a considerable range of arbitrariness (Weber, 1978). The main difference between traditional and modern states is the difference in bureaucracy and how this is applied to carry out administrative activities. Weber's analysis of a patrimonial state reveals that the public and private became conflated. Therefore, actions which are state sponsored can result in them becoming the private interests of entrusted politicians (Weber, 1978).

Berman (1998) stated that modernity is characterised by four basic features: it is European; it stems from the historical processes of the Renaissance and the Reformation and the collapse of polarity; it has seen the removal of 'religious and political illusions'; and the character of the new bourgeois class allows for a genuinely open society. Bureaucracy can be thought of as being a pure type of rational-legal authority, whose efficiency is provided via the expertise of specialised staff, administrative discipline, competence, which allows officials to be rewarded with state benefits (Biersteker & Weber, 1996).

A traditional state based on the Weberian paradigm is a patrimonial state, where the sovereign offers patrimonies to different actors such as officials, individuals or a specific community. The state in which the sovereign plays the role of patriarch, where an arbitrarily legitimate mechanism is used to govern, results in a set of interconnected phenomena, similar to clientelism. The sovereign has a clientele constituted of people who show obedience to him and the state and serve state functions and include those such as blood relatives, slaves, clients, or his own freedmen (Poggi, 1988).

According to Weber (1978), patrimony, like feudalism, was 'a chronic condition', ultimately dislodged by the social transformation caused because of the Reformation. However, there are also other opinions concerning patrimony. Scholars who have developed the rational (Kiser & Schneider, 1994) and fiscal military (Tilly, 2004) choice approaches to modern state formation disagree with Weber on this specific issue. These scholars insist that patrimonialism was undermined by the rulers' ability to defeat and subdue the landholders. Moreover, it was the king and patrimonial officials who realised

they could mutually benefit through the creation of surplus bureaucratic instruments of rule by increasing their scope to acquire greater wealth and land from their subjects. It should be noted that patrimony is more than a group of behaviours for exercising authority. It also involves justifying, from an ideological perspective the legitimacy of those behavioural norms and that power. It can be argued that Weber underestimated the legitimacy and the longevity of patrimony since he did not consider how it was expressed in actual relations between royal and lesser elite families. In a similar manner, lower levels of patrimonialism deepened legitimacy because it acted as an active model for relations and property rights in lower-class families (Adams, 2005, p. 29).

As a strategic norm, patrimony is largely defensive in nature and provides protection from other elites, underpinning the assertion of non-elite dominance. Monarchs have typically used the ideological foundations of patrimony against their subjects, who then go onto make analogous claims against their own subordinates. Thus, it was possible for nobles to compare themselves to kings and great barons claimed allegiance from their subjects in a similar way to what kings required of them (Lachmann, 2011).

One of the key differences between elites and non-elites is the former's ability to appropriate resources from the latter (Lachmann, 1989). Whilst in rare cases a single unified elite may gain pre-eminence, it is more common for a range of elites to operate different bureaucratic apparatuses. This scenario compels elites and their progeny with the dual task of ensuring the exploitation of non-elites and with sustaining organisational capabilities in the face of other elite competition. Elite and class conflicts thus take place concurrently.

As noted, patrimony typically benefits families by normalising their rule and maintaining a monopoly over wealth with the ability to dispense favours. However, assets which are geared towards benefiting a family are always vulnerable to rival challenges. As a result, elites may tend to want to enhance their relationship with the patriarch, which can lead to structural tensions between rival elites. Although the patriarch in theory has political precedence, in practice, this does not necessarily have to be the case since every patriarch is also restricted by the very bodies they have appointed. This can result in the patriarch gradually losing the ability to monopolise political power, thus losing the right to dismiss agents at will. This simple point emphasises the paradoxical existence of the patrimonial system.

3.2 Forms and Variations

Patrimonial arrangements can take on a number of forms and may exist throughout the entire government hierarchy. This can begin at the micro-level, where local elites attempt to establish norms by imposing their political dominion on the local government, tax farming, which involves

businessmen trying to take over state functions, and make a personal profit or proprietary office holding, where government officials legally own their administrative positions (Ermakoff, 2011).

Therefore, the politics of patronage can be considered a modern type of local patrimony, that is, the monopolization of government office by members of the political clique, who use the resources derived from their mandate to increase their power basis and that of their clientele. The resultant relations of allegiance result in norms which can, therefore, be categorised as being self-interested and personalised. Holders of office distribute personal favours and elicit allegiance from their agents who, in turn, repeat the process in a similar resource appropriation and principal-agent manner with subordinates, a process which Weber describes as being 'natural' (Weber, 1978, p. 1040). A holder of office imposes his rules and creates relationships of dependence with those less powerful and creates criteria for choices which do not need to be justified whilst 'shield[ing] their actions from outside observation' (Ferejohn, 1999, p. 138).

Based on the above, it is possible to develop norm-based patrimonial relations in parallel with bureaucratic structures. A key characteristic of what is known as the 'mass patronage machine' is 'its ability to intervene, directly or indirectly, into the workings of the bureaucratic machinery of the state' (Jeong, 1997, p. 136). Practices such as clientelistic hiring, job patronage and the discretionary power implementation of local government are key political resources which result in a network of subordination and political obligation. According to Putnam (1993), these features describe political norms as being vertical relations of authority based on dependency – a prominent feature of patron-client networks. By their nature, patrimonial systems are 'hybrid political systems in which the customs and patterns of patrimonialism co-exist with, and suffuse, rational-legal institutions' (Bratton & Van de Walle 1997, p. 62).

3.3 Early modern European patrimony

The literature provides extensive analysis of variations in patrimonial rule, especially in European states such as Spain, France, the Netherlands and Britain during the 17th century, and show with the passage of time how patrimony shaped the state processes, resulting in hybrid bureaucratic institutions. Adams (2005, p. 135) notes how, in early modern European times, venal officials and merchant organisations had similar ideas concerning 'fatherhood that provided the recurring motifs for symbols of authority'.

The implementation of patrimonial systems provided elites with advantages over the generalised ideological legitimacy of paternal authority, which was typically distributed unequally. Relationships and alliances based on familial mechanics allowed elites to protect themselves from challenges and

claims through the placement of clerical, local and state bureaucracies, trade routes, businesses and military command within positions associated with revenue and power. Actors were able to trust each other through religion, shared tradition, commercial relations and marriage ties (Tilly, 2004). These types of alliances solidified the elites' economic, political, ideological and military resources into institutes organised along familial lines (Lachmann, 2011).

3.3.1 Spain

In the case of the Habsburgs, their European empire involved a strategy which traded political and fiscal autonomy for fealty to the crown in the lands they acquired in the 16th century. The aristocrats were favoured by the Habsburgs over town merchants and clerics. However, beyond Iberia, rival elites were able to operate, and Iberian familial alliances were arranged according to layers of aristocratic titles. These chains of lineages were capped by provincial estates and regional barons, who were able to assemble and increase their authority over the clergy, town merchants, peasants and land (Storrs, 1999).

The structure of the empire meant that elites were able to operate independently throughout the Spanish provinces whilst refusing to pay greater revenues requested by the crown. They also ensured that new offices would be occupied by individuals belonging to their progenies. Revenues acquired from paying provinces were reinvested on patronage, which helped guarantee the elites would remain loyal (Storrs, 1999).

The independence of the Spanish elite prevented Spain from competing with the other great powers. However, provincial elites were still able to strengthen their positions over other rival elites and non-elites using their alliances with the Habsburgs. This phenomenon accounts for why the empire did not fragment even after Spain was unable to compete for global or regional dominance. Familial elites were thus able to safeguard elite positions against rivals such as bourgeois or clerics and prevent the state from monopolising power, even though it resulted in geo-political marginality and economic stagnation (Storrs, 1999).

3.3.2 France

According to Lachmann (1989; 2000), French kings employed a strategy of 'vertical absolutism', which involved enhancing their fiscal and political powers over elites. Instead of positioning elites in specific areas, the monarchs would pit rival elites against each other by placing them in (already occupied) offices and granting them power in return for money. The monarch's sale of venal offices allowed patrimony to be decentralised through the creation of local patriarchs, which undermined the lineages led by provincial elites. This also had the impact of reducing the elites' ability to mobilise opposition to the crown at the state level.

This form of patrimony created new types of alliances between elites. Business organisations, members of parliament, feudal lords, colonial trading companies and military officers closed ranks to protect their specific rights against rival officials and non-elites through tactics such as intermarriage (Morrill, 1978).

3.3.3 Netherlands

The political structure of the Netherlands was forged in the war for freedom against Spanish occupation. The anti-Habsburg coalition was led by a single merchant class and, following the ousting of the Spanish, they solidified their grip on newly freed provinces and towns whilst preventing challenges from upstarts through the Dutch VOC and 'Contracts of Correspondence', which were used to enforce and extend intergenerational privilege (Armet, 2013). These contracts were negotiated between elites for cities and towns concerning their ratios of fiscal responsibility and their voting rights in the nested legislatures (Padgett & Powell, 2012, p. 211).

The 'Contracts of Correspondence' required the rotation of offices and the distribution of profits from merchant routes and companies amongst the elite, and the preservation of powers and income rights as patrimonial property. This arrangement prevented the type of competition between elites witnessed in France. Manifestations of patrimony in this context differ from other countries since it did not experience agrarian-based feudal relations and there were few elites occupying positions in state offices, or as clergy or noblemen, resulting in low factional conflict. This meant there were periods when there was no internal strife or revolutionary activities undertaken by non-elites, which ensured the status quo remained (Lachmann, 2011).

Although the variation of patrimonialism found in the Netherlands was compatible with international commerce, nevertheless, it also weakened the state. Moreover, the state was never fully able to directly control officers who had inherited their positions in the army and navy. Thus, the progress of the Dutch state in expanding its ability to trade and wage war was stifled by the pursuit of elites attempting to preserve their positions even though it resulted in long-term Dutch decline. Moreover, internally, the Patriot movement emerged in the latter half of the 17th century. This aimed to morally reform the bureaucracies of state. This was mainly backed by people who had grown increasingly annoyed with the elite's abuse of power, patronage and nepotism, and insisted on an end of the stadholder (a de facto hereditary head of state) and the rampant abuse of office by the regents of important Dutch cities (Kerkhoff, 1995).

3.3.4 Britain

Unlike other powers, Britain did not create excessive venal offices and, following the Reformation, elites blocked the inception of offices which could challenge their power at the state level. The

monarchy and rival elites also blocked families from holding onto power, preventing them from permanent control over national and local offices. Patrimonial property was also restricted to land, and, in the 17th century, was viewed as a revenue generator by being leased to commercial farmers. The elite were especially concerned with defining land as private property to undermine Charles I's claims to previously monastic lands, advowsons, benefices and tithe rights (Lachmann, 2011). Therefore, unlike the elites of other powers, British elites were unable to rely on venality and other patrimonial forms; instead, they relied on novel claims regarding marketable private property of land.

The British military also fell outside the scope of patrimonial control. Although the elite did occupy the higher echelons, promotion was still possible for lower ranking officers. Moreover, incompetent high-ranking officers born into sensitive positions were not entrusted with key commands (Mann, 2012, p. 179). This structure allowed the Britain's military to reform whilst the influence of the elite continued to wane in a timely fashion prior to the Napoleonic Wars. The corrupt East India Company and its army become nationalised in the 18th century when Britain's military and economic hegemony in Asia were threatened.

The political system set during the Civil War and institutionalised in the Glorious Revolution allowed the elite merchants and gentry to dominate and control the country's fiscal matters based on their own interests. The dual parliamentary party system also facilitated the rise of new elites in the form of industrialists, who could also influence government policy through 'virtual representation' without advocating violent challenges or provoking destabilisation (Mann, 2012, p. 125-131).

Due to its reforms in the 19th century and its robust civil service, Britain was able to remain economically and militarily dominant over its European rivals. This synergy can be directly attributed to the unique trajectory of the elite structure and the conflict of the elite and class relations in the 17th century.

3.4 Modern States and Patrimony

For the most part, patrimony has all but vanished from developed countries but is still a common feature in Russia (Hanson, 2011), several former Soviet republics, the Indian sub-continent and the Middle East. Moreover, the latter is amongst the few regions where monarchs also act as government heads.

In early European states, patrimony was used as a strategy to ensure elite independence. Elites in modern neo-patrimonial states (which are discussed below), like their predecessors, also pursue this objective through economic means. In a world where the trend has been for governments to privatise previously nationalised organisations, along with traditionally state-based functions, for example,

telephone services, electricity and gas., the Middle East stands out with its prolonged control of oil. In the case of the Gulf states, where oil revenues have often been sufficient enough to cover an entire fiscal budget, the elites have become untouchable, acting with impunity. This has been achieved through neo-patrimonial rentier state structures.

RST (discussed later) describes oil-rich states as having an exceptional ability to resist democratisation and popular accountability as long as wealth derived from natural resources continues to flow. The 'rentier bargain', is built on the premise of exceptional 'rents'; this describes the disproportionate costs associated with the production and the price of natural resources on the international market. This phenomenon permits the ruling elite to avoid taxing people whilst also distributing a portion of its wealth to society. This mitigates the population's desire to challenge authority and gives them the desire to engage in rent-seeking from rent distributions (Moritz, 2019). Societal elites support these practices, which help ensure state leadership remains patrimonial.

In the case of non-oil producing states such as Syria, Egypt and Lebanon (in the case of the former and latter, the presidency has also been inherited); the elites have been compelled to rely on more innovative means to ensure control over non-elites. In the case of the above, all three states are known for being havens for oil money (Adams & Charrad, 2011, p. 215). Subsequently, elite families have turned the state banks and associated enterprises into familial properties. Coupled with foreign aid, these organisations become financial bases for limiting the impact of rival elites and for buying support within the ruling party for the purpose of ensuring patrimonial rule. In Syria and Egypt, elite families have also acquired lesser firms and offices through patrimony and can be likened to the early European granting of offices.

3.5 NEO-PATRIMONY

More recent scholarship defines neo-patrimony in different ways, but according to Daniel Bach:

> Neopatrimonialism provided the 'common denominator' for a range of practices that are highly characteristic of politics … namely despotism, clannish behaviour, so-called 'tribalism', regionalism, patronage, 'cronyism', 'pre-bendalism', corruption, predation, factionalism, etc. All of these practices had . . . been frequently treated as a disparate collection of phenomena in the scholarly literature. (Bach, 2012, p. 221-224)

This thesis concurs with Christopher Clapham's' definition. He stated (1985, p. 48):

> [Neo-patrimony is] a form of organization in which relationships of a broadly patrimonial type pervade a political and administrative system which is formally constructed on rational-legal lines. Officials hold positions in bureaucratic

> organizations with powers which are formally defined but exercise those powers . . . as a form of private property.

The idea of neo-patrimony is not a new phenomenon. It was explained in 1966 by S.N. Eisendalt to differentiate between traditional and contemporary patrimonial contexts. He also explained how power could be aligned with the Weberian form of patrimony and rational-legal authority. In the mid -20th century, scholars made no assumptions concerning neo-patrimony's efficacy in goal attainment, viewing it as a form of social capital suitable for specific societal stages of development, that is, a form of dualism consisting of tradition and modernity (Eisendalt, 1966).

By the 1970s, this view had evolved as neo-patrimony and was used to explain why societies in Africa were not modernising. However, a decade later, neo-patrimony became indicative of countries with poor economies linked to internal state causes. So, whilst previous academic works stated neo-patrimony was synonymous with underdevelopment as a stage in the development process, ideas emerging in the 1980s provided causation, that is, failing economies due to neo-patrimony. This new line of thought stated that the 'marriage between modernity and tradition was unhappy, but also lethal to the partners and their offspring' (Mkandawire, 2015). Thus, under the veneer of modernity espoused by the leaders of the patrimonial states, there also exists a primordial sense of selective interest.

It is no surprise when political systems of Middle Eastern countries are described as being neo-patrimonial (Erdmann & Engel, 2007). In these systems, political rule is not inhibited by the law because at their core, power is informally exercised through a personalised system where the patriarchs look after the close circles and networks of elite members linked to the state bureaucracies, large business organisations, and the military and security establishments. Moreover, the patriarch ensures an equilibrium exists between the elites through a kind of role which involves refereeing elite groups in the case of disputes. This benefits the patriarch since elite conflict is considered a function of regime stability, and resolving differences prevents the possibility of giving rise to alternative power bases. As would be expected, the relationship between the patriarch and his subjects is vertical in nature, representing the asymmetric relations of loyalty, subordination, dependence and dominance which result in power. The upper elite stratum then goes on to build clientelist networks, further contributing to the informal, hierarchical relations within society. Neo-patrimony is manifested in this manner, built upon an equally informal patron-client relationship that shapes the fabric of society; thus, it penetrates society in an especially deep manner (Schlumberger, 2008).

3.6 RENTIER STATE THEORY

RST was developed by Hussein Mahdavy in the 1970s and is considered a classic example of neo-patrimony. It is an important norm through which Middle East politics can be understood. RST is a political-economic theory, which explains the relationship between a state and its population, where a significant portion of GDP comes from rents, or externally derived, unproductively earned payments. Subsequently, the theory was applied extensively to the Middle East (and South America), where payments are commonly derived from petroleum sales, but which can also include aid and fees. As noted, RST involves the distribution of rents to the general (or targeted) population whilst simultaneously removing the burden of tax from its citizens. However, this is coupled with absence of concessions in the form of political rights, democratisation or a development strategy. Thus, RST attempts to rationalise observable phenomena linked to the nature of state-society relations, the challenges associated with development in oil states and the 'democracy deficit' (Gray, 2018).

3.6.1 RST: early literature

Proponents of RST such as Giacomo Luciani outlined the theory's essence in simplistic terms while stating:

> A rentier or exoteric state will inevitably end up performing the role of allocating the income that it receives from the rest of the world. It is free to do so in a variety of ways … [As] long as the domestic economy is not tapped to raise further income through domestic taxation, the strengthening of the domestic economy is not reflected in the income of the state and is therefore not a precondition for the existence and expansion of the state … allocation is the only relationship that they need to have with their domestic economy; all others [i.e., extractive/taxing states] ride their domestic economies. (1990, p. 71-72)

Based on this premise, there is a clear disconnect between the state and its people. As long as the state distributes even a minimal amount of wealth, it is free to do as it pleases with what remains. Moreover, the state is not concerned with matters associated with legitimacy or domestic support since the population is either bribed into submission or, for those who resist the 'rentier bargain', is subjected to the repressive apparatus of the state. Such a state-societal relationship produces or leads to the absence of democratic institutions and processes (Sandbakken, 2006), although it is still possible for shocks to the system, such as an economic crisis, to spur political change (Luciani, 1994). In 2001, the seminal article by Michael Ross, entitled 'Does Oil Hinder Democracy?', re-energised the interest in RST. The article appeared to confirm the correlation between oil and undemocratic governments in the case of Middle Eastern governments (Ross, 2001). The structure of such a state has been described as neo-patrimonial, whereby a select few are intimately involved in the generation of rents and sustaining the neo-patrimonial system (Beblawi 1990).

Neo-patrimony has also been traditionally linked to early forms of RST and added to the latter's strength and viability as a theory. The link is obvious since a select elite from society is involved in the generation of rents and in sustaining the ruling elite (Beblawi 1990). Therefore, neo-patrimony can be used to explain the mechanisms through which the state distributes money and manages the elite relationships, which are used to replace electoral mandates or provide greater legitimacy.

Although all regimes are made up of leaders and elites who will attempt to maintain the system in a bid to protect personal advantage, the neo-patrimonial theory argues for a specific leadership style, where the sovereign occupies a central role in a web surrounded by the elite who are encouraged to compete with one another. This arrangement suits the leader since it allows them to monitor and curb the rise of potential rivals (Erdmann & Engel, 2006). However, this arrangement also acts against more considered or cogent development policies due to the neo-patrimonial nature of conduct carried out by elite and sub-elite actors. These individuals are typically compromised after being co-opted by the sovereign and then go on to seek rent for the state whilst having to compete against fellow elites.

Another important feature has been the allocative function of the state irrespective of economic failings since this would have no impact on the ruling elite. Thus, corruption, misuse of wealth and inefficiency can be brushed aside as long as the financial expectations of the population are being met. Specifically, between the 1950s and the mid-1980s, neo-patrimonial norms dictated how rentier states of the Middle East, in most cases, completely avoided taxation, employed most of the population and paid employees handsomely. During more contemporary times, rentier states lacked socially engaged economic policies, which led to little non-rent development. This changed with new state capitalism espoused by Gulf countries during the 1990s and 2000s, when leaders developed new economic opportunities for themselves and their clients as an extension of the neo-patrimony and clientelism of the rentier state.

Subsequent works also adhered to the rentier state theory, having the characteristics highlighted by proponents such as Beblawi and Luciano. For example, Ross' 2001 time series data analysis concluded with similar findings and highlighted three effects of rents which sustained autocratic and non-democratic rule in oil states. These included, firstly, the 'rentier effect', the absence of tax resulting in political toleration; secondly, the 'repression effect', the use of rents to buy, install and maintain repressive state apparatus to quash political change; and lastly, the 'modernisation effect', where rents caused or enhanced socio-political stagnation or underdevelopment and, again, stopped democratic change.

RST has had to develop over time, mainly because the Middle East states have become globalized and because these states are using their rentier wealth in a bid to diversify economies, reduce oil and gas

reliance, develop international cities and, in some cases, change the state's relationship with the population. Despite these major developments, the fundamentals of RST are still valid since Middle Eastern states are not embracing democracy and regimes have clearly demarcated actions which are politically acceptable and unacceptable.

3.6.2 RST: second phase

Ross (2001) set forth new concepts for RST theories which were initially criticised for being inadequate or unsophisticated when attempting to describe globalised cities such as Dubai. This led to the second phase of literature on RST and its close variants such as rentierism (Gray, 2018), which saw the development of two distinct theories, that is, 'specialised RST' and 'conditional RST'; the former was proposed by those who linked RST with a sub-disciplinary approach, whilst the latter was promulgated by those wanting to develop explanatory conditions through which the first phase of RST was reshaped into the second phase (Gray, 2011).

3.6.2.1 Specialised RST

Critics of classical RTS stated that the factors affecting the evolution of the state were ignored in the first phase of RST and argued that in certain cases, states already had operational bureaucratic institutions prior to the discovery of oil. Therefore, for some scholars, it was necessary to include the pre-rent society dynamic, taking into consideration specific state experiences; for example, business-government relationships were different in the Gulf states. Therefore, it is possible to juxtapose the shared social origins of merchants and political elites in Kuwait and those of Saudi Arabia. Although both societies are similar, there is a significant difference between the two, even more when compared to Iraq. In the case of Saudi Arabia, it can be argued it has been a rentier state even before the discovery of oil since rents acquired from the Hajj and trade allowed rulers to minimise taxes. Moreover, the relationship between the ruling elite and merchants ensured the former received goods and money in return for new opportunities, broader freedoms and other privileges (Al-Rasheed, 2010, p. 83-86). This view was more applicable to Saudi Arabia between 2000 and 2010.

The merging of both RST and international relations theories also became common during this period, leading to new perspectives. This led to new ideas concerning the exact state role and behaviour based on a unique mix of domestic and international factors, such as interstate conflict, regional threats and regional instability. RST has continued to evolve and become more complex based on other factors, such as economic power, business-government relationships, and social origins.

Three such views have influenced this argument and comprise, firstly, the blurring of military and economic features linked to security' secondly, and closely linked to the aforementioned, is the factor that rentier states have been directly linked to military conflict as both aggressors and victims (Gray,

2011), for example, the case of the Iran-Iraq War and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and the involvement of Gulf states in Syria and Yemen. With respect to Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, there has always been an argument that this was linked to domestic actors, that is, social forces impacted by economic liberalisation (Chaudhry, 1991) or the post Iran-Iraq War Iraqi military, or other institutional actors (Hassan, 1999, p. 77-89). Moreover, it can also be argued that the Kuwait invasion was underpinned by additional OPEC quotas and Iraqi oil reserves.

The broader point here is that whilst states became richer, this increase in wealth did not result in a linear increase in regime stability, or, in the case of GCC countries, did not result in a more stable region. Moreover, in the case of the Iraq-Kuwait relationship, this dynamic underpins why Kuwait is, and considers itself, a vulnerable state, which points to features which fall outside the scope of typical rentier states. Living alongside its much larger neighbour, Iraq, which threatened to invade in 1961, and would often intimidate it with troop movements along the border, before invading it in 1990, is a unique consideration of Kuwaiti politics. The impact of Iraq on Kuwait has thus made the emirate more responsive to social forces relative to typical rentier states which are able to defend their borders or face no viable threats. The final factor is the influence of important external powers in the security and strategic environment of the region (Luciani, 1995, p. 79-105). Regardless of how RST informs domestic politics, major powers have influenced the stability of rentier states. For example, during the Cold War, this led to considerable outside interventionism because of geo-strategic influence and energy resources. Moreover, this is likely to continue as competition amongst the major powers will increase as states such as China and India focus on energy security.

3.6.3 Conditional RST

This RST variation sought to explain prior RST weaknesses, such as acknowledging states are never completely independent of their societies. For example, during the 1970s, Iraq was able to develop and improve its economic standing and legitimacy through state building; however, this would not have taken place had it not been interested in its domestic agenda. Subsequently, the first phase of RST literature did not fit well whilst the second phase was more adaptable at addressing matters linked to the state's autonomy from society, for example, rent fluctuations, the financial crises caused because of low rents, and the instability caused because of external pressure on Iraq due to sanctions.

Small GCC states are also of interest; for example, since the 1990s, states such as Dubai and Qatar have attempted to diversify their economies whilst integrating themselves into the globalised capitalist system. This resulted in significant opportunities in several spheres, including business and education and further underlined those states are not truly autonomous but are embedded in the political economy and must be responsive to society to ensure regime longevity. Moreover, a

distinction can be made between small late rentiers and larger rentiers such as Iraq and Iran, whose populations are too large to be financially induced, resulting in legitimacy being sought through other means. In the case of Iraq, Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism.

3.6.4 RST: late phase

Rodney Wilson has described Saudi Arabia as an open economy with a closed society (Fox et al., 1995). However, since the 1990s, it has undergone societal and economic changes, such as joining the WTO in 2005. More importantly, its slow reforms in education, tourism and new media outlets suggest a move towards features indicative of global capitalism. Relative to Saudi Arabia, the UAE has taken a different approach. For example, in the early 1990s, Dubai was able to diversify its economy in a bid to acquire more rent-like incomes. This phenomenon provided the middle classes with new opportunities associated with trade, property and stocks and thus placed the state in the late RST sphere. Moreover, as oil revenues continue to decline, it could soon be classed as being neo-rentier in nature. Whilst there are some who state the Dubai model (Hvidt, 2011) no longer fits with RST, it can be argued that central RST characteristics are missing. That is, whilst the rent type and flow have changed, the 'rentier bargain' underneath is the same. Although other small GCC countries have attempted to emulate the Dubai model, they have not been as successful.

In the case of late rentier Gulf states, foreign policy initiatives have exhibited both continuity and innovation. In terms of continuity, the maintaining of strategic alliances with countries such as the US and the UK have helped maintain their positions. The alliances with smaller states were further strengthened during the latter half of the 20th century to counter the dominance of larger states in the region, specifically, between Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia from the 1960s to the 1980s, and between Iran and Saudi Arabia after the 1990 Gulf War. Through the acquisition of advanced military hardware, an automatic threat was created to smaller states in the region (Gray, 2011).

With regards to innovation, the late rentier phase has seen states develop new foreign policy initiatives which are more appreciative of soft power and have realised the potential for greater investment and trade links to bind other states to the fate of their own. Through greater amounts of foreign direct investment, states typically seek continuity and stability where investments are taking place and thus externally reinforce the neo-patrimonial system. For example, soft power has been exercised most effectively in Qatar by creating 'brand awareness' through Al-Jazeera and building the state's international reputation for leisure and sports events, such as the 2022 FIFA World Cup. In a similar vein, Dubai has become a tourism magnet and its Emirates airlines has become synonymous with value and quality. Qatar and Etihad Airways subsequently followed the Emirates model during the 1990s and 2000s (Bellamy, 2009).

Whilst earlier RST models have regarded these initiatives as unnecessary, they have become core components of the late rentier state's development and foreign policy postures. Due to most GCC countries being small, their political and economic planning have to be adjusted accordingly, which, in turn, makes foreign relations important. Irrespective of wealth generated through rent in small and large states, it can never guarantee security. This reality has led states to approach foreign policy and external linkages in a profoundly more nuanced manner in a bid to ensure long-term state feasibility, protection of the state and rentier income.

3.7 IRAQ AND RST

Like many states in the region, Iraq had a colonial past. It struggled against this colonial master before attempting to create a modern state. However, what ensued were informal and personalised norms based on patrimonial networks, which were made possible because of the discovery of oil in 1927. Subsequently, the nationalisation of the Iraqi oil industry in 1961 (Sharif, 1968) ensured Iraq developed along the lines of the classic RST. Oil provided the state with significant resources, and, through the newly formed Iraqi Development Board, money was ploughed into social welfare (Omeje, 2017, p. 254). This period can be considered a major milestone, which witnessed Iraq morphing into a rentier economy.

Prior to 1962, oil revenues were modest; however, these increased by 60% during the next two decades after which the economy started to exhibit clear signs of rentierism. For example, revenues derived from oil between 1972 to 1973 amounted to 56% of GDP. This shot up to 86% in 1977 and was coupled with tax reductions which were far greater relative to the state's total finances. Whilst in theory taxes were supposed to be collected from everyone, the process was administered in an ad hoc and inefficient manner, which meant they were only collected from state employees (Batatu, 1978).

In addition to the increase of oil revenues, Iraq also benefited from assets held abroad. Whilst in 1976 these amounted to only 4% of all revenues, following the second oil crisis in 1979, total revenues derived from overseas holdings comprised 45% and 39% of oil and government revenues respectively (Askari et al., 1982). The huge increase in available funds allowed Iraq to pursue a two-pronged policy involving social development in the form of welfare benefits and expanding its military security machinery. However, these revenues also made Iraqi foreign policy more aggressive, which led to the Iran-Iraq war in 1980.

Saddam expected the invasion of Iran would quickly fracture the newly installed revolutionary regime of Ayatollah Khomeini (Piplani & Talmadge, 2015). In the first two years, the war did not have a heavy

financial toll because of the daily flow of 3.5 million barrels of oil, which amounted to $30 billion (Al-Khafaji, 2000). These funds were further boosted by military aid coming from the Gulf states. However, as the war dragged on, the economic situation became dire, with oil-producing facilities such as Mina Al-Bakr and Khawr al-'Umayya being partially destroyed, the pipeline through Syria (with which Iran was allied) which provided access to the Mediterranean Sea closing, and oil prices falling.

Significant rents were being received from the Gulf states, which were key to the economies' survival. However, the regime downplayed the significance and stressed the boldness of the leadership standing up to the Safavid threat. This propaganda from the Iraqi government also explains why it did not hasten to end the war. Saddam may actually have been convinced he would be able to achieve victory singlehandedly as the cost of war was spread among the oil-producing Gulf monarchies. Moreover, Iraq insisted that no official debt arrangements should be made to accommodate the war. In other words, Saddam may have actually considered the war to be economically rewarding. In hindsight, this was a complete miscalculation. The total cost of the war, which lasted from 1980 to 1988, was an estimated $452.6 billion and $644.3 billion for Iraq and Iran respectively (Mofid, 1990).

Following the cessation of the war, Iraq had many economic problems, not least the demobilisation of 200,000 troops (Chaudhry, 1990), which could no longer rely on government employment and state welfare. Moreover, the state was no longer able to sustain and deliver the social contract set up during the years when rentierism was profitable – the war had permanently changed the state. Unemployment reached new highs and was exasperated because of privatisation during 1986 and 1987, and the youth could no longer rely on the civil service for employment. It can be argued that following the war, Iraq could have returned to its pre-war financial standing had it pursued a domestic and inward-focused strategy. Instead, Saddam pursued a belligerent strategy of rent acquisition, which culminated in the Kuwaiti invasion in 1990.

3.8 WASTA

For the sake of clarity, this thesis has minimised the use of Arabic terms in a bid to ensure easy comprehension. However, whilst discussing patrimony, it would be remiss to discard this term and its importance. '*Wasta'* has been researched extensively by proponents such as Cunningham and Sarayrah (1994), and to a lesser extent by Sharabi (1988). The term can be translated as 'intercession' or 'intermediation' and can be considered the norm in which networks are created and maintained in the Arab world (Hutchings & Weir, 2006).

> 'The lubricant of the patronage system endowing it with suppleness and resilience, is the '*wasta*' (mediation) mechanism', (Sharabi, 1988, p. 45). It describes the person who mediates or intercedes. The phenomenon of '*wasta'* has been documented

> explicitly and implicitly in reports from all major countries in the Middle East, including Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Syria and Israel (Cunningham & Sarayrah, 1994).

The discovery of oil in the Arab world allowed governments to provide services to their citizens without any change in the latter's behaviour or attitudes. Generally, Middle Eastern countries have become wealthy through fate as opposed to hard work. It has been reported that after the discovery of oil, King Idris of Cyrenaica (parts of modern-day Libya) stated: 'I wish it could have been water. Oil makes men idle, whereas water makes them work' (Savage, 1991). When wealth is readily available, competitive edge is dulled, and dependency flows from the country, its society and people.

'*Wasta*' indicates informal relationships between parties which produce mutual benefit. The relationship consists of an individual in a powerful position extending material and immaterial favours to family, friends and business acquaintances. The motive behind this course of action is an expectation of iterated game situations. That is, any bestowed favours will yield benefits in a reversed scenario, which ultimately leads to a relationship that is mutually beneficial (Cunningham & Sarayah, 1993).

Mediatory '*wasta*' requires a protagonist intervening on behalf on a client in a bid to acquire some type of benefit, for example, admission to a well-known university, a tax deduction, a government document or a job. In these contexts, it is common for multiple groups of invocators and intermediary parties to exist at the same time and vie for the same benefit. Typically, the number of stakeholders outweigh the possible benefits, in which case the individuals with the strongest '*wasta*' will prevail. In many of these examples, the candidates' files contain notes, or cards from those making the '*wasta*', thus, clearly defining one's sponsor. The success or indeed failure of a '*wasta*' is contingent upon the intermediary as opposed to the invocator's ability or talent (Cunningham & Sarayah, 1994).

Naturally, '*wasta*' angers those who are unsuccessful, especially those with outstanding credentials, and it results in dependencies among less qualified individuals who are able to acquire position and power via connections. As competition increases, available resources decrease, which further perpetuates the importance of '*wasta*'. Whilst in society, critics often claim '*wasta*' is inefficient or even illegal, these same critics will continue to provide or even seek '*wasta*' for their own gains (Cunningham & Sarayah, 1994).

Irrespective of ideological appearances, the individual's affiliation in a neo-patriarchal society is to one's identity, the ethnic or religious group, the clan or the family. For the layman, homeland or society is an abstract concept which, as a concept, can only provide meaning through the primordial connections of kinship and religion. In social practice, the authority of sheikh, tribal leader and father,

as opposed to class or nation, determine an individual's behaviour and allegiance. This results in increased personal dependency and loyalty, cultivated at the early stages of the family, and bolsters groups of people within society as part of a patrimonial system and the division of protection.

This complex system supports patronage throughout the Arab world and would not be as firmly rooted were it not for the in-built mediating mechanism – it ensures the protection and material interests of individuals who make up groups. This accommodates the lowest member of the group and increases the latter's sense of cohesion and identity (Sharabi, 1988). Thus, '*wasta'*, in the form developed with the family serves a dual purpose: it socialises group members into accepting the supremacy of the patriarch and it also normalises the individual into accepting his or her situation. Through the mediation of respected figures in and close to the family, a child realises, irrespective of insignificance, that it is still possible to operate within the broader power system. Therefore, even the lowliest person can gain a hearing at the centres of power and wealth through the mediation of well-connected relatives or friends, or the friends of relatives, or friends of friends. The satisfaction of needs associated with patrimony makes it easier for a person to accept what societal norms are.

Although it is not possible to completely remove alienation, the system does provide a sense of belonging and protection by dispensing the occasional favour. Perhaps one of the more salient features of this form of patrimony is that everyone involved can benefit, that is, the patriarch, the supplicant and the mediator all stand to gain. However, it is the former who stands to gain the most because he has the power and the wealth, enabling one to be generous (Sharabi, 1988, p. 46).

In dire situations, '*wasta'* is used as a survival mechanism and is forced upon an individual because of uncontrollable matters. People in such situations also have the ability to seek solutions using state laws; however, in staunch patrimonial societies, institutions are unable to provide protection or justice after being left superfluous. Individuals are required to submit rendering the concept of social contract inconceivable. Laws do not benefit society as a whole but are subject to the will of the rich and powerful, demarcated through institutionalised ethical injunction and material capacity. Thus, patrimony has a devastating impact on any structure which it comes to control. Placing obedience before autonomy and conformity above originality crushes and banishes creative talent and encourages only those powers which maintain the system. The requirements and interests of the elite become paramount instead of those of society. The institutions within which patrimony manifests itself are the determinants used for framing any course of action and its precursor intention (Sharabi, 1988).

3.9 CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of patrimony is built on two key elements, modernity and patriarchy. The patriarchal element refers to a generic form of traditional society, which assumes a different character depending on the instance. On the other hand, the term modernity refers to the unique historical development which took place originally in Western Europe. Having this knowledge allows patrimony to be understood in a holistic manner and appreciate its effect on politics, economy, society and culture. A society based on patrimonial norms, be it conservative or progressive, has a central psychological feature in the form of a father figure who acts as patriarch. In other words, the relationship between the ruler and ruled is vertical in nature.

The patrimony and neo-patrimony of Middle Eastern states has persisted through historical developments and during contemporary times via rentierism and '*wasta'*. Rentierism and rents are central to understanding the nature of oil-producing states and making sense of a regime's relationship with society. Whilst Arab societies have fundamentally changed because of factors such as globalisation, the basic tenets of RST remain valid. That is, whilst the sources of rent and the delivery modes may have changed, the 'rentier bargain' underneath is essentially the same. In the context of Iraq, the events between 1980 and 2003 show how a chain of events resulted in the failure of the rentier state: the war with Iran led to state capacity being outstripped. The subsequent financial crisis further weakened the state, forcing the regime to take a bellicose posture, the annexation of Kuwait, in a bid to improve Iraqi rents, which led to sanctions and then the invasion and occupation. Thus, under Saddam, Iraqi armaments and foreign policy were able to interact on three different levels. Firstly, Iraq pursued an activist approach to its foreign policy by acquiring large amounts of weapons; secondly, foreign policy decision-makers were enticed by the military build-up and, thirdly, these armaments became constraints, thus influencing choices between different foreign policy options.

'W*asta'* is the principal mechanism through which neo-patrimony operates it loosely translates as 'connections', inferring an intercessory capability. In practice, this refers to a process whereby an individual achieves goals through personal links with people in higher positions provided through family or friends. So pervasive is '*wasta'* that it informs all facets of life, including law enforcement and endorsement, employment recruitment mechanisms and even contractual agreements between non-state actors. It should be noted '*wasta'* operates not as an exception but as the rule. These aforementioned patterns of behaviour are of great importance and are capable of impacting the economic, political and social life of Middle Eastern countries. What is striking about '*wasta'* is its ability to withstand external criticism and maintain itself within a broader patrimonial system, 'for

wherever patriarchal relations exist – subordination-domination, superiority-inferiority, loyalty, conformity— patronage dominates' (Sharabi, 1988, p. 48).

This thesis will go onto demonstrate that by using the above mechanisms, the politics of neo-patrimony has been able to successfully divert public resources which have allowed for private gain. Although after 2003 the one-party rule was replaced with an open political system, neo-patrimony remained imperative for the ruling party since it provided access to resources. Subsequently, unit and systemic level policies were developed which strengthened the neo-patrimonial status quo instead of objectives based on state interest. This phenomenon had both short- and long-term repercussions for ordinary Iraqis who end up suffering from low levels of development and security and then felt compelled to indirectly support the system because it provided social survival.

The following chapter continues with the neo-patrimonial theme as a 'norm' by looking at the pre and post 2003 government structures established by Saddam and the newly democratically elected governments set up by the occupying forces.

4 IRAQ: THE LEGACY OF NEO-PATRIMONY

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the legacy of neo-patrimony in Iraq and discuss how it arose from 2003 to 2014. This will be achieved by first discussing the role of the Ba`th party as the primary enabler of neo-patrimonial tendencies. Then the phenomenon of how this has affected the behaviour of the political and religious elite in post-2003 Iraq will be analysed with examples of the methods and tactics used by the elite to establish their own neo-patrimonial networks whilst disrupting those of their rivals.

Patrimony is associated with powerful rule; however, it can be argued that modernisation complicates the leadership positions of monarchs and autocratic regimes, who typically attempt to solve political problems using technical solutions. In modern states, traditional patrimony tends to be filtered through multiple and complex bureaucracies, which is a primary difference between traditional patrimony and neo-patrimony. Following the formation of Iraq as a modern state, the rulership structure developed into formal bureaucratic systems of administration and neo-patrimony. The resultant Iraqi bureaucratic structures were hybrid political systems, in which neo-patrimonial practices and customs concurrently existed and suffused rational-legal institutions.

Throughout Iraqi history, neo-patrimony has resulted in hegemony for certain groups at the expense of others. This phenomenon increased as social distinctions were systematically organised as cleavages, allowing the politics of neo-patrimony to mobilise agendas based on sectarian lines for the dominant elite. However, this fault line always resulted in repression, which forced lesser groups to acquire (often external) support to gain leverage over rival elites.

When discussing neo-patrimony in the context of Iraq, sectarian cleavages within society cannot be ignored, in addition to the correlation between those cleavages and the regime ideology which underpin them. Cleavages have manifested themselves through the weakness of the state and the Sunni and Shi'a sides' readiness to resort to violence, on the one hand, and the Kurds moving systematically towards independence, on the other. This has led to fragmentation and dangerous leaderships coupled with the weakest of Middle East identities.

4.1 SADDAM HUSSEIN: THE LEGACY OF NEO-PATRIMONY

4.1.1 The party member

Saddam was first introduced to political activism as a teenager by his uncle. Because he lacked formal academic qualifications, politics seemed a good career to pursue. During this time, he participated in the movement against King Faisal II; then in 1957, he joined the Ba`th party. The Ba`th party was a secular pan Arab party with strong Tikriti representation in the higher ranks (Rubin, 2009), consisting of the Tikriti officers group, including the powerful Ahmed Hassan Al-Bakr, Herdan Al-Tikriti and Adnan Khairallah. Bakr was one of the Ba`th party's respected military leaders, who went on to forge strong ties with Saddam. The ties of marriage between Bakr's son and Sajida's (Saddam's wife) sister, and the marriage between Bakr's daughters and two of her brothers, were also useful to Saddam, allowing him speedy ascension through the ranks (Simons, 2016). Following the overthrow of the monarchy in 1959, Saddam was directly involved in the failed assassination attempt of the new Iraqi president, Abd Al-Kareem Qasim, in 1960, which led to him fleeing to Syria and then Egypt. Upon news of the revolution in 1963, Saddam returned to Iraq. This coup was headed by Abdul-Salam Arif and the Ba`thist officers in the Iraqi army. However, following Arif's takeover, he attempted to move closer to Egyptian President Abdul Nassar. This required turning against his party and purging Ba`th members from government (Okeke-Ibezim, 2006, p. 15).

These events forced Saddam to go underground; however, he and fellow Ba`thists began to plan the removal of Arif. Plans for coups included assassinating the entire Iraqi leadership during a cabinet meeting and shooting down Arif's plane. These plans were discovered, which led to the arrest of key Ba`th party members, including Bakr, in mid-September 1964. Saddam was captured a month later and was jailed; however, this allowed him to remain close to Bakr and consolidate his leadership position among the Ba`th party inmates. Saddam and his comrades were able to execute a successful jailbreak in 1966. In the same year, Arif died in a suspicious helicopter crash and was succeeded by his brother, Abdul Rahman Arif, who realigned himself with the Ba`thists of Iraq.

During the party's short-lived rule of approximately five years, Saddam gained increasingly powerful positions through his Tikriti connections. A key milestone in Saddam's ascension was control over the '*Jihaz Haneen'* (Instrument of Yearning), the Ba`th party's intimidation and terror organisation, which was modelled on and exhibited stark similarities to Hitler's Gestapo. Saddam used this organisation to terrorise political opponents. But he also unleashed terror on ethnoreligious groups.

In the summer of 1968, the Ba`th once again rose to power through another coup, this time headed by Bakr, who became the new Iraqi president. During the following decade, Saddam consolidated power through a skilful elimination of opponents by imprisonment, torture, killing and exile, and by promoting those loyal to him with positions of authority in the government and military (Okeke-Ibezim, 2006, p. 22).

The Ba`th party and Bakr were propped up by the new Republican Guard, which was tasked with preventing coup attempts and protecting the president. Practically, this meant using brutal force and terror to maintain control over the Iraqi people. In 1968, there were less than five thousand party members. However, the Ba`th party slogan, 'we came to stay' (Donaldson, 2016), made it clear they would not be ousted a second time, and nothing was off the table if it meant staying in power. It is clear why Bakr wanted Saddam as his deputy. Whilst the Tikriti connection was important, Saddam was also ruthlessly competent and was not tainted by excessive loyalty to the army faction. So, whilst the military was useful for executing coups, it was disturbing to a civilian regime intent on retaining power.

By 1973, many of Saddam's rivals had been purged, murdered or had suffered mysterious deaths. Whilst the now ailing Bakr remained the president of the party and government, it was Saddam who was firmly in control. He installed supporters, almost all of which were fellow Tikritis throughout the government. In October 1977, Bakr appointed Khairallah as minister of defence. Conveniently for Saddam, Khairallah was also his brother-in-law and cousin (Arnold, 2012, p. 45). These types of appointments essentially epitomised how tribal and familial ties connected Saddam to the reins of government.

In 1978 Bakr proposed merging with Syria to fight Israel as a bold political move. Fearing the consequences of a Syrian-led, Syrian-Iraqi federation (in opposition to Israel and Egypt's Pan-Arabism), Saddam pressured Bakr into resigning, which took place on July 16, 1979. While Bakr resigned officially because of failing health, the real reason can be attributed to Saddam's relentless pressure and political in-fighting. Saddam was elected president the same day and promoted to Field Marshall on the next (Coughlin, 2007).

On July 22nd, Saddam called a major Ba`thist meeting, where different family members and other loyalists called for the party to be 'cleansed'. Saddam proceeded by pulling out a list of names who were supposedly part of a Syrian plot to overthrow him. The men were taken into custody and summarily executed. Individuals included a high-ranking member of the Revolutionary Guard, a leading Shi'a member of the command, the head of the Labour Unions and twenty others who were

considered disloyal. In the days that followed, approximately four hundred and fifty other non-party officials were rounded up and killed. The cleansing process was also supported by TV and radio campaigns, which encouraged people to provide the names of 'enemies of the revolution'. Whilst the Ba`th party had promoted collective leadership, this event marked a turning point in its history. Power was no longer shared by Ba`th elite; instead, Saddam, his family and his friends were in charge of everything. Although at this point, the military was able to challenge Saddam, they were bought off by increased salaries and other benefits (Arnold, 2012). Iraqi absolutism is something that cannot be ignored and can be likened to that of French absolutism during the 17th century when the monarchy extinguished all other patrimonies within the kingdom (Morrill, 1978).

By the time Saddam Hussein took power in 1979, the bureaucracies of the state had a clientelist type of structure. Whilst the political culture of Saddam's regime cannot be easily measured, it is possible to make assertions when juxtaposing attitudes of people toward the regime amid a backdrop of neo-patrimony and sectarian implications. Similar to other countries where vast wealth and political posts have been inherited, under Saddam, he could formalise benefits to family members and other elites. It has been estimated that at its peak, up to 50% of Iraqis related to Saddam were being employed by the government or military. The people, the party and the government became a single, almost monolithic, entity, which ensured Saddam's complete domination of the country (Okeke-Ibezim, 2006).

4.1.2 Saddam's government

The regime of Saddam claimed legitimacy based on its ideological adherence to Ba'thism. With its blend of Arab socialism and nationalism that contained fascist traits, Ba'thism supposedly subsumed sectarian identities across Iraq to the wider Arab cause, with Saddam at the fore. In reality, however, the regime of Saddam was based on two familial, but rival wings, that is, the Al-Majids and the Ibrahims, which were the progeny of his father and paternal uncle, and the progeny of Saddam's stepfather respectively. From the former came major personalities, such as Ali Hasan Al-Majid, Hussein Kamel Al-Majid, Saddam Kammel Al-Majid and Rokan Abdul-Ghafur Suleinman Al-Majid. From the Ibrahims, Saddam's three half-brothers were the most dominant forces, including Barzan, Sabawi and Watban (Olsen, 2013).

Saddam and his first wife, Sajida, had five children, the oldest of whom were sons, that is, Uday and Qusay. Born in 1964, Uday was Saddam's apparent heir and was primarily known for his flamboyant lifestyle and his psychopathic tendencies. While beholden to his father, his access to power gave him influence in both the political and cultural spheres. After chairing the Iraqi Olympic Committee in the

mid-1980s, he went on to acquire a daily newspaper known as '*Babil*', then a sports paper by the name of *'Al-Ba`th Al-Riyadi'*, a weekly magazine called '*Al-Rafidain'* and the '*Shabab',* youth television and radio network. He then moved into more prominent government roles, such as security, establishing the '*Fedayeen'* (or men of sacrifice), made up of mainly unemployed men (who were not part of the regular army) (Tucker, 2010). He also oversaw much of the domestic economy, foreign oil sales and, after 1991, bureaucracies designed to circumvent the UN sanctions regime. However, his countrymen best knew him for his sadistic behaviour and supervising of all executions ordered by his father (Yaḥyá et al, 1997).

In 1998, his brutality finally caught up with him after he bludgeoned to death one of Saddam's bodyguards, Kael Hana Jajo, and shot his uncle in the leg. The culmination of his actions resulted in temporary exile in Switzerland. Following his return to Iraq, he was no longer considered as the heir apparent to his formidable father. He was further removed from any type of power after gunmen fired on his red Porsche in the streets of Baghdad, leaving him with permanent injuries and only able to walk short distances (The Guardian, 2003).

Much less is known about Qusay, who was born in 1967. He was in charge of Saddam's special security force but also employed the bodyguards of ministers and Ba'th Party officials, who were tasked not only with protecting these people but also arresting them if they become suspect. According to Ahmed Chalabi (Select Committee on Intelligence, 2006), Qusay was able to wield greater influence than his older sibling. So, although Uday was responsible for the Fedayeen, ultimately, he was within Qusay's domain since the latter was the head of the security forces in their entirety. Moreover, it was reported that Qusay was in charge of the army's strategic rocket forces. Whilst Chalabi was in exile and part of the Iraqi National Congress, he stated Qusay had the greater likelihood of succeeding Saddam. However, in 2003, both Uday and Qusay were killed by US forces just outside Baghdad.

4.1.2.1 The cousins

In addition to direct family members managing key government posts, Saddam's cousins were also key parts of the neo-patrimonial network which helped maintain control of Iraq. Ali Hasan Al-Majid, known as 'Chemical Ali' in the West, amongst other roles was the chief of all military operations in the Kurdish regions. He notoriously became famous after the gassing of Kurds in 1987 and 1988 during the Iran-Iraq war and further solidified his reputation for brutality as the governor of Iraq's nineteenth state during the occupation of Kuwait. He became too powerful after heading the Ministry of Defence between 1991 and 1995, when he was relieved of his post. However, he continued to support Saddam in less formal roles. For example, he travelled to Jordan with Uday to see the late King Hussein in a bid

to secure the return of two of Saddam's sons-in-law, Hussein and Saddam Kamil Al-Majid, following their defection in the aftermath of the 1990-91 Gulf war (Bartrop, 2012).

4.1.2.2 The sons in law

Hussein Al-Majid married Saddam's oldest daughter, Raghad, and was promoted to the rank of a four-star general despite being a school dropout. This event created friction between other elites who thought that the Al-Majid family was significantly increasing its power over the Ibrahim's. It was reported that Uday attempted to prevent his younger sisters from marrying Hussein and Hakim. Hussein became one of Saddam's close advisers and served in several key positions, including as the minister of Industry and Minerals and the director of the Military Industrialisation Organisation. He also helped establish and expand the Republican Guard and oversaw the Special Guard as well as other military and civil industries. Hussein was also credited with building up Iraq's conventional military capabilities prior to the Kuwaiti invasion (Olsen, 2013, p. 219).

Arguably Hussein was a pragmatist and, before he defected to Jordan, urged Saddam to comply with UN sanctions. Whilst there was some support for this amongst friendly tribal elites, it has been reported that Uday, Qusay and Ali Hasan were opposed to any concessions. Following a heated discussion amongst the parties involved, Hussein decided to flee to Jordan after he became frightened that, `Uday was now getting strong enough to really take care of him', an Iraqi official stated: 'I think he ran for his life' (Ibrahim, 1995).

Another prominent family figure was Saddam Kamel Hassan al-Majid, the second cousin of Saddam and his son-in-law. He grew in influence following a starring role in a film called, 'The Long Days', where he played the role of Saddam Hussain. He performed as a young, heroic Saddam Hussain, which caught the eye of the President, who promptly transferred him from the Academy of Fine Arts to the Military Academy. After becoming an officer, Saddam Kamel went on to marry Saddam's middle daughter, Rana, and assumed a role in charge of presidential security (Pender, 2005, p. 442).

Family ties are also an effective means of supporting a system based on neo-patrimony, especially in politically volatile environments because it minimises the probability of defection. Moreover, the patriarch knows the probability of defection is lowest when the cost-benefit ratio is highest for the agent. This explains why family ties are a prominent feature of neo-patronage in Iraq and the Middle East. The demise of Saddam's two sons-in-law underlines what can happen: the price which must be paid in the case of disengaging from familial members is very high when compared to non-family members (Ermakoff, 2008).

4.1.2.3 *The half-brothers*

Saddam also had three half-brothers from his mother who married Ibrahim Hassan: Barzan, Watban and Sabawi. Barzan went on to head the Mukhabarat (the intelligence and security service) from 1974 but in 1983, he and his brothers were relieved of their duties. This was most likely because of their opposition to Raghad's marriage to Hussein Kamil instead of Barzan's son. However, Watban played several less prominent roles, including serving as governor in Salah-Ud-Din province. In 1989, Watban's full brother, Barzan, was made Iraqi Ambassador to the UN in Geneva after being demoted from Saddam's inner circle (Brown, 1999, p. 171). Nonetheless, Barzan continued to hold an advisory role in the cabinet. He was also appointed the Interior Minister in 1991 but was removed in 1995. However, he remained an adviser to the President (Okeke-Ibezim, 2006).

By the late 1980s, members of Al-Majid's family line controlled the Ministry of Defence, the Mukhabarat, the Military Bureau, Ministry of Military Industries and the internal security organisation, in addition to other lesser industries. On the other hand, Saddam's clan, made up the members of the administrative chain, the party chain and the security chain, were part of a group which set certain restraints on their authority. Members of the clan, therefore, exercised a broader reach of power only controlled by the President. This neo-patrimonial structure was both extensive and informal and acted as a counterweight to the Ba'th party whilst simultaneously complementing it. It also ensured a formidable cohesion capable of withstanding the huge changes associated with the first Gulf War and its aftermath (Olsen, 2013).

4.1.2.4 *Sunni tribes*

In addition to the Majids and Ibrahims, Saddam also relied on several other Sunni tribes and clans. These have been tabulated along with their geographic location in the table and figure below:

Table 4.1: *Saddam's network of Sunni tribes (Olsen, 2013; Homeland Security Digital Library, 2007)*

Saddam affiliated tribes	Location	Key attributes
Jubur	Location within the Tikriti area, immediately south of Baghdad.	The Jibburi tribe includes both Sunni and Shia people. Saddam had a complex relationship with this tribe; in the 1980s, he provided tribal leaders with jobs in exchange for manpower during the Iran-Iraq war. In 1990, this ended when the Jiburis plotted to assassinate Saddam.
Ubayd	Immediately north of Baghdad.	Migrated into Iraq in the 6th century.
Dulaym	Anbar province, west of Baghdad.	Linked to Jannabiyin, Ubayd and other confederations. It is common for many prominent Iraqis to carry the last name 'Dulaym', thus, indicating a connection to this broad tribal confederation. In 1992, Dulaym initiated a failed coup attempt.

Tikriti	Tikrit	Ahmad Hassan Al-Bakr, former president of the republic, was from this tribe as well as Saddam Hussein. The supra tribe, known as Albu Nasir, provided a pool of 350,000 men from which the Ba`th would draw its strength.
Khaza'il	Can be found in Baghdad area	Khaza'il were part of a powerful confederation. The tribe is named after respective ancestors in the sheikhly house.
Anizah	Scattered throughout Iraq.	This confederation is numerically believed to be the largest group of nomadic Arab tribes. They occupied a triangle of the Syrian desert, near today's Iraq-Syria border, on the east bank of the Euphrates.
Hushaim		Tribal confederations on the Euphrates who are Shammar in origin. Groups of this tribe form a single political unit.
Aqrah	Located along the Shatt al Dagharah a few miles from Shatt al Hillah.	Independent and acknowledge no paramount chief but form a loose confederation.
Zubaydi		They have a wide kinship. The Dulaymi, Jibur and Ubayd albu Amir are of Zubaydi stock.

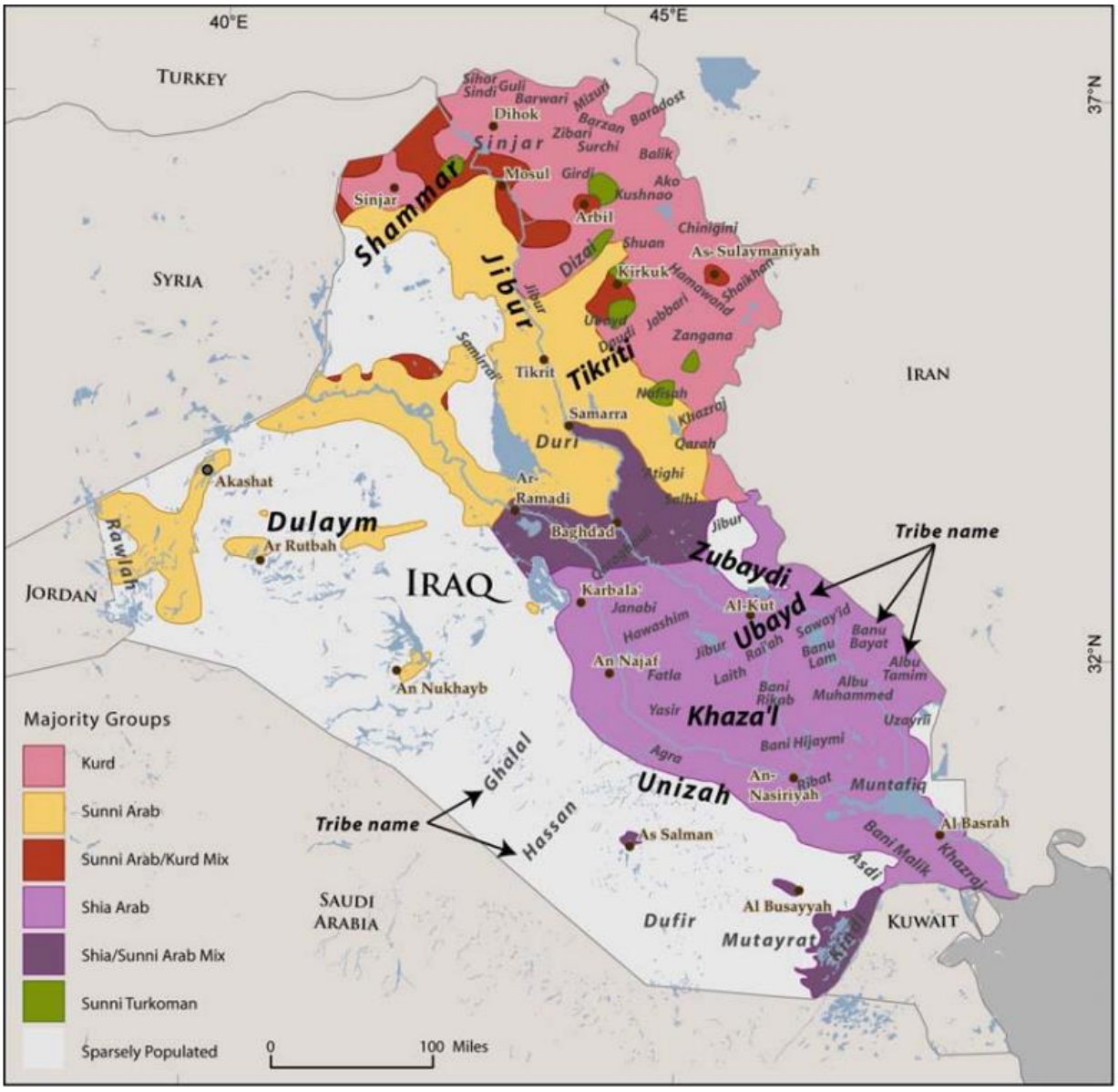


Figure 4.1: Iraqi tribes and major confederations (Homeland Security Digital Library, 2007)

A key feature of neo-patrimony in Iraq was selective allying among tribes – a common practice of authoritarian regimes. The cleavage between tribes is an important social divider between many Iraqis. Tribes, with their organisational structures, values and power, have always been a dominant force, especially in the countryside, but also within some urban areas.

Saddam raised the profile of tribal groups when he saw fit. For example, during the latter stages of the regime, between 1990 and 2003, tribalism and religion were encouraged to different degrees and their networks and institutions were supported through state patronage. The neo-patrimonial structure consisted mainly of Sunnis, but specifically those with geographical and tribal associations with the regime. Therefore, even though the regime was authoritarian in nature, it was also able to successfully utilise neo-patronage and tribal ties in order to maintain its position. Moreover, Saddam filled the ranks of the army and the Republican Guard, with members of his own tribe, the Albu Nasir of 'Auja and used this method to surround himself with people he could trust and reward. This mode of exclusionary behaviour is an outstanding feature of a survivalist political culture; that is, the survival of one group usually has destructive implications for others. Neo-patrimonial ties to tribes and related individuals increased following shocks to the state system. Policies such as these explain why non-Sunni groups within Iraq felt threatened by the Sunni minority.

Whenever Iraq was challenged, tribes could be allocated additional powers; however, the amount of power was strictly based on the regime's survival requirements. This meant the retribalisation did not have an impact on the political sphere. In other words, the state never accepted, at least at an official level, tribal norms (Zeidel, unpublished99) but, more importantly, did not allow the individuals of elite classes to challenge Saddam in any way.

4.2 2003-2014: MULTIPLE NEO-PATRIMONY

After the overthrow of Saddam and the central command oil rentier economy, religion and tribalism emerged more forcefully as a legitimation mechanism. A new political framework was created by the previously exiled Iraqis – and backed by the US-based on western-style democracy, which involved dividing power amongst groups based on their size. The subsequent elections had a considerable impact on how elites exhibited their power, especially amongst themselves. This system allowed the larger segments of society to benefit from the single district legislature and to dominate the parliament (Kuoti, 2016). Although unwritten, an informal agreement was reached between the major groups as regards the control of government bureaucracies. This allowed the Shi'a to gain the balance of power whilst marginalising the previously dominant Sunni population. The Kurdish region was also recognised as autonomous, with its own government, parliament and president. This arrangement created a system which reinforced and institutionalised neo-patrimonial claims to power.

Although democratic in nature, the elections (especially those of 2005) (Yamao, 2012) produced a paradox. While largely free and fair, the Iraqi electorate largely voted on sectarian, tribal or religious lines, rather than for parties based on a particular socio-economic agenda. Sects and tribes morphed into temples of solidarity, trust and protection, as they had been a millennium ago. That is, a single man is nothing without his tribe in the desert. These tribes would then go on to ally with other tribes based on religious affiliations and then support the political elite.

What emerged was a transformation of the political system from a dictatorial regime with a single head to a non-liberal democratic regime which demonstrated elements of convergence, political decision, organisation and institutional behaviour along the lines of a neo-patrimonial state containing multiple heads. At least in part, this norm of power being concentrated in the hands of a few from a defined religious or sectarian background reflected the continued legacy of Saddam. 'The sectarianisation of political life not only made political action outside sectarian confines exceedingly difficult, if not impossible; it also meant that supremacy within one's own faction was the main way of acquiring influence at the unit and systemic level' (Yahya, 2017).

Although some Iraqi politicians, notably Al-Maliki, supported Sunni politicians in Mosul and Anbar, and also fought against Shi'a militia in the south as part of an anti-terrorism drive, such alliances were regarded as functional and largely aimed at buying off tribal sheikhs, a policy which recalled the networks of tribal neo-patrimony created by Saddam (Al-Qarawee, 2014). This was very much a case of history repeating itself and, given the fragmented nature of the Iraqi state in the aftermath of 2003, few were taken by surprise. The main impetus, however, no longer came top-down from a strong autocratic leader. Rather, neo-patrimony was increasingly the result of elites, largely drawn from the Shi'a majority, exercising a preponderance of influence over the state structures via the control of public sector positions and resources. As a report from the Carnegie Middle East Centre noted:

> While certain communities have undoubtedly benefited more than others at specific periods of time, Iraq's power-sharing system is run by coalitions of oligarchs whose influence derives mainly from their ability to use state institutions to distribute favours to their clients, often at a significant cost to a majority of citizens. (Yayha, 2017)

Again, this trend was inherited from the Saddam period. As noted, the Ba`th party itself was built on the accumulation of wealth through rents, which was supported by a strong centralised neo-patronage system centred on individuals with Saddam's long-term personal trust (Abdullah, 2019). Nonetheless, after 2003, political corruption significantly increased as the sectarian division of power became a dominant feature of government members based purely on ethnic and religious affiliations by placing party followers and faction members on the payroll. The extent of this practice since 2003

can be seen in the extensive and rapid growth of the state payroll, which expanded from 850,000 employees in 2004 to up to nine million in 2016. The normalisation of contract corruption across all ministries resulted in resources reaching the parties making up the political elite and was a major impetus for the mass demonstrations which took place in 2011. Moreover, judge Radhi Hamza al-Radhi, the most senior government figure responsible for pursuing corruption from 2008 to 2011, identified the government's contracting process as 'the father of all corruption issues' (Dodge, 2019).

Moreover, 'government procurement contracts are controlled by political parties that either auctioned them off or set up shell companies to award contracts to themselves. These contracts are then sub-contracted, or simply never fulfilled, with funds siphoned off by beneficiaries on the way' (Atlantic Council, 2016). This has led to failed projects, notably in the realm of reconstruction. National projects aimed at improving the lives of normal Iraqis have instead resulted in corporate cronyism that only served to benefit a narrow elite and their US associates (Yahya, 2017). Alliances between businessmen and elite politicians created an environment which bred cronyism in the absence of strict oversight, which caused, 'unprecedented levels of theft' by different elite categories including members of parliament, government employees, and American contractors (Yahya, 2017).

For example, in 2011, it emerged that the Minister of Electricity, Ra'ad Shalal Al-Ani, had signed suspect contracts for developing the electricity industry. The total value of these contracts was $1.7 billion, with companies located in Germany and Canada; An-Ani was subsequently forced to resign. Corruption has also been internationally recognised in 2010 and 2011, Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index ranked Iraq 175 out of 182 countries (Transparency International, 2013).

This also resulted in the phenomenon of corruption protection, which increased considerably during the Al-Maliki period. One high ranking official stated:

> There is not any accountability; in reality, there is Public Integrity Commission, General Inspector, Auditing Institution and Integrity Commission in parliament. But where is accountability? Unfortunately, these institutions are dominated by the powerful group(s); my evidence in the last session of federal parliament could not hold account of one politician in the last four years. (Abdullah, 2019)

Part of this problem can be attributed to the way in which the Iraqi parliamentary system works. That is, voters are required to select an electoral alliance which negotiates the structure of the ruling coalition, propose a prime minister and form the government. In practical terms, this phenomenon has prevented the winning individual from becoming the prime minister on more than one occasion (Directorate General for External Policies – EU, 2018).

4.2.1 Structural patrimony between the elite and population

This new form of neo-patrimony in Iraq strengthened the need for relations between the elite and their respective populations unlike those of other Middle Eastern countries – with Lebanon being a major exception. This has taken place along sectarian norms because of the state's inability to deliver essential and basic services and has led to greater levels of inequality, corruption, anger and poverty. In 2006, 20% of the population is living in absolute poverty, 30 and 50% of the labour force is unemployed, especially youth and inflation has risen over 30 per cent (Foster, 2006). Although reliance on elites within these circumstances became acute, the public mood within Iraq at the end of the period of study indicated a shift from systemic levels of anti-American to anti-Iranian sentiments, to the unit level, and one of anti-elite more generally, directed towards those running Iraq (Directorate General for External Policies – EU, 2018). This echoed an earlier report, which noted:

> Corruption has permeated all aspects of public life in Iraq, leading to poor service delivery and a monumental waste of public funds … One in five Iraqis lives below the poverty line, despite residing in a country with vast oil wealth that experienced rapid rates of growth over the last decade. The concentration of wealth in the hands of a corrupt political elite damages the legitimacy of the state, and in some cases drives people towards embracing extremist ideologies. (Atlantic Council, 2016)

Although the major elites of all sectarian groups have benefited from expanded wealth acquired through the oil industry, this has not trickled down to the majority of the population (Directorate General for External Policies – EU, 2018). Subsequently, major protests have taken place throughout Iraq, but the elites and their parties became so entrenched within their own neo-patrimony webs because of a deep 'invested [interest] in maintaining the status quo' (Haddad, 2017), the elite norm of power acquisition remained. Since the elite patriarchs have only attempted to benefit themselves and their underlings, valid criticism of the endemic cronyism has often been presented by its beneficiaries as being motivated by sectarian malice, a situation that has allowed major players in the political parties to deflect scrutiny and avoid accountability (Yahya, 2017). The sectarian card became a political norm and was used extensively by politicians, thus, rendering Iraqi anti-corruption bodies such as the Commission of Integrity (COI) impotent (Abdullah, 2019).

Norms associated with state weakness and corruption were also responsible for the events leading up to inter and intra-ethnic sectarian violence, which is discussed in detail in the following chapter. It started after the occupation and culminated in the emergence of so-called 'Islamic State' in 2014 (Directorate General for External Policies – EU, 2018). Power was demonstrated through political violence, bombings of public spaces, assassinations and pre-election thuggery by state actors, as well as punitive punishments carried out by non-state actors. According to Kuoti (2016), 'The motivation

for violence has been to subvert the government, capture political power, and establish a new system of rule or even an Islamic State'.

4.3 Centres of Power

Although no single elite patriarch has been able to replace Saddam, this has not stopped individual actors from attempting to acquire as much power as possible. These patriarchs have been typically the heads of political parties and religious figures with external links to nations which this thesis describes as person-to-state, party-to-state or, in case of the Kurds, pseudo-state-to-state relationships. These relationships provide a discrete means of pinpointing centres of power upon which people have come to rely. It can be argued Iran has been the main protagonist in Iraq shaping much of the narrative.

4.3.1 Shi'a political elite

During the early 1970s, Saddam expelled many thousands of Shi'a Iraqis including those of the political and religious elite who ended up finding haven in Iran. Adherents of Shi'a Islam, both Arab and Persian, have shared ideational values, which later formed the basis of person-to-state and party-to-state relations. The KRG has also enjoyed good relations with Tehran; these relations developed when Erbil and Tehran shared a common enemy in Saddam. Moreover, the late General Qassem Soleimani facilitated the premiership of Iraq's Kurdish president, Jalal Talabani, who had a relationship with Soleimani for several decades (Sky, 2015). Following the 2003 invasion, the first official delegation to visit Baghdad for talks with the IGC was Iranian, and during this early period, Iraq also received export credits and financial support from Iran (Herzig, 2004).

Due to the Iraqi state being weak and having no ability to project power at the systemic level, it was unable to prevent Tehran from manipulating the Shi'a political elite at the unit level. To this end, Iran influenced the parliamentary elections of 2005, 2010 and 2014 and the provincial elections of 2009 through advising and funding preferred candidates and encouraging its Shi'a allies to unite under a unified list, thus, preventing a split in the Shi'a vote. For example, in 2010 up to $200 million reached Shi'a parties, with $70 million given to ISCI alone (Dodge, 2010, p. 187).

Iranian influence is typically exercised through its embassies in Baghdad, Karbala, Basra, Sulaymaniyah and Erbil. These institutions are often headed by former Iranian Quds Force operatives, such as Soleimani (once described as the most powerful man in Iraq), the Iranian commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, and Hassan Danaeifar, who served as Iranian ambassador to Iraq between 2010 and 2017. The use of such personnel by Iran underlines the infiltration of Iranian security services in developing and executing policies within Iraqi borders

through the Iraqi Shi'a elite, which at times involved Lebanese Hezbollah personnel providing support to the militias (Levitt & Pollak, 2014). Iran has assured its influence since it has always backed multiple politicians to secure its interests no matter who comes out on top.

It should be noted that not all Iraqi Shi'a have welcomed closer ties with Iran. This can be observed indirectly through the Iraqi Shi'a dislike for institutions such as ISCI because of its close Iranian ties. In 2007, ISCI changed its name to the 'Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq' due to the accusation that its name reflected its subservience to Tehran's diktats (Felter & Fishman, 2008).

4.3.1.1 Nouri Al-Maliki (Shi'a), Dawa Party and State of Law coalition

The Dawa party is the oldest Shi'a Islamist movement dating back to the 1950s. It actively attempted to assassinate Saddam and other government officials and was severely supressed and eventually split into several factions. The party was headed by Ibrahim Al-Jafari who was also an influential leader in the IGC. Both Al-Jafari and Al-Maliki spent time in Iran as exiles (Mumtaz, 2005).

In 2006 Al-Maliki was brought to power on the urging of then US ambassador, Zalmay Khalilzad (Childress, 2014), who saw him as a pragmatic, hands-on leader and not unduly close to Iran, moreover, he was Arab which made him preferable over other more likely candidates such as Ali Adeeb whose father was born in Iran (Childress, 2014). Al-Maliki's norm of centralising power, as opposed to prioritising the strengthening state institutions, during his terms as prime minister is often cited as the main cause of Sunni and Kurdish political discontent (Romano, 2014; O'Driscoll, 2015). The norm associated with the centralisation of power involved the implementation of two strategies.

Firstly, it involved strengthening the neo-patrimonial links at the unit level between himself and his underlings through the acquisition of state institutions and consolidating his position through alliances with pro-Shi'a and pro former supreme leader Ayatollah Khomeini proxies. His position was further strengthened through the creation of Shi'a militia and paramilitary groups. At the systemic level, strong person-to-state relations were reciprocated with training and logistical support for militia groups (Directorate General for External Policies – EU, 2018).

Secondly, Al-Maliki skilfully disrupted the attempts of other elites seeking to strengthen their neo-patrimonial networks. For example, the constitution permits territorial autonomy for governorates and makes provision for liberal governance. Nonetheless, Al-Maliki constantly attempted to block Kurdish constitutional autonomy whilst also targeting the Sunni elite (O'Driscoll, 2015). Moreover, Al-Maliki was also well known for targeting Shi'a political opponents, exploiting differences between rival elites and refusing to fund and employ Sunni tribes as per the US '*Sahwa*' initiative (Directorate General for External Policies – EU, 2018).

During his tenure as prime minister between 2006 and 2014, norms associated with neo-patrimonial networks became considerably more corrupt and exclusive. Dawa party members became immensely rich from oil rents and groups such as the Sunni Arabs were mostly excluded from his network and were not permitted to create their own. It can be argued that Al-Maliki's neo-patrimonial endeavours peaked in 2012 as government forces were able to minimise politically motivated violence, suppress political rivals, and economically and militarily constrain the KRG. Moreover, in November 2012, Iraq's oil production reached six million barrels a day for the first time in 30 years. It is expected to reach eight million by 2035, with the majority of the oil being produced in Shi'a cities such as Basra. It is expected this will average $200 billion and will return the country to a rentier state in a manner comparable to its Gulf neighbours (Dodge, 2012, p. 207-208).

Whilst these norms became extremely divisive for Iraq as a state, Al-Maliki continued to enjoy popular support amongst the majority Shi'a population. Moreover, in 2014 Al-Maliki was also the most popular political candidate, with 721,000 people voting for him (*Gulf Times*, 2014). His position was also later cemented in the 2014 parliamentary elections, where his State of Law coalition acquired the greatest number of votes and over 50% of all Shi'a votes (Sly, 2014).

Ultimately, Al-Maliki paid the price for his actions. Whilst being the most popular politician in Iraq, his divisiveness made it impossible for him to form a government and, with the reduction in US and Iranian support, Al-Maliki's fate was sealed (Al-Ali, 2014). Moreover, the corruption of the officer corps led directly to the collapse of the national army at Mosul in 2014, allowing IS to take control of over 40% of Iraq (Juan, 2016). In this case, the transaction between Al-Maliki and his external supporters based on the person-to-state relationship demonstrated that support was never unconditional and could be taken away if conditions became unfavourable.

Nonetheless, even after stepping down as prime minister, Al-Maliki enjoyed influence on Iraqi politics through a web of neo-patrimony (despite being side lined internationally), which included the judiciary, the executive and his proxies in parliament. The neo-patrimonial norms inherited and then perpetuated by Al-Maliki would continue to resonate and were readily emulated by other, lesser elites.

Haider Al-Abadi replaced Al-Maliki as the Dawah nomination for prime minister. However, what followed were months of political deadlock, with his position challenged by Al-Maliki, who also refused to relinquish the role of prime minister. Al-Abadi was viewed by many as a more conciliatory figure, with Iraqi interests at heart, expressing the need for reform while leaning towards the West (Directorate General for External Policies – EU, 2018). Although viewed as being a more consolatory figure, after becoming leader of the Dawa party, Al-Abadi continued the spoils and neo-patrimonial

system of his predecessor. This allowed Dawa-affiliated personnel to acquire the lion's share of lucrative jobs while others were relegated to less 'rewarding' posts (Juan, 2016).

4.3.1.2 Shi'a rivalry

Rivalries between parties located in oil-rich regions took on a different twist relative to intra-Shi'a rivalry between political parties in central Iraq. Parties such as ISCI promoted the idea of a central-southern Shi'a region based on the KRG model and were supported by political parties in the resource-rich regions of Maysan, Dhi Qar and Basra. Whilst this move would ensure wider Shi'a solidarity, under greater federalism, any Shi'a prime minister would also forfeit the right to huge sources of revenue (ICG, 2008). This also exemplifies why viewing Iraq solely through a sectarian lens is disadvantageous. Thus, consecutive Shi'a-led governments and Shi'a elites have consistently rejected the 'Shi'a project' for the south, most notably Al-Maliki and Muqtada Al-Sadr. While both have sought Shi'a ascendancy and are Islamic, each has emphasised rolling back decentralisation and have promoted a strong central government (Duss & Juul, 2009).

4.3.2 Kurdish political elite

Between 2003 and 2014, Iraqi Kurds enjoyed their most powerful regional government built on significant support from the CPA and the US. In 2005, it received economic support in the form of 17% of total federal oil revenues. Whilst during these early phases, the KDP and the PUK were united, this unity should be contextualised by being viewed through the prism of the emerging post 2003 distribution of resources (Leezenberg, 2005). Moreover, the joint need to exploit local oil production was another major factor, which eventually tipped the balance of power towards the KDP which controls the oil ministry. Essentially this allowed the KDP to make unilateral decisions concerning oil sales.

Oil rents provided the Kurds of Northern Iraq with the opportunity to control their destiny in a manner not before encountered in their turbulent history (Logan, 2009). It was the first time Kurds began to think of their government as being based in Erbil and not in Baghdad (Gunter, 2008). However, instead of enforcing loyalty to the KRG, neo-patrimonial networks continued to be tightly organised around the KDP and PUK. Thus, the potential for conflict between the parties has been ever present as one party impeded the other's ability to maintains its networks.

Subsequently, the KRG is split between two factions, which have always been intent on ultimate systemic and unit power in Iraqi Kurdistan: Massoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The deep divide between these two parties cannot be understated since the two as recently as the mid-1990s were engaged in a bitter civil war, which saw Barzani call upon Saddam in 1996. This explains why the united KRG, which was announced on

May 2006, has remained partially divided along the PUK-KDP schism (especially concerning its security apparatus).

Despite maintaining a united front, the finance ministries and army (*Pershmerga*) remain divided into separate PUK and KDP branches. Moreover, the intelligence and security agencies, Protection (*Parastin*) and Security (*Asayesh*), are controlled by Masrour Barzani, the son of Massoud Barzani, while the PUK's Information Apparatus (*Dezgay Zanyari*) and *Asayesh* are controlled by Khasrow Gul Mohammad. Between 2003 and 2008, Bafel Talabani (the elder son of Jalal) controlled the PUK's related Counter Terrorism Group. In a similar vein, the judiciary and the press can also be divided along KDP and PUK lines, although there are a few independent exceptions, such as the *Awane* newspaper and the *Livin* magazine. Nonetheless, an overwhelming majority of the media in Kurdistan is owned, controlled and funded by the political parties and their affiliates (Chomani, 2014).

Through the acquisition of oil rents, the Kurdish elite has also been able to entrench their political positions through neo-patrimonial networks. The PUK and KDP have been able to buy loyalty by maintaining a system which has rewarded countless individuals, according to Rebeen Fatah, an Erbil-based journalist, "Payroll has been the primary mechanism through which the ruling elite in the Kurdish region have bought off people's loyalties" (Saleem & Skelton, 2020). The paradox which had played out in Arab Iraq, was also witnessed in Kurdish Iraq: the huge discrepancy between the Kurdish elite and the general populace. However, this did not prevent the combined efforts of the PUK or KDP to undermine their own constitution by becoming unaccountable, avoiding transparency and operating above the rule of law. The general population responded with protests. Of note were the February 2011 demonstrations against the PUK and KDP, which broke out in Sulaymaniya (Human Rights Watch, 2011).

Protesters were supported by prominent elements of society, including academics and intellectuals, and were subject to daily harassment. Demonstrations were aimed against governmental nepotism and corruption and restrictions on free speech. The deep anger was palpable and directly focused on the Talabani's PUK and Barzani's KDP family dominion over government and social life. There were also calls for the resignation of Prime Minister Barham Salih and President Massoud Barzani, which went unheeded.

In traditional Iraqi style, the government response was to resort to violence. KDP-affiliated gunmen initially responded to the protests by setting fire to offices belonging to the Goran (Change) Party and by opening fire on those demonstrating. PUK loyalists burned down an independent television station to prevent any live coverage of what was transpiring. In the last 10 days of February, state security forces and unknown assailants attacked, arrested, and threatened at least 40 journalists in the

Kurdistan region, including slashing the face of a Hawlati reporter. Whilst the government officially responded with a set of seventeen recommendations for reform concerning improved living conditions and freedoms, protests continued for sixty-two days until they were eventually quashed in April. These demonstrations were a shock to the KRG but had little impact in terms of the government's structural reforms (Human Rights Watch, 2011).

4.3.3 Inter elite rivalry: the Shi'a government and the KRG

The relationship between rival Shi'a and Kurdish elite developed into a norm characterised by animosity, suspicion and brinkmanship, which had the potential to threaten the stability of the [Iraqi] state at a far deeper political level. As Al-Maliki grew stronger, the Baghdad government also tried to impose its authority over the Kurdish regions. The 2005 constitution, which allowed Kurdish semi-independence based on federalism, was challenged as being imposed at a momentary point of weakness. Subsequently, many Sunni and Shi'a Arabs wanted a return of a more centralised Iraq by modifying the constitution (Al-Kadiri, 2010). In fact, one of the key points of contention between the Shi'a and Kurdish elite has been federalism and the way, in which the KRG conducts itself at the systemic level. Moreover, at the unit level, the presence of hydrocarbons has been the root cause of major disputes between the central government and the KRG. It can be argued these disagreements have had a neo-patrimonial hue about them, which have involved the management of the oil sector, decision-making processes and ultimate authority to shape hydrocarbon policies.

Indeed, the management of natural resources has also involved an implicit consideration of the KRG and epitomises elite neo-patrimonial struggles, since control over the oil and gas sector is a key political and social tool that leads to self-sufficiency. As noted, the control of natural resources especially oil has also shown itself to determine the longevity of Middle Eastern regimes. This explains why Baghdad has emphasised restoring a new balance of power with the KRG. Having control over oil money would ensure any Shi'a-led government would be able to strengthen its own neo-patrimonial networks while also giving it control of economic development in other regions, thus making actors such as the KRG subservient.

Thus, Kurdish fears stem from the possibility of a strong government reneging on future revenue sharing promises; thus, it has insisted on developing its own hydrocarbon industry and adopting automatic revenue allocation to sub-federal actors to maintain its grip on power. From Baghdad's perspective, Kurdish control over hydrocarbons may have facilitated further concessions on revenue sharing and pave the way to a secessionist bid. This may also explain why the KRG has pushed for greater decentralisation throughout all of Iraq and not just in the Kurdish region. Kurdish elites have consistently argued that Iraq was irrevocably divided between sectarian and religious groupings,

mobilised by deep communal antipathies (Alkadiri, 2020). The KRG must have realised a strong central government might not only threaten its neo-patrimonial networks but could also pose an existential threat to the Kurdish elites' way of life.

Throughout his tenure, Al-Maliki had an antagonistic relationship with Barzani and Talabani: both accused the prime minister of monopolising power. Al-Maliki accelerated his efforts to secure what he viewed as his constitutional prerogative by empowering the central government and flexing its military might against his rivals. For example, in February 2008 military operations code-named 'Charge of the Knights' (Iron, 2008), were launched in the south against the Mahdi Army militia. The KRG realised if Iraqis from the same ethno-religious background could be fought against, they were even more prone to aligning with a different ethnic group and espousing Sunni Islam. This underlines why the most consequential danger for the state was the potential for an ethnic conflict between Kurdish forces and the Iraqi army (RAND, 2010). Kurdish fears were realised later that year as Kurdish Peshmerga forces were confronted by the regular army in the disputed town of Khanaqin; the regular army also attempted to soften Kurdish control over oil-rich Kirkuk through the same approach and was successful in both cases. Whilst these parties have been at loggerheads, ultimately peace has prevailed because of the US, which has needed the Kurds to balance against the Shi'a government in the absence of any credible Sunni counterweight (The Washington Institute, 2017).

Al-Maliki's also reinforced his own neo-patrimonial networks and disrupted those of KRG through the use of powerful allies. Oil minister Hussein Shahristani challenged KRG efforts to secure oil and gas efforts by refusing to acknowledge the legality and legitimacy of contracts signed between international petroleum companies and the KRG. Shahristani maintained all contracts had to be submitted to Baghdad and the generous terms which the Kurds were offering had to be lowered and aligned with those of the central government. The intention to cut Kurdish awards also played a factor in 2009 when Shahristani launched Baghdad's own licensing rounds, which were largely successful despite imposing tougher contractual conditions relative to the KRG. Moreover, Shahristani also prevented any company which had been awarded Kurdish acreage from taking part in the bidding process. This strategic move forced oil companies to choose between the two sides and significantly reduced the attractiveness of dealing directly with the KRG. Shahristani also prevented the Kurdish oil partners access to the main Iraqi export pipeline, which drastically limited the investment returns of foreign companies. Although there was a brief period in 2009 when the KRG submitted to Baghdad's terms, allowing for greater cooperation, this rapprochement faltered quickly, partly because Baghdad refused to pay for the investment costs owed by the KRG to its foreign partners (Al-Kadiri, 2010). Nonetheless, at the systemic level, the KRG has continued to fortify its neo-patrimonial networks by

developing its party-state relationships, especially with Turkey. In 2013 these governments signed a multi-billion-dollar energy package (Financial Times, 2013).

4.3.4 Sunni political elite

Unlike their Shi'a and Kurdish counterparts, the Sunni political elite were largely unsuccessful in developing resilient patronage networks. Nonetheless, a limited number of Sunni elite were able to form relations with the outside world, thus also creating person-to-state relations.

Between 2003 and 2014, Usama Al-Nujaifi rose to prominence as a Sunni politician of the Mutahidoon bloc – a Turkish funded, anti-Iranian organisation, which had significant influence among Sunnis (Kassim, 2018). Alongside Atheel, the brothers played a political role by representing the Sunni population in the Ninawa governate. Usama had a significant role in the INL and was the minister of industry in 2005 whilst Atheel headed Al-Habda which was founded in 2009 and became part of the Al-Iraqiya coalition. With the fragmentation of Al-Iraqiya, Usama came into direct competition with Allawi. Atheel had strong links with Turkey, which proved to be vital for him in becoming governor in 2009 (Gulmohamad, 2021, p. 28).

Usama's person-to-state relations with the outside world became significant at the end of 2010 when he became the speaker of the ICR. In 2012, he formed to the 'Uniters for Reform', which consisted of twelve Sunni factions. In addition to having close links to Turkey, he met on friendly terms with Barack Obama and other senior US officials such as Hilary Clinton in the US, as well as US representatives in Iraq. In 2013, he met the former European high representative of the union for foreign affairs and security policy in Brussels. These high-level engagements were used to voice discontent concerning the government's sectarian politics, Sunni marginalisation and demonstrator crackdowns.

The messages from Usama, which were conveyed to foreign powers, often contradicted those of the central government, as he appealed to foreign governments to rescue the Sunnis from Shi'a tyranny. In 2014, Usama became vice president, a largely symbolic role, and he continued with the same unit and systemic level policies. This included lobbying for a Sunni federal region similar to the KRG. Atheel also lobbied Ankara in support of military forces to fight IS following the fall of Mosul in 2014. He publicly referred to his close person-to-state relationship with Saudi Arabia, which he called on to take on a greater role in Iraq through a Saudi-Iraqi military coalition, one capable of taking on IS. Usama's political party also developed close ties with Qatar (Gulmohamad, 2021, p. 30).

Usama headed the largest Sunni electoral bloc during the 2014 parliamentary elections, acquiring 23 seats. The coalition proved to be incompatible with the Islamic Party and Jabouri, who sided with the government. Although the Al-Nufaifi brothers were unable to establish neo-patrimonial networks in

Iraq, they were nonetheless influential personalities, who attempted to represent the broader Sunni community.

In June 2014, Usama was accused of taking more than half a billion US dollars from Saudi Arabia (Gulmohamad, 2021, p. 30). But in 2016, another lawsuit was filed against him by Sunni politicians friendly to Al-Maliki for 'corresponding with a foreign power'. The charge involved Usama's leadership of the Ninawa National Guard, a force which had received training from a Turkish force stationed in the province (Kassim, 2018).

Despite personalities such as the Al-Nujaifi brothers, since 2003, there has been no equivalent person-to-state or political party-to-state Sunni relationship which can be compared to that of the Shi'a and Kurds. There are multiple reasons for this, but it can be mainly attributed to the Sunni rejection of the democratic process by boycotting elections and de-Ba`thification, causing the hollowing out of the Sunni leadership. However, many Sunnis also have a distrust of their political leadership (Seloom, 2017).

> The sheer scale of the devastation that Sunni-majority areas have suffered, the mass displacement, the complete disarray if not redundancy of Sunni political elites have left Iraq's Sunni communities with few options other than to try to secure their interests by working with the Shia political classes. This has led to the emergence of new frameworks of political power at the local level. By remaining in their provinces and working with Iraqi security forces in the fightback against IS, these local actors have attained a degree of credibility lacking amongst pre-2014 Sunni political leaders and they have also secured greater access to sources of patronage through their association with Baghdad-linked power brokers. (Haddad, 2017)

4.3.5 Shi'a Religious elite

The religious elite has always played a significant role at the unit and systemic level, arguably more so for the Shi'a, where leadership is intertwined with clerical scholarship. This could be because of the political situation pre-2003 when no other type of Shi'a leadership was accepted by the regime. According to Marr (2011, p. 11), the US-led invasion allowed the Shi'a to enjoy an even 'stronger leadership and a greater sense of cohesion than its Sunni counterpart'. Nonetheless, the political structure in the post-2003 Iraq was somewhat different to that which existed in Iraq prior to the Iranian revolution. While Shi'a Iraqis make up the bulk of the population, it has been under Sunni control since the modern state of Iraq was created in the 1920s.

4.3.5.1 Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani

With the fall of the Ba`thists in Iraq, the Shi'a religious elite was presented with the opportunity to safeguard the rights of Shi'a Iraqis more freely. Religious figures such as Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani backed the democratic process and the one man-one vote standard and requested that Shi'a Iraqis

take part in the 2005 elections. This was a pragmatic move since it allowed the Shi'a takeover of Iraq peacefully because of their numerical majority (Nasr, 2006). Due to the preferable political climate of the time, Al-Sistani became involved in politics seeking to strengthen the community. The involvement of Al-Sistani in politics was justified by his eldest son and aide, Sayyed Mohammedreza Sistani, who stated his father's efforts were mainly directed at lobbying elected members of the government in a bid to prevent ratification of anti-Sharia laws in the new constitution.

Nonetheless, in a limited number of cases, Al-Sistani has played a key political and social role. Concerning the former, the coalition was compelled to abandon a caucus system for selecting members of a transitional assembly because of his opposition. Al-Sistani issued a fatwa in 2004 calling for an appointed, not an elected, transitional assembly which was followed by mass Shi'a demonstrations in support of the fatwa. Another example of Al-Sistani's influence was demonstrated early in the occupation, when, in June 2004, UN Security Council Resolution 1546 was passed. Due to Al-Sistani's opposition, the resolution failed to endorse explicit clauses in Iraq's interim constitution adopted by the IGC in 2004, which ensured Kurdish rights in federal Iraq. This showed the US was more concerned with appeasing Al-Sistani at the expense of the Kurds despite them being long-term allies (Mumtaz, 2005).

However, in general since 2005, the Shi'a religious elite have not directly been involved in the executive political affairs of the state. Al-Sistani has argued he 'believes religious leaders should not be involved in the administration of the state' (Directorate General for External Policies – EU, 2018) unlike Iran's Khamenei, who advocates for the concept of *Velayat-Faqih* or guardianship of the jurist: that is, religious authority should be established through political means (Alaca, 2020).

Al-Sistani also played social roles by issuing rules and mediating conflicts between different parties to stabilise Iraqi affairs at both the systemic and unit level. For example, securing the smooth transition of power in general elections, and breaking political deadlocks in 2006 and 2014. He was also frequented by the Shi'a political elite however, this stopped after 2011 because many officials began to abuse Al-Sistani's reputation and market themselves politically (Khatteeb, 2017).

Al-Sistani has always encouraged people to take part in the democratic process and has also urged voters not to re-elect politicians who have broken their promises and was also part of the group which compelled Al-Maliki to step down (Yahya, 2017). However, the most exceptional political act undertaken by the Shi'a elite was Al-Sistani's '*jihad fatwa'* issued on June 13th 2014, which called upon all Shi'a and non-Shi'a Iraqis 'to defend the country, its people, the honour of its citizens, and its sacred places' by joining PMF groups (Abbas, 2017). This single fatwa can be considered the greatest degree

of political activism that has ever been demonstrated by the Shi'a religious elite not only for the research period but for the entire previous century.

These circumstances indicate that Shi'a religious figures such as Al-Sistani morphed into hybrid political as well as religious figures. This new type of elite category allows them to adopt different postures, which involve having the ability to engage in politics when, in the context of the political opportunity structure, they perceive a threat to the Shi'a community, especially when it is imposed by outsiders. Moreover, Al-Sistani has a network of millions of followers, including those from the political elite and other regional players, who regard him as the most important Shi'a religious leader in Iraq.

4.3.5.2 Muqtada al-Sadr

Al-Sadr is the son of the famous Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr. During his lifetime, Al-Sadr senior built up a large network of charities and, mosques, as well as junior cleric followers, which enabled him to gain popularity amongst the Shi'a of Iraq. The sermons and ideological convictions of Al-Sadr offered a shared identity based on nationalism, Islam and anti-imperialism. He also developed a theory of the 'silent jurisprudent' and the 'speaking jurisprudent', saying that quietist Shi'ite leaders including (Al-Sistani) implicitly upheld the oppressive status quo and insisted that the only ethical course was to speak out against tyranny (Cole, 2003). His popularity became the reason for his ultimate demise when the Ba`th regime assassinated him in 1999. His son, Muqtada Al-Sadr is not merely the scion of a famed Shi'i clerical family, he is also a very ambitious man who believes, with some justification, given his family's sacrifices during Saddam's rule, that he has a claim to Iraqi political and spiritual leadership.

Following the US occupation, Al-Sadr moved quickly to re-establish his father's networks, including the extensive number of mosques associated with the Al-Sadr movement. This allowed him to garner Shi'a support in underclass areas such as Sadr City but also linked these efforts to marginalising and minimising the neo-patrimonial networks of fellow Shi'a elites. Whilst belonging to the same strain of Shi'ism espoused by the two main rivals, that is, Al-Maliki's Dawa Party and the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (renamed SCIRI from ISCI), Al-Sadr vehemently disagreed with the policies of other Shi'a religious elites. This was justified based on those leaders being previously adopting quietist norms and non-advocates of direct political involvement. On the other hand, Al-Sadr followed the norms developed by his father opposing political '*taqiya',* continuing the tradition of Al-Sadr senior (Bayless, 2012).

The disdain for Al-Sadr meant rival elites worked with the US to weaken him. The Sadrists assumed this cooperation was based on a joint desire to deprive them of power. However, the Sadrists also feared that a corrupt and materialistic government, backed by the US, would promote non-Islamic norms. Moreover, Sadr believed democratic principles contradicted Islam and were a step in the

wrong direction (Feldman, 2009). Sadr's deputy, Sayyid Kazim Al-Hairi, issued a fatwa calling on Iraqi Shi'a to ignore the Americans and simply take control of Iraq themselves (Cole, 2003).

During the early stages of the occupation and government formation, Sadr was cold-shouldered by those in charge. He was excluded from even symbolic government bodies, such as the IGC, which was capable of exercising very limited power. This exclusion from government positions fuelled the Sadrist antipathy of Iraqi exiles handpicked by the US. Nonetheless, Sadr benefited because the political elite associated with SCIRI, Dawa, and other secular Iraqi leaders was criticised by average Iraqis for their cooperation and were considered stooges.

The US and Shi'a elite exclusion of Al-Sadr at the political level lacked foresight, resulting in Al-Sadr's popularity and influence growing unexpectedly because of his perceived independence. Whilst this unnerved some of the Shi'a elite, proponents such as Al-Sistani did not appear to be phased by the young comer but adopted strategies aimed at undermining Al-Sadr by 'ignoring the upstart while emphasizing to his own community that Shi'i clerical authority could be exercised only by permission of the *hawza* [the seminary where Shi'a clerics are educated]' (Feldman, 2009, p. 39). This approach attempted to frame the actions of Sadr as being 'unauthorised and illegitimate'.

The political and religious exclusionary tactics practised by the Shi'a elite added to the existing animosity. In response, the Sadrists developed their own strategies, which sought to undermine the Shi'a religious and political elite. Concerning the former, Al-Sadr 'sought, unsuccessfully, to wrest control of the shrine of Imam Hussain from Sistani, which would have given him access to major revenue as well as a powerful political base'. The Sadrists also sought to undermine Al-Sistani by playing the sectarian card highlighting his Iranian origin whilst 'present[ing] himself as the only true Arab Iraqi Shi'ite leader as a way to exclude him [Al-Sistani] from Iraqi national politics' (Shaery-Eisenlohr, 2008, p. 215). The conflicting strategies employed by Al-Sadr and Al-Sistani created a rift between them and eventually led to an attack by the Sadrists on the supporters of Al-Sistani at the *hawza*.

Al-Sadr also targeted secular leaders by lashing out at the IGC and declaring it an illegitimate body brought to power because of an unlawful occupation. Al-Sadr also, 'stir[red] up anti-Israel and anti-U.S. sentiment' using his newspaper *Al-Hawza* (Chehab, 2005, p. 158) and even praised the 9/11 attacks. This led to the IGC openly reprimanding Sadr whilst the CPA temporarily shut down *Al-Hawza* on the basis that it incited violence against the occupying forces (Bayless, 2012).

These events proved to be a significant milestone, giving rise to Sadr's militia army called the JAM (also known as the Mahdi Army). 'Muqtada Al-Sadr declared jihad and urged his supporters to

"terrorize the enemy". Observing a sit-in at one of Najaf's holiest mosques, the cleric said that street demonstrations had become pointless. It was the first time he had urged his followers to opt for armed resistance' (Glantz, 2005, p. 171). In April 2003, Al-Sadr's militia forces surrounded the houses of Al-Sistani and other members of the Marjaiya in Najaf, demanding they leave Iraq. However, the Mahdi army was forced to stand down when protection arrived in the form of several thousand Shi'a Arab tribesmen loyal to Al-Sistani (Tucker, 2010, p. 762).

4.3.5.2.1 Fractured militia

In 2005, JAM suffered a major defeat at the hands of the coalition forces in a battle in Najaf. At the time, Al-Sistani was seeking medical care abroad; nonetheless, he hastily returned and immediately negotiated a ceasefire with Al-Sadr.

> Sistani brokered a truce with Muqtada al-Sadr that contained several demands: the removal of JAM fighters from the sacred Imam Ali shrine and the city of Najaf; the withdrawal of Coalition Forces from the city; the creation of a demilitarized zone in Najaf and Kufa; the appointment of Iraqi Security Forces to guard the cities and the shrines; and compensation for citizens whose property had been damaged in the fighting. (Cockburn, 2008, p. 161-162)

These ceasefire negotiations were successful; however, the power dynamics between the two significantly changed with Al-Sistani's authority increasing at Al-Sadr's expense. This led to a partial breakdown of Al-Sadr's neo-patrimonial networks, with many of his father's confidants breaking away from him because of disillusionment. This was a significant loss for Sadr since he was no longer able to control JAM. Over time, JAM's actions continued to threaten Al-Sadr's position: 'Al-Sadr had clearly been the symbolic leader of the Sadrist Movement throughout the revolts, [but] he had difficulty controlling his movement during the fighting' (Cochrane, 2009). This led to key nodes in Al-Sadr's network, including Ayatollah Kazem Al-Haeri, being ejected.

A common pattern which trended following network ejection included the establishment of new groups, who worked against their former allies at the unit and systemic level. In the case of Al-Haeri, he issued a fatwa declaring Iraqi Shi'a should not be paying charity to the Al-Sadr's movement. This was a major event since it 'was very likely done with Iranian approval and reflected a decision by the highest echelons of government to adopt a new policy toward the Sadrist movement' (Cochrane, 2009). The strategy disrupted Al-Sadr's neo-patrimonial network because charity was a significant source of JAM funding. Moreover, 'the rapid growth in the movement from 2004 to 2006 and the subsequent emergence of a mafia-like system [involved in corruption, intimidation, and extortion to enhance their wealth and power] undermined Al-Sadr's control over his commanders. As local commanders grew more powerful and financially independent, they became less likely to follow orders' (Cochrane, 2009). As Al-Sadr's network began to falter, JAM split into five different groups,

which committed terrible acts of violence involving death squads being responsible for sectarian cleansing and the taking over of Sunni and mixed Sunni-Shi'a neighbourhoods (Cochrane, 2009).

Intra-fragmentation occurred over time, following the solidification of schisms which allowed groups to step back and chart independent policies. In 2004, Al-Sadr's close deputy, Mohammed Sadiq Al-Sadr, and friend, Qais Khazali, broke away. Al-Sadr reconciled with the latter and appointed him, along with other important JAM commanders, to a position of power. However, in 2006, Khalazi decided to take this opportunity as means of developing his own splinter militia network called Asaib Ahl al-Haq (Counter Extremism Project, 2015). This was made possible by developing his own person-to-state relations with Iran, who were eager to expand their influence in Iraq by providing military training to Shi'a groups. Members of the regular JAM saw the Khazali network as superior to themselves, which led to further divisions. Khalazi's fighting force evolved into an independent organisation but continued working with other JAM leaders, including 'Akram Al-Ka'bi, Layth Al-Khaz'ali, and Hasan Salim' (Cochrane, 2009).

Although Sadr repeatedly attempted to reacquire Al-Khazali into his neo-patrimonial network, his attempts were unsuccessful. This led Al-Sadr to begin distancing himself from former JAM commanders in a bid to gain standing in the future political arena. Sadr then declared Khazali's network responsible for the sectarian war and told his own followers they would be sinful if they worked with the group (Bayless, 2012). Although JAM forces linked to Al-Sadr continued to use violence as their primary form of resistance, Al-Sadr soon realised this method alone would be insufficient to expand his neo-patrimonial networks on a grander scale.

4.3.5.2.2 Al-Sadr Reform

By 2007, Al-Sadr decided to 'freeze' JAM because it was no longer a cohesive single entity with a reliable chain of command. This 'freeze' was the direct result of excessive force used by JAM on not only Sunnis but also fellow Shi'a, including two Shi'a governors, and the desecration of a Shi'a religious festival (Bayless, 2012). JAM was then transformed into a nonviolent organisation, albeit with a small armed contingent permitted to fight the US troops, called *'Al-Mumahidoon'* and '*Al-Munasiroon'* or 'those who pave the way' and 'the helpers' respectively, which were tasked with fulfilling civil duties such as helping poor Shi'a. Al-Sadr created these groups and in the long run, his public relations attempts were successful in improving his credibility as a non-extremist.

By 2009, Al-Sadr had moved to Qum, the centre of religious scholarship in Iran to continue his religious studies. Before the 2010 elections, the firebrand Sadr returned to Iraq, but this time as a mainstream Shi'a politician enjoying widespread support. Whilst Al-Maliki secured the largest parliamentary coalition, allowing him to lay claim to the prime ministership, this was only possible with Al-Sadr's

support. It was the first time Al-Sadr was directly engaged in politics, resulting in a necessary but uneasy dialogue with the secularists, which was unpopular with many of the Sadrists (Bayless, 2012).

Whilst many of Iraq's political elite were required to adopt different norms prior to entering the political domain, Al-Sadr was able to skilfully play the opposition parties and the ruling elite whilst maintaining his militia. This has required him to reinvent his armed wing under different iterations; this appeasement has been viewed with scepticism by the opposition and government but was tolerated. The dual role has allowed Al-Sadr to enjoy a unique political standing; on the one hand, he enjoyed an audience with the ruling elite and a say in the most important decisions of the state, whilst on the other, he has also remained close to people at a grass roots level which allowed him to demand political change and an end to corruption.

From 2011 onwards, Al-Sadr played a pivotal role in the protest movements in Iraq, mobilising people and encouraging them to come out on the streets. His primary slogan has always been 'reform'. Although he wanted the existing political structure to remain, he also wanted it to be reorganised and key figures replaced. It was this reformed based protesting which allowed the protests to remain non-violent (Robin-D'Cruz, 2019). These protests appeared to be somewhat manipulated by Al-Sadr based on a discernible pattern: a protest would climax, Al-Sadr would then make new ultimatums to the government, the government would then respond by making promises in return, and then Al-Sadr would send the protesters home.

These tactics allowed Al-Sadr to use his neo-patrimonial networks to acquire greater leverage over his political rivals and become more powerful in the government. However, this strategy did not come without cost to Al-Sadr. It split the protesters' camp into two because of tensions. The older politicians believed the 'historic' alliance with Al-Sadr clashed with those who criticised him for manipulating protests to acquire greater political power. In 2012, Al-Sadr stated: 'The Iraqi spring is coming . . . We are with the demonstrators and parliament must be with them, not against them. The legitimate demands of the demonstrators . . . should be met' (Jansen, 2013). Al-Sadr took part in protests in Anbar province, a Sunni stronghold which had been marginalised by Al-Maliki. This move allowed Al-Al-Sadr to distance himself from Al-Maliki ahead of spring provincial elections but also allowed Al-Sadr to absorb Sunni support into his neo-patrimonial networks.

Al-Sadr was also successful in forging a Shi'a, Sunni and Kurdish alliance between the Sadrist Shi'a Ahrar bloc, the Kurdish bloc, led by Barzani, and Allawi's Iraqi Sunni National Movement (Al-Iraqiyya) under an umbrella organisation called *Al-Sa'irun*. This group attempted to unite and transcend divisions and moved towards intra-communal politics whilst pursing a no-confidence motion in parliament to unseat Al-Maliki. Having both the protesters onboard and an anti-Al-Maliki bloc, Al-Sadr

pressured the government using legitimate bottom-up grassroots activism, in addition to top-down pressure using traditional political manoeuvring.

In 2014, Sadr's Ahrar Party gained thirty-six seats in the parliamentary election and was awarded three cabinet seats. However, these appointments did not allow or provide the Sadrists with significantly increased patronage. Nonetheless, Sadr was still able to continue increasing in popularity because of three key events, including the humiliating defeat of the regular Iraqi army and the fall of Mosul in June 2014, Al-Maliki's ouster, and the collapse of oil prices, leaving the Iraqi state penniless. However, it was not until 2018 that Sadr's political potential was realised. In May of that year, *Al-Sa'irun* came first in the parliamentary elections followed by the Iran-backed Fatah coalition, ahead of the incumbent Prime Minister Abadi.

4.3.6 Sunni Religious Elite

The role of the Sunni religious elite in developing strong neo-patrimonial networks has been significantly less effective relative to their Shi'a counterparts. The fragmentation in the Sunni elite at the political level significantly informed the community's unit-level disputes as it tried to adjust to the post-Saddam period. Moreover, due to the religious elite being also highly fragmented, they were unable to unify their potential and affect politics, unlike the Shi'a religious elite.

The Sunni religious elite found themselves in a precarious situation as the shift to Iraqi freedom meant Sunni Islam was no longer the state norm. Moreover, unlike other Arab countries, Iraq did not have a single Sunni religious leader or executive decision-making body. Rather, Sunni religious decision-making was undertaken by a broad group of religious elites bound together because of professional identity having received similar religious educations, which informed their beliefs concerning the nature of politics and society.

Throughout Iraqi history, the evolution of Sunni religious structures underwent changes in parallel with traditional political bureaucracies. This was first initiated by King Faisel, who sought to introduce tighter state controls of Waqf charitable trusts, which led to a certain degree of formalisation and perhaps bureaucratisation of Sunni religious organisations. In the late 1950s, Qasim officially acknowledged the Sunni and other religious elites as civil servants and gave them access to pensions (Freer, 2020). On the other hand, the Shi'a elite largely avoided being incorporated into the state bureaucracy because they were funded through donations. This meant only Sunni mosques were subject to legislation.

In 1976 during the Ba`th period, the Sunni elite was subject to further control through the Ordinance on Service in Religious and Charitable Institutions Act, which compelled imams to assimilate Ba`th

narratives into their sermons, such as the 'the achievements of the July 17th Revolution'. Moreover, the traditional teacher disciple method of teaching taking place in mosques was replaced with a formal state devised curriculum taught in universities, such as the High Islamic Academy for Training Imams and Preachers (Rabkin, 2016).

The acquiescence of the Sunni religious elite to the state apparatus was in stark contrast to the Shi'a religious elite. Whilst this difference can be partly explained through Ba`th members being superficially Sunni, arguably more important was the social standing between the Sunni and Shi'a religious elite amongst their followers. Sunni orthodoxy dictates religious scholars are merely human beings who can err; on the other hand, Shi'a Ayatollahs command veneration and in some strands of Shi'ism are infallible. Moreover, Sunni independence was tainted with state financing, and they also had no access to charitable funding, such as *khoms* and local constructs such as pilgrimages, unlike those found in Shi'ism. Thus, state involvement in religious affairs at the unit level was unlikely to be perceived as a takeover per se but a welcome sponsorship (Baram, 2014).

The initiation of the 'faith campaign' in 1993 allowed Saddam to expand and strengthen his neo-patrimonial networks through greater assimilation of the Sunni religious elite. Saddam's strategy was to use the Ba'th Party's time-honoured reverence for Islam and its claim that Ba'thists were believers to emphasise the regime's Islamic legitimacy, thereby neutralizing the Islamist opposition (Helfront, 2014). Nonetheless, whilst there was a veneer of Islam, the Iraqi social system remained staunchly secular, and the security services continued to repress political Islamists.

The Sunni religious elite response to the faith campaign was manifested in two ways. One group of elites internalised the Ba`thist narrative and Islamic revivalism based on the current Iraqi political climate of the 1990s. Sermons focused on anti-Zionist and anti-imperial narratives, on the one hand, whilst the state used Sunni religious arguments to justify the Shi'a crackdown in 1991, on the other (Helfront, 2014). The other Sunni religious elite was influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood. This made them less concerned with the geopolitical orientations and more with the broader Islamisation of the state. Whilst this religious elite was unable to affect politics directly, it still benefited from this period by building religious and charitable organisations (Al-Jazeera TV, 2004). Although different, these approaches were not perceived as being antagonistic to one another, most likely because of the impending external threat. Nonetheless, after 2003, they most likely facilitated the Sunni cleavages between opponents and supporters of the new political order.

4.3.7 Invasion and Sunni response

Previously, the Iraqi state had supported the Sunni religious elite through remuneration; however, Iraq was now headed by Shi'a Islamists and Kurdish nationalists. Whilst previously the Sunni religious

elite had called for patriotism, now it faced the dilemma of either supporting the new rulers of Iraq or supporting the resistance. Major Sunni scholars who were entrenched in the 'faith' campaign and known for their anti-Americanism, such as Al-Azhar-educated Harith Al-Dhari, organised clerics whilst focussing on humanitarian projects; however, these groups also embraced politics and continued to exhibit deep concern for national unity (Cordesman & Baetjer, 2006). These groups came together under an umbrella organisation called the '*Hay'at Ulam Al-Muslimeen fil-Iraq'* or AMSI and functioned under the supposition that the fledgling insurgent groups would be successful in driving out the US, leaving them to be celebrated as Iraq's liberators. Subsequently, AMSI praised the insurgents but avoided making direct calls for violence and opposed the political process calling on all Iraqis to boycott the polls. This mood was also reiterated by other Sunni elites, including tribal and community leaders (Al-Jazeera, 2004).

Al-Dhari intended AMSI to develop into the Shi'a equivalent of the *Marjaiya* (Al-Jazeera TV, 2003), the Najaf based leadership of Shi'a Ayahtollahs (of which Al-Sistani was foremost). However, this desire or aspiration could not be realised, arguably because AMSI had no religious or historical basis and because it consisted of clerics with poor neo-patrimonial networks headed by leaders who were not willing to compromise for a greater cause. In theory, decisions within AMSI were to be undertaken using '*Shura*' (consultation with those affected by the decision), however, Al-Dhari would routinely and unilaterally make key decisions. This was perhaps based on an unspoken justification and Al-Dhari's claim to his own neo-patrimonial networks (similar to Al-Sadr's but this time) based on his grandfather, Dhari Al-Mahmud, who was a prominent sheikh of the Shamar tribe and became famous in the 1920s for his courageous fight against the British (Dougherty, 2019). Although AMSI claimed it represented the Sunni religious elite on political issues, Al-Dhari's networks were shallow and weak, with no administrative authority, unlike the state-sponsored Waqf.

Although AMSI adopted a confrontational approach, the Sunni Waqf never accepted the rejectionist stance on the opposition to the new political order. Since the Waqf was a state organisation, the IGC had the right to appoint its leaders, which gave a leading say to the Iraqi Islamic Party (IP). The IP was founded in 2003 and was filled by the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist networks developed during the faith campaign of the 1990s. The party leadership consisted of mainly older men who had been Muslim Brotherhood activists prior to Ba`th Iraq.

The IP promoted an Arabic professor, Adnan Al-Dulaymi, as head of the Sunni Waqf. In the 1950s, Al-Dulaymi became known for his political activism and was forced to flee the country in the 1990s. Nonetheless, after taking refuge in Jordan, he travelled throughout the Middle East to raise money for

charitable works during the faith campaign era, which allowed him to secure a recommendation from none other than the Muslim Brotherhood's Yusuf Al-Qardhawi (Rabkin, 2018).

Before 2003, Al-Dhari and Al-Dulaymi used to be on friendly terms; however, this changed because AMSI was praising the insurgent attacks and calling for election boycotts whilst Al-Dulaymi was encouraging Sunni political participation and attending public conferences (Asharq Al-Awsat, 2005a). Moreover, Al-Dulaymi also convinced Sunni scholars to issue a fatwa, which stated it was a religious duty to join the police and army (Asharq Al-Awsat, 2005b). In July 2005, Al-Dulaymi was replaced because he was organising Sunnis to oppose the incumbent government in elections. Ahmad Abd al-Ghafur al-Samarrai took over from Al-Dulaymi and continued to view the government as being legitimate but avoided participating in direct elections.

As the insurgency began to increase, AMSI adopted a more confrontational line and would not condemn the growing excesses of the more extremist elements of the Salafi-Jihadists, placing the blame of casualties on American or Zionist actors (Asharq Al-Awsat, 2004). This harmed the Sunni cause as a whole and put pressure on the existing neo-patrimonial networks of the Sunni elite. Al-Dhari was eventually forced to flee to Amman in 2006, but continued to direct operations from abroad; however, he became largely irrelevant over time. Similar to other countries, Jordan has played a significant role in the anti-Iraq government factions and had established person-to-state relations and become a safe haven for Sunni government rebels and tribal leaders opposed to Al-Maliki (although it does not officially back any groups). Nonetheless, when Baghdad wanted Al-Dhari extradited, Amman refused. Al-Dhari was also targeted by the US Department of the Treasury for providing financial, material or technological support and financial services to AQI, including operational guidance for attacks against Iraqi and Coalition Forces in Iraq (US Department of the Treasury, 2010).

Notably, the neo-patrimonial networks of the Sunni religious elite remained weak even though there was no purging of Sunni clerics following the invasion. This can be attributed, in part, to the lack of consensus amongst the religious elite, which was unable to agree on a common political strategy. Nonetheless, whilst the Waqf and AMSI viewed the situation in Iraq through different paradigms, their behaviour towards one another remained dignified (unlike with the intra-Shi'a rivalry).

The withdrawal of US forces in 2011 could have been a new era for the Sunni religious elite and their neo-patrimonial networks. With only residual numbers of foreign troops in the country, the Iraqi government and its legitimacy were broadly accepted by the Sunni population, which allowed the Sunni religious elite the necessary mandate to coexist and cooperate with the state. In October 2012, the Iraqi parliament passed the Sunni Waqf Law #56, which continued to provide support for the Sunni

religious elite through the Sunni Waqf organisation. Moreover, parliament also put safeguards in place preventing political interference. For example, the PM was strictly forbidden from choosing a candidate for the Waqf presidency. Rather, the Waqf itself became responsible for choosing its leader through the Fiqh Council of Senior Scholars for Preaching and Fatwas (Iraqi Legal Database, 2012).

The Fiqh Council was a more credible Sunni establishment and was a serious attempt by the Sunni elite to implement the ideas forwarded by Al-Dhari. In many ways, the Sunni elite was eventually successful in creating an organisation similar to the Shi'a Marjaiya. Whilst the formation of such a body was proposed in 2007, it was not until 2012 that a formal announcement and a list of preeminent scholars were provided. The creation of Sunni Waqf Law #56 demonstrated that politicians across the sectarian divide were willing to provide the Sunni religious elite with the opportunity to manage their own affairs. In a somewhat ironic twist, it can also be argued the law was created partly to assuage the Shi'a religious elite concerning their own autonomy from the state. Subsequently, the Shi'a Waqf Law #57 was passed alongside the Sunni Waqf #56 law, but it differed because its head was appointed by the cabinet after receiving the approval from the Shi'a religious elite (Iraqi Legal Database, 2015). Whilst both Waqfs are now state-funded, the Sunni Waqf is significantly larger than its Shi'a counterpart because of historical ties with the previous regimes (discussed previously). Nonetheless, the requirement to respect the Shi'a Marjaiya's autonomy could have necessitated legislative recognition of a parallel independence for Sunnis, even in the absence of any historical precedent.

4.3.8 Sunni religious elite failure

The Sunni religious elite controlling the Fiqh Council proved to be unable to fulfil the leadership role it claimed despite state recognition and backing. Although the Sunni religious elite had the opportunity to significantly develop their neo-patrimonial networks in Iraq, they were unable to develop these networks because they could not agree on a common political strategy, were unable to gauge the true Sunni potential and faced unrealistic political demands. For example, in December 2012, large-scale demonstrations broke out in Sunni provinces. The primary reason for these demonstrations was the Al-Maliki backed government's targeting of the Sunni political elite, including the Rafi Al-Isawi, the IP aligned Minister of Finance (Sowell, 2014). The impetus for the demonstrations was provided by the Sunni elite response to arrests and because of the security crackdown. This included the arrest, punishment and torture of innocent Sunni men under the guise of counterterrorism but also included routine kidnappings by the security forces as a means of demanding ransoms (Abdul-Ahad, 2012).

The Sunni religious elite was instrumental in the protest movement and fully endorsed both the protester demands and tactics. The '*Jum'a*' (Friday prayer) itself, renamed the '*Salat-Al-Muwahhada*' (Unified Prayer), was used as a political tool and moved from the mosques into open spaces in a bid

to accommodate the tens of thousands of Sunnis (Naama, 2013) whilst featuring politically charged speeches. Friday sermons were given a slogan based on whatever theme was trending, for example, 'Al-Maliki or Iraq' and 'Iraq is our choice'. The Sunni religious elite in charge of organisations such as the Fiqh Council encouraged the mass gatherings by closing local mosques, which compelled worshippers to offer the mandatory prayer in congregations elsewhere (Al-Abasia News, 2013).

Although the Sunni religious elite was instrumental in the protests, each group had its own interests, which resulted in the misaligned political demands. Even at the unit level, and despite common demands, each group engaged in the protests to further its own agenda in the tug of war with Baghdad. Tribes attempted to strengthen their own neo-patrimonial networks, seeking a larger share of power at the expense of other tribes which had aligned themselves with Baghdad, especially after Al-Maliki started his second mandate in 2011; the religious elite also behaved in the same way vis-à-vis those figures viewed to have been co-opted by Al-Maliki. The IP intended to draw Sunnis away from the more secular current, victims of de-Ba`thification viewed this as a chance to reclaim their rights and former resistance members took this opportunity to continue fighting the post-Saddam political establishment (Katzman, 2011).

One faction of the protesters was demanding an autonomous Sunni region similar to the Kurdish north. This faction was led by the mainly younger IP-aligned religious elite and leading national Sunni politicians who were posing a direct challenge to Baghdad by issuing symbolic declarations of provincial autonomy. Whilst there was support for this idea amongst some elements of the Sunni population, the Sunni religious elite manipulated the situation to build their neo-patrimonial networks and by choosing who would represent Sunnis politically. An autonomous Sunni region was theoretically possible according to the constitution. However, the Sunni religious elite must have known the Shi'a-led government would be unwilling to acquiesce to Sunni autonomy.

The other group of Sunni religious elites rejected the idea of an autonomous Sunni region, insisting on a unified Iraq. The primary religious figure opposed Sunni autonomy was the scholar, Abdul-Malik Al-Saadi. A few years before the fall of Saddam, Al-Saadi moved to Amman and after 2003, he encouraged Sunnis to avoid the political process. Al-Saadi returned to Iraq in December 2012 and was welcomed by Sunni protesters, especially in his hometown of Anbar, where he became a widely accepted as a spiritual leader. Al-Saadi's speeches focused on several themes, including overturning the political order, reinstating officers of the de-Ba`thified army and taking a census-based on Sunni and Shi'a affiliations – which would have been a first in Iraqi history – because of his belief that Iraq had a Sunni majority (Abbas, 2015).

Throughout 2013, the Al-Saadi and the Fiqh Council issued contradictory fatwas concerning the federalisation of Sunni provinces. Al-Saadi ruled that this was forbidden by the religion because it would divide and weaken the country. Nonetheless, the Fiqh Council gathered the Sunni religious elite and discussed the merits of Sunni federalism. Whilst these religious elites did not produce a fatwa for Sunnis to push for autonomy, they did insist on the permissibility of the idea in theory and the continuation of respectful dialogue concerning its suitability (Rabkin, 2016). Sunni supporters of federalism considered this a reproach of Al-Saadi who, in turn, responded with a statement insisting an autonomous Sunni region was against the principles of the religion. He also attempted to undermine the Fiqh Council, stating: 'The claim that the statement comes from the Senior Scholars of Iraq… is inaccurate, as many senior scholars did not participate… Furthermore, the majority of those present [at the Sunni Region conference], despite my respect for them all, cannot properly be described by this term' (Rabkin, 2013).

Although Al-Saadi proposed leading negotiations with the government, his offers were rejected, arguably because of the perceived lack of unity. The efforts of the Sunni religious elite were further damaged after Sunni politicians began working with the government to shut down the protest movement. The application of governmental pressure came as Sunni MPs such as Ahmad Al-Jiburi, who were aligned with Al-Maliki, ordered the Waqf president, Ahmed Abdul-Ghafoor Al-Samarrai, to be replaced with his deputy, Mahmud Al-Suaydai (Al-Sumaria, 2013). This approach was framed as a response to corruption within the Waqf; however, it was also a successful method by which the neo-patrimonial networks of the Sunni religious elite became disrupted. Nonetheless, the protest movement itself had become a ubiquitous phenomenon, which meant it became difficult to repress.

It is safe to assume the Fiqh Council was upset to see its authority undermined; however, by failing to solidify its neo-patrimonial networks in the community, it lacked political leverage and found itself unable to counter this move. Following the removal of Al-Samarrai, the Fiqh Council ordered its mosques to be closed in protest. An official statement insisted the closure was part of the broader Sunni protest movement whilst remaining silent about the Waqf leadership and the removal of Al-Samarrai (Hirak, 2013). Two days later, the Fiqh Council realised an open-ended closure of mosques was not viable and ordered them to be reopened.

In January 2014, the Sunni demonstrations concluded with a bloody end as security forces cleared out protest sites in Anbar. This event was also coupled with the capture of Fallujah by militants. Sunni religious elites such as Al-Saadi backed the uprising, urging fellow Sunnis to 'defend your faith, your honour, and your land' from the army, which he now referred to as 'occupiers' whilst accusing Al-Maliki of attempting to 'wipe out' the Arab Sunni (Rabkin, 2013). These developments had a unifying

effect on the Sunni religious elite as both Al-Saadi and the Fiqh Council issued fataawa (plural of fatwa) providing religious justification for violence against the security forces in Anbar, thus allowing the insurgency to return.

Although endorsed by the Sunni religious elite, the taking up of arms was measured. Many could still remember the nihilistic violence which took place in 2004 to 2005 and feared the new insurgency would also end similarly. Although the Sunni political elite was in favour of protests, members realised they were perhaps unleashing a level of violence which would be uncontrollable. For example, Ahmed Al-Dhiyabi, the governor of Anbar and member of IP, stated in a televised address that he would not be siding with the religious elite but rather with the government and denied the framing of the conflict as self-defence.

> Salutes and prayers to our honourable scholars!… we cannot pay our respects to you at the expense of the blood of the people of this province…. if we are following you into a dead end, and you want us to obey, no! One may not obey a human being in disobedience to God. Our God-given task is to preserve the lives of the people. (Rabkin, 2013).

4.3.9 Sunni religious elites and IS

Many of the Sunni religious elite endorsed the violence in 2014, which proved to be disastrous. While there were many factions in Anbar, IS became the most successful by either absorbing or annihilating competing factions. When Mosul fell in June, it took only a few short weeks for IS to capture other cities from the government. Following this takeover, it appeared the Sunni religious elite were in self-denial, even after the fall of Mosul and the IS caliphate announcement. Al-Saadi was insisting IS was just a small faction and that a genuine revolution was taking place (Al-Omah Al-Awasat, 2014). At first, the Fiqh Council responded by calling for 'disciplined resistance factions and tribal revolutionaries', to be responsible for Sunni provinces (Rabkin, 2018). The Sunni religious elite approach proved to be somewhat naïve as IS began to execute rival Sunnis in a bid to establish their own hegemony. Later Al-Saadi moved to Jordan, from where he would occasionally make political announcements, likening IS to the Shi'a militia. Whilst the Fiqh Council condemned the attacks on Christians in Mosul, it avoided mentioning the perpetrators directly and focused on the Shi'a militia attacks and alleged government compliance (Abdo, 2017, p. 165).

The Sunni religious elite may have thought groups such as IS could be incorporated into their neo-patrimonial networks; however, this proved to be a grave miscalculation. IS considered the existing Islamic organisations such as the Waqf irrelevant and sent many of their Sufi imams fleeing; some were killed or replaced – with many shrines destroyed (Saleh, 2017). The absence of any substantial

criticism of IS from the Fiqh Council most likely reflected the members' frame of mind, which placed the blame for the sectarian conflict squarely on the government.

4.4 OTHER ELITES

The tribe has always been considered an important social divider in Iraq and because of traditional values, organisational and power structures, it has typically dominated the countryside. Throughout early Iraqi history,

> … much of the rural population failed to put down deep roots in the soil. The settled village community with its attachment to the land - the backbone of the social structure throughout most of the Middle East - has been a missing link in Iraq's social fabric. Instead of love of the land, loyalty to family and tribe has dominated Iraq's social and political life. (Marr & Al-Marashi, 2018, p. 16)

Although tribalism has declined because of urbanisation, education and employment, its legacy and the support for neo-patrimonial practices is still significant: 'in political life, family, clan, and local ties often takes precedence over national loyalties and broader ideologies (Marr & Al-Marashi, 2018, p. 16). This phenomenon indicates that social constructs associated with the tribe cannot be ignored and are therefore discussed when necessary.

In terms of the non-political, religious and tribal elite, the literature fails to discuss other elite types, for example, the economic type. This phenomenon can be perhaps attributed to the country's historical oil-based economy, which has been controlled by a select few. According to Idris (2018), although the oil sector has grown, other forms of enterprise have been stifled because of poor infrastructure, brain drain, lack of access to finance, and restrictive regulations which have strengthened state-owned enterprises. Aspects of the constitution which deal with natural resources such as petroleum have marginally benefited the north and south of the country, where the Kurd and Shi'a majorities reside respectively. This is perhaps a by-product of the neo-patrimonial networks and principal interests playing into politics, which sought to advance group interests during the drafting of the constitution (Kuoti, 2016).

4.5 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

The significance of neo-patrimony and the extent to which it has permeated Iraqi politics has had a significant impact on policy design and implementation and, hence, requires deep exploration. Neo-patrimony can be considered the vertical distribution of resources, which gives rise to patron-client networks based on a powerful group or individual. Under Saddam, neo-patrimony and bureaucracy were organisational traits. During his thirty-year tenure, Saddam manipulated and shaped those

around him, using confrontation and competition. He reminded his followers of his position through an exhibition of power and granting them favours and then snatching them away from his children, half-brothers, cousins and tribesmen. This flavour of neo-patrimony resulted in inherited offices, the accumulation of personal wealth and the subversion of bureaucratic norms. At the unit level, familial links provided structural resilience, which made the ruling families' claims to privileges more compelling.

Saddam and his entourage were able to acquire a large portion of state wealth far greater than that which was practically expendable and was only possible because elite control of state bureaucracies, mainly the revenues acquired through rentierism. The acquisition of wealth and position in this manner undermined the bureaucratic practices and notions of meritocracy in the context of employee recruitment and selection practices. Whilst neo-patrimony is confined to the ideological realms in many countries, in Iraq, it was an institutional plane, which significantly changed the norms and practices of bureaucracies influencing decisions at the unit and systemic levels. Moreover, the inability of the Iraqi government to curtail Saddam's power can be seen as an indicator signalling a total loss of bureaucratic control.

Bureaucratic norms can only be maintained when state institutions are strong and state and non-state actors such as politicians, banks and industries adhere to the rule of law. Such a structure compels the elites of these organisations to share resources and authority with other elites positioned in other organisations. When control and authority over resources and revenues are distributed in a stable manner, the elite structure forms an equilibrium, permitting elites to carry out their official duties without having to perpetually consider survival. However, in the case of Saddam, a single elite became politically dominant, acquiring all state resources whilst eliminating rival elites. This primal instinct allowed Saddam to control his underlings, oppress minorities and carry out brutal crackdowns on demonstrations and insurrections.

One of the key features of the Iraqi neo-patrimony during this period was that social mobility could only be realised through tribal inheritance or through the Ba`th party. The regime was able to control the elite through internal competition, party organisations and special agencies. It is difficult to comprehend how this system was cost-effective, but it served its purpose and allowed Saddam to hold onto power through informal networks and by promoting a sense of helplessness amongst the population. Saddam's neo-patrimonial networks consisted of an informal network of family, tribe and clan, which was able to prop up the state whilst undergoing seismic changes. In times of weakness, this arrangement allowed the regime to fall back on a non-state apparatus.

After the US imposed democratic norms on the Iraqi order, contests between major communities erupted. This initial phase can be considered the point at which Sunni Shi'a politics began to crystallise on communal identity lines and it can be likened to previous grand identities, such as the Kurds, the Chaldo-Assyrians and the Turkmen, which formed in the 1990s. With the installation of the new regime, traditional state neo-patronage was destroyed, taking with it the lifeline for many, mainly Sunni, Iraqis, for example, through salaries. This inflated the role of the political and religious elite and reduced the power of the middle classes (which had generally backed the previous regime), resulting in a chronic form of 'gatekeeper' politics (Beresford, 2015). This is a term which refers to how the elite access public resources and opportunities to entrench their personal and economic positions. This is a cyclic relationship, involving the distribution of opportunities and resources through patrimonial networks aimed (amongst other things) to regenerate the political power of the patron through access to state resources such as rents. For all those involved, this was a win-win transaction because, after purchasing loyalty and support from nodes within the neo-patrimonial network, clients realised they also had a vested interest in maintaining the structure and acted accordingly. Thus, the role of the patron inevitably contributes to a volatile political system, which can result in violent battles over who controls the 'gate'. In this context, neo-patrimony results in social and political structures wherein power and authority are cultivated, disseminated and contested.

During Al-Maliki's rise to power and time as prime minister, he attempted to strengthen his own neo-patrimonial networks at the expense of others by becoming what resembled an authoritarian leader, centralising power in the form of governmental activities which were quasi-democratic to authoritarian in nature. This was made easier through the acquisition of external help, that is Iran, which whom he developed person- or party-to-state relations which alienated the Sunni and Kurds and intensified the antagonism between elites from different groups.

Al-Maliki centralised power and strengthened his own neo-patrimonial networks through unit and systemic level support. His treatment of demonstrators also had significant similarities to the former regime, which in part led to his removal. It can be argued that Al-Maliki's Dawa party was very similar to Saddam's Ba`th party of Iraq. Elite actors often resorted to violence or other means to undermine their rivals with the expectation that cooperation would threaten their power (Pearlman, 2009). Whilst some may argue Al-Maliki's intentions were benign, surprisingly the US supported him even though he was acting against the constitution. Much of the actions undertaken by Al-Maliki prompted others, such as the Kurds acting similarly, resulting in highly fragmented groups of self-seeking elites. In addition to Al-Maliki, this included the Kurdish leaders, Talabani and Barzani, as well as Shi'a figures such as Allawi, Chalabi and Al-Abadi.

Another group comprised the religious elite, which also has constituencies of formidable support of their own. Whilst the Shi'a religious elite were united against Saddam's tyranny, they have not always been united under the secular democratisation of Iraqi politics imported by the US. Al-Sistani has consistently been in favour of the one man-one vote system, but others, such as Al-Sadr, have opposed it. Whilst Al-Sistani can be considered to be a Pope like figure for Iraqi Shi'a, this tends to belie the fractious nature of the Shi'a population because of their diverse nature. For example, they form many communities and speak with several often-competing voices – sometimes political, religious and tribal.

Both these figures can be considered hybrid actors since they have shown they can enter and exit unit and systemic level political processes while relying on their regular religious followers who make up their neo-patrimonial networks. Al-Sistani has not directly called for an Islamic state because of his quietist approach, but others such as Al-Sadr have argued for a radical Islamic transformation of Iraq and have also fought the government because of its divergent views in a bid to undermine rival elites. Nonetheless, Al-Sadr has successfully integrated himself into the government apparatus, allowing him to keep a foot in both government and opposition camps and remaining faithful to the Al-Sadr legacy.

Groups such as the Sadrists were subject to cross-pressures from below and above. From below, group patriarchs had to contend with intragroup rivals who had strong incentives to mobilise factional violence, either to secure a neo-patrimonial leadership position of their own, or to seize a greater portion of the group's resources. From above, groups had to contend with state forces that faced strong incentives to suppress these groups, especially, when the neo-patrimonial interests of the elite were threatened by other groups (Warren & Troy, 2014).

Iran has intimate ties with the majority of the Shi'a elite and their political parties. The Badr Organisation, which used to be ISCI's militia split in 2012, also has close ties with Iran. In 2014, the organisation entered politics and won 22 parliamentary seats. As noted, the head of Badr, Hadi Al-Amri became the transport minister. Iranian-backed political parties also included ISCI, which won 29 out of the 328 seats in 2014 during the parliamentary elections. Al-Sadr's militia also received help Iran, and it is where he fled to in 2007. He returned in 2011 and distanced himself from Iran and became a nationalist. But despite the rhetoric, he did not sever his ties altogether. In 2014, the Al-Ahrar bloc won 34 seats.

Although both the Shi'a and Kurdish elites have been successful in developing, maintaining and protecting long-term neo-patrimonial networks, the Sunni elites – both political and religious – have largely failed. For example, although the Al-Najuifi brothers become part of the political establishment and developed person-to-state relations with Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, their neo-patrimonial

networks were easily undermined by Al-Maliki. This is also a reason why these countries were unsuccessful in penetrating Iraq strategically. The core dynamic of Sunni politics during the research period can be described as a division between those focused on confronting Al-Maliki and framing the country's problems though a sectarian lens, and those taking a conciliatory or proactive stance with Baghdad, often for neo-patrimonial benefits, and framing the Kurds as the primary threat.

Moreover, Sunnis with experience in politics were also either barred or withdrew from the newly invented politics based on ethnic and counter ethnic policies. After being impoverished by sanctions, inhibited by state controls and mostly excluded from the new economic neo-patronage system, they found in the new forms of ethnicity and religion the only methods remaining which ensured any type of social mobility. Even when faced with potential annihilation, they have been unable or unwilling to set aside their own interests and accept a single principle and join forces.

The self-interests of the Sunni elite ultimately doomed the protests because of Sunni disunity during this critical time. This prevented the Sunni religious elite from assuming the Marjaiya type role and the capacity to intervene in state matters enjoyed by the likes of Al-Sistani and the Ayatollahs. This led to further identity fragmentation and segmentation from the rest of the Iraqi populace and an increase in Sunni inspired terrorism. Although the Sunnis reengaged with politics later, they have never enjoyed the same amount of authority compared to their Shi'a or Kurdish counterparts.

In the case of Iraq being a neo-patrimonial state, regional and local administration have been customised by an authority playing the role of the principal, which is enacted not as a result of state authority but as personal sovereignty. The potential for private appropriation is independent of the existence of a formal right to this effect. Elites in Iraq have developed this potential although they have no formal right to use resources for personal gain. Neo-patrimonial relations have assumed an informal character based on shared expectations between principals and agents concerning what is permissible. Although the dynamics of neo-patrimony may be rejected when examined rationally, the contemporary importance of this notion lies in the constant uncertainty the Iraqi people have found themselves in to ensure their communal survival. The desire for survival has allowed neo-patrimonial structures to persist and become accepted. Moreover, they have become indispensable through their ability to provide protection and resources; however, this chapter has shown that discontent among Iraqis is a very good indicator of how wealth has not trickled down to individual communities.

Therefore, this research argues neo-patrimony has been micromanaged between different sects and ethnic groups instead of being centralised within a single-family or tribe. In superficial or underdeveloped democracies such as Iraq, a neo-patrimonial feature of the state emerged through a parochial dependent political culture, but it differs from other countries in the Middle East, in early

European history or in the eastern European democracies which developed after the Cold War because they typically had a single head of state (Stanciugelu & Niculescu, 2012). The situation can, therefore, be described as a new broken form of neo-patrimony, where competing elites in the government pledge allegiance to different figureheads. Whilst previously a single patriarch dispensed patrimony, the situation then had fragmented, creating many patriarchs with their own underlings, who vie with others, within and outside their neo-patrimonial structures. Indeed, this is epitomised on the streets of Baghdad when the people say, 'Before we had one Saddam, now we have a thousand!'. This phenomenon can be best described as multiple, many or fragmented neo-patrimony.

Subsequently, successive political and religious elites have attempted to consolidate power through authoritarian and violent strategies – common features of Iraqi neo-patronage and a legacy of the Saddam era. This phenomenon justifies why it is necessary to understand neo-patrimonial structures within state bureaucracies since this approach provides insights into policy determinants. In Iraq, communal and ideological pressures on the state have led to it weakening and have limited its ability to monopolise power domestically and execute coherent unit and systemic level policies.

Based on the above, it is clear elites have to bear most of the responsibility for the political fragmentation in Iraq. With hindsight, it is clear the exiled opposition groups spent most of their time planning how to take power and that their fundamental capacity to govern was inadequate when they were given the opportunity. However, as this chapter has shown, this is not primarily driven by ethno-sectarian divisions amongst Sunni, Shi'a and Kurds, but rather that the disputes over political authority, rents and resources come from within, cut across and transcend these identities. Nonetheless, it is impossible to discuss Iraq without exploring notions of identity and what it means; therefore, the next chapter describes the communal and ideological pressures which have been manifested in the form of sectarianism.

5 SECTARIANISM, TRIBE AND THE IRAQI STATE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Having discussed the legacy of neo-patrimony in determining the dispensation of power in Iraq, I examine more closely the role of sectarianism and the tribe in the political development of the state. In particular, the chapter examines how this feature has manifested itself in the emergence of sectarian interests. Although the direct link between external relations and sectarianism is not necessarily self-evident to all, this chapter provides this link by introducing the debates on sectarianism so it may be understood within the Iraqi context, that is, how, pre and post-2003, sectarianism began to determine the political landscape and how this landscape informed the allocation of political appointments at the unit and system levels.

Most states in the world are secular in nature, which means their decisions reflect this reality. However, this chapter analyses how domestic sectarianism can impact on decision-making through the correlation of internal dispensation of power and the orientation of bilateral policy with other countries. After 2003, the capacity and impact of sectarianism can be traced to the neo-patrimonial interests of the mainly Shi'a Arab political elite. This indicates that sectarianism had an input into decision-making. It can be observed through the association between religious concerns, ethical ideas, values and norms. This conforms to a constructivist understanding of foreign policy behaviour, where sectarian prisms rather than a positivist understanding of a fixed external reality determined Iraqi approaches toward defining interests and external engagement.

In the Middle East, the term 'sectarianism' has multiple meanings. It can be used to refer to different intra-societal relations but can also refer to the actions of individuals (Saleh, 2009, p. 77), where violence, harassment, intimidation, threat and personalised discrimination are driven by ethno-politico-religious differences. On the other hand, sectarianism can also refer to state policies. That is, it is not a societal phenomenon; rather, it is something to be implemented. For example, it could be 'the promotion and deliberate deployment of sect-based allegiance in the pursuit of political ends' (Ayub, 2013). This indicates sectarianism can also refer to a governmental system, that is, the division of the state into separate communities based on their ethnic or religious affiliations (Bashkin, 2010).

It has also been stated the political elites can politicise and manipulate sectarianism whilst others have noted the matter is the consequence of politicising fractured identities (Shuman, 2013). Due to the context of this research effort, there is a direct link between sectarian identities and state patronage, which can be used to effectively demarcate the term's multiple meanings. According to Makdisi (2000, p. 7), sectarianism 'refers to the deployment of religious heritage as a primary marker of modern

political identity'. In other words, sectarian identities may be intricately linked with modern political perceptions. It should also be acknowledged that there will be difficulties in understanding sectarian cleavages if religion is ignored. For example, it would not be possible to use sectarianism as a political instrument to understand clerical injunctions or sect-based prejudices which instigate the sectarian enmity as a duty. Nonetheless, since Makdisi's definition is closely aligned with this thesis, it has been accepted as the main definition in this chapter.

Bureaucracies have traditionally been salient causal mechanisms capable of transforming ideas into policies. In this regard, Sikkink (1991, p. 2) has stated: 'Rarely do new ideas thrive in the modern world outside of institutional networks. Ideas within an institution become embodied in its statement of purpose, its self-definition, and its research or training program, which in turn tends to perpetuate and extend the ideas'. Based on this assumption, there are clear implications for Iraq, a society which has become deeply divided along sectarian and ethnic lines, and one which has seen violence and bloodshed for an extended period. It, therefore, appears that government agencies are not immune from ideational influences.

Sectarian bureaucratic politics concerning foreign policy are important for two main reasons, firstly, because the domestic elite have increased their influence and power. Under normal circumstances, this would not always be the case since foreign policy operates within a thin interest group environment. Within domestic policymaking models, interest groups can impact decisions. Foreign policy interest groups, in contrast, are usually less organised, relatively smaller and have less wealth; therefore, they have minimal influence (Zegart, 1999). In Iraq, however, interest groups such as those who were effective against defeating IS in 2014 went on to have leverage in subsequent elections and on the government (Mansour, 2014). For example, Jamal Jaafar Mohammad Al-Ibrahimi (aka Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis or The Engineer) became the single most powerful actor in the PMF program but was also known for having links with the IRGC and person-to-state relations with Iran (ISCC, 2019).

Relations such as the above raised the profile of the elite and their ability to influence the direction of foreign policy. Thus, the foreign policy trajectory has also been set by multiple actors who operate as rogue negotiators, backed by a domestic following in addition to external entities. In short, the bureaucracies of state were used to amplify particular sectarian positions rather than being autonomous actors in their own right devoid of allegiances beyond institutional affiliation.

The existence of sectarianism can also be used to understand how organisational cultures can further impede the implementation of foreign policy ideas. The inputs of procedural organisations such as government departments can usually be viewed (Wilson, 1989, p. 164) where the observation of outputs is possible. These bureaucracies usually focus more on means rather than the ends. In the

context of foreign affairs, the connection with outputs of foreign policy agencies and the outcomes designed to influence is indirect or vague and, in certain situations, it is not very observable. However, in Iraq, sectarian input has transcended traditional inputs through the emasculation of non-foreign policy actors and institutions.

As such, sectarian alliances have produced compelling beliefs which have been joined together with departmental leaders and lower-level operators. When the ideas of both leaders and operators are closely aligned, it produces idea-fused agencies, which results in a unique sense of departmental mission. Although in other contexts, this may result in the departmental ability to overcome intra-agency principal-agency difficulties (Wilson, 1989), this type of approach to foreign policy decision-making is highly problematic: It highlights the extreme circumstances in which Iraqi bureaucracy has been required to function.

5.2 SUB-STATE IDENTITIES

The post-2003 sectarian violence across Iraq brought to the fore two much-debated questions: what is the origin of sub-state identities, and what causes them to mobilise violently? Mainstream scholarship has answered the first question by drawing on 'modernist' approaches, viewing political identities, both national and sub-national, as 'imagined' ties, which have been given meaning by elites, and the social and economic changes brought about after the creation of the modern state. This model assumes the construction of a nation is created as a form of top-down control (Anderson, 1983).

In contrast, the 'primordial' view (Smith, 1986, p. 3), argues that Sunni and Shi'a differences are ancient in nature and cannot be overcome by modernity through artificially created borders. In this regard, Fanar Haddad provided a nuanced interpretation after applying Anthony Smith's 'ethno-symbolism' to Iraq. Haddad (2011) argued that by using older ethnic ties as a basis for modern political identities using 'myth symbol complex', greater political instability would be likely. A central feature of the myth symbol complexes is 'chosen traumas' and 'chosen glories' (Volkan, 2004). The former refers to a collective disaster which has befallen a group, consisting of myth and sanctification, which can remain dormant but when awoken can be tailored to fit a given situation. On the other hand, 'chosen glories' refer to events which create feelings of success and triumph. These concepts, highly relevant to the sectarianism in Iraq, have been widely applied elsewhere. For example, on the Indian sub-continent, 'chosen traumas' have been applied to both Hindu-Muslim and Sikh-Hindu to demonise the 'other' (Kinnvall, 2002). 'Chosen traumas' are perhaps more vivid in the minds of Hindus following close to a millennium of Muslim rule over parts of India. 'Chosen Glories' have also been reactivated by the Hindus of India to bolster the group's self-esteem, for example, through the naming of missiles after famous Warrior Hindu Kings such as Prithvi Vallabh.

In Iraq, ‘chosen traumas’ for the Shi'a provided linking objects for old and new generations to be rediscovered, reused and reinterpreted. External manifestations of past trauma were repressed by the state only to be rediscovered as collective experiences. The linking cycle allowed the younger generation to experience the loss and pain of their elders through repeated usage of the same abject other, that is, the Sunni population. Therefore, ‘chosen traumas’ and ‘chosen glories’ within the Iraqi context have a sectarianism tinge and an intimate connection with religion in addition to recent history.

Haddad viewed the myth symbol complex as the most important dynamic in Iraqi sectarian identity. Myths of Sunni-Shi’a hostility, based on historic events, although being constantly reinvented, were handed down from one generation to the next, lying dormant, ‘but ever ready to be reawakened and revised to suit the needs of a future crisis (Haddad, 2014, pp. 17-20). Haddad placed a greater emphasis on the bottom-up nature of this myth-making, as opposed to the modernist view, which insists the construction of identity takes place in a top-down manner, with no agency for the masses (2014, p. 21).

The Shi'a view can also be extended to include concepts such as victimhood, which is, historically, because of the killing of Hussein, the grandson of the Prophet Mohammed (Council of Foreign Relations, 2011), and more recently their victimisation and discrimination by the minority Sunni population. Although Ba`thism was supposed to be all-inclusive, the Sunni population was privileged, more specifically those of Tikrit, which led to the term, the ‘Tikriti connection’, being coined, consisting of Sunni elites, tribes, and areas loyal to Saddam. Naturally, this produced a sense of victimhood in the Shi'a psyche. When the opportunity arose, they sought retribution. Therefore, the narrative of victimhood fed into state neo-patronage after 2003. It is clear powerful elements saw the utilisation of such narratives as an opportunity for revenge or to gain power by completely reshaping the political landscape.

5.3 Tribalism in Iraq

Tribes are typically thought of being monolithic in nature, reflecting a single religious or sectarian identity. However, the tribes of Iraq, unlike tribes of other states, such as Saudi Arabia, do not conform to this norm. A single tribe in Iraq may consist of both Sunni and Shi'a members, which, in the past, have allowed hybrid tribal identities and sectarian affinities. Although tribal influence has been mainly relegated to the social sphere in contemporary times, its influence throughout Iraqi history and folklore cannot be denied. For example, the revolution of 1920 was a tribal revolt, which provided the country with national heroes such as Sheikh Dari of Zawba (Zeidel et al., 2010, p. 167) who fought against the British. This historical chapter was perhaps a unique convergence of national and tribal

narratives, but, following this instance, a success of this nature was never again emulated. Moreover, from this moment on, not only were tribal efforts at taking control unsuccessful but they were detrimental to the idea of how the mandate authorities, in this case, the British, conceived of the state, which looked to privilege one group over another, thus creating dependency relationships upon which colonial rule could be sustained. This process of divide and rule was repeated throughout both the British and French empires in the aftermath of the First World War. In the case of Iraq, however, this has particular ramifications as the Sunni minority came to be beholden to the British, who, in turn, gave them privileged access to the nascent institutions of the state, notably the army.

5.3.1 Ba`thist State and Saddam: subjugation of the Shi'a

With the passage of time and the rise of modernity, the tribe became more reliant upon the urban political elite, especially during the British occupation and under the Hashemite monarchy. With the overthrow of the latter in 1958, the sheikhs and the tribal systems they represented found themselves at a disadvantage because it placed them in the opposing camps of the Baathist political order. The agrarian revolution, with its wholesale land reforms, posed an existential economic threat to the tribal system through the parcelling out of their lands. This led the tribes to rebel and align themselves with other conservative forces against the government but to little effect, resulting in their influence almost disappearing (Yaphe, 2012).

Despite the tribe progressively losing status, there were brief periods of re-tribalisation in Iraq. For example, in the 1960s, the Arefi brothers led three governments which made tribal nominations of Sheikhs into sensitive bureaucratic government and security positions. This period can be described as one where the tribe was used by rulers for purposes of allegiance and loyalty. In general, the loyalty of the tribe, in addition to other types of loyalties, such as Sunni sectarian loyalties, were used together for government-buttressing purposes. History shows tribal reliance on its members and outside actors typically increased following dramatic events where the regime found itself weak and lacking confidence. The use of the tribe in this manner also replaced more ideological identities, such as communism and nationalism in the 1960s and Ba`th ideology during the 1990s.

The next period of tribal strengthening occurred in the late 1980s and increased after 1991. Saddam filled the ranks of the army, the Republican Guard and other security services with members of his own tribe, the Albu Nasir of ‘Auja (UK Government Web Archive, 2002), as, faced with existential threats to the regime, the Iraqi leader fell back on tribal ties to shore up his support.

During the 1990s, lower-ranked tribes affiliated with the government were encouraged to supplement the state by preventing uprisings and maintaining public order (Isser, 2011, p. 267). Although the Ba`th party ideology considered the tribes to be backward, during this period they were instrumentalised to

counter growing popular discontent, not least in Shi'a and Kurdish areas. By 2003, there were over 7,000 sheikhs receiving payments from the regime, a form of neo-patrimony that was crucial to ensuring continued allegiance to the regime when the state was beginning to fragment (Mazaheri, 2010). However, not all Sunni tribes supported the government and during this period the tribes from the Sunni confederation and elements of the military attempted to organise coups against the regime. Following the Gulf War in 1991, army units in the south of Iraq immediately rebelled. The most serious of these events involved an armoured battalion which mutinied and positioned itself outside Baghdad ready to 'fight to the death'. It led to the execution of General Mohammed Mazlum al-Dulaimi, resulting in civil unrest in Ramadi and skirmishes between rebel and government forces at Abu Ghraib involving tanks, armoured vehicles and helicopters. One of the primary rebel demands was the release of political prisoners (*The Independent*, 1995) but the insurrection was rapidly quashed by the army and Republican Guard (Zeidel, 2010).

Saddam's use of neo-patrimony ultimately relied on sectarianism to divide and conquer. However, from a political perspective, his regime remained careful not to empower the tribes by facilitating their accelerated entry into the institutions of the state. Tribesmen were not appointed to senior positions in the army, security services or powerful government positions whilst other state institutions such as the Interior and Foreign ministries were beyond the scope of their influence. This indicated the state as a whole was immune to tribal norms. By the end of Saddam's reign, tribal connections were replaced with a very narrow pool of individuals who were either directly or indirectly related to him (Okeke-Ibezim, 2006, p. 20).

5.3.2 Post Saddam Iraq, 2003

Still, following 12 years of empowerment under Saddam, tribes had become too conspicuous to be ignored, which meant that by the time the US and the UK invaded, some degree of cooperation was mandated. In some instances, this process began prior to the invasion phase, with the Americans secretly working with some tribes to lay the groundwork for the invasion of western Iraq (Heazle & Islam, 2006, p. 87).

Following the invasion, the emerging Iraqi resistance comprised mainly Sunni and Shi'a religious fundamentalists, patriots and ex-Baathists. However, as the resistance developed, it became organised along tribal lines and subtribes, with operational zones arranged according to tribal territories. For example, checkpoints were operated by a single tribe, an occurrence which started in Anbar province but was repeated in other areas (Silverman, 2011, p. 263).

During this period, the previously accumulated influence of the tribe had a detrimental impact on an already weakened centralised state. While under Saddam Hussein, some, mainly Sunni tribes had been

co-opted by the state, by 2003, many of these tribes were fighting against it due to the Sunni loss of power and status across Iraq. One Sunni tribal leader asserted that the '[Shi'a] cannot take charge of Iraq in the same manner as the Sunnis. The [Shi'a] are backwards. They are barbarian savages, they do not know true religion, theirs is twisted, it is not the true religion of Muhammad' (Fitzsimmons, 2013, pp. 71-72).

Iraqis living in the countryside relied more heavily on their tribal ties for subsistence and security relative to their urban counterparts. The tribes also organised themselves into Sunni and Shi'a coalitions. For example, Thameer Al-Dulemi's Iraqi National League for Chiefs of Tribes had approximately 16,000 members when it was first formed in 2003 and the Iraqi Tribal National Council led by Hussein Ali Shaalan (assassinated by insurgents in 2007) engaged in both unit and systemic level politics and participated in the 2005 legislative elections under the Iraqi National List. Other such groupings included the National Alliance of Tribes and Clans of Iraq, the Democratic Grouping of Iraqi Tribes and the ISC headed by Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdul Wahid (al-Khaled). This later joined the Iraqi National List led by the former Prime Minister, Ayad Allawi (O'Sullivan & Al-Saiedi, 2014).

By the summer of 2006, Iraq was in the midst of an unprecedented sectarian civil war. Tribes were expected to take sides, often facing contradictory pressure coming from the American-led coalition and central government, on the one hand, and Sunni and Shi'a militias, as well as terrorist organisations such as AQI, on the other. Concerning the latter, coercive measures were employed, such as the targeting of sheikhs, which became a major threat to the tribes (Malkasian, 2017, p. 6). The fight against AQI was arguably made easier because of the latter's tactics, which involved attempting to oppose and dismember the tribal structure (Gartenstein-Ross & Jensen, 2015). In particular, tribes in Anbar province suffered greatly from violent coercion. This explains why tribes across the province responded by raising militias of their own. For example, the Abu Risha tribe, which belongs to the major Sunni tribal confederation of Dulaim, sought and accepted American support, giving rise to the 'Abna Al-Iraq' and 'Sahwa' or 'Sons of Iraq' and 'Awakening' programs (O'Leary, 2011, p. 89). These efforts were successful but were restricted to areas of the countryside subject to Sunni influence. They did not impinge upon the Shi'a tribal areas of the south or in areas where the government had a monopoly on power.

It can be argued that AQI may have been more influential in Iraq had they been more lenient with the Sunni tribes. Moreover, had they not interfered with the nationalist resistance and supported, at least nominally, a nationalist ideology, they could have enjoyed broad support from most of the Sunni fighters and also acquired systemic level support from Jordan, Syria and Saudi Arabia. However, AQI was managed by foreign leaders who proposed foreign ideas and cared little for the public relations

which would have helped them win Iraqi hearts and minds. Although, AQI members spoke Arabic, were Sunni Muslims and identified with the same ethnic group as Iraqi Sunnis, they also miscalculated the consequences of their extreme actions. By exceeding all Iraqi norms, be they humanitarian, social, cultural, and religious, AQI was successful in removing the stigma associated with working with the Shi'a government and the US forces.

The use of tribes in this phase was useful, however. Following the US withdrawal, the government had to do something about the tribal militias which were no longer needed. Although Sunni politicians attempted to reintegrate these men into the security services, only a few were given employment (Cordesman & Khazai, 2014, p. 206). This created an ominous threat to regional security, where militias had been used to pacify provinces such as Nineveh, Diyala and Anbar. Ex-militia grievances were a major motivator for Sunni protests in these areas. However, equating tribes with conflict is overly simplistic because unlike in the era of Saddam Hussein, newly formed provincial councils began to play important roles in security governance. These were elected by people in each province and mirrored the municipal balance of power. It was at this level that the tribes were able to exhibit maximum impact and influence.

Notably, the 'Sahwa' co-founder, Abdul Sattar Abu Risha, led the Iraq Awakening Council to a leading position and won the Anbar municipal elections in 2009. Elsewhere in Iraq, the majority of the successful Sahwa leaders were those who allied themselves with political parties such as Saleh Multaq's Iraqi Front for National Dialogue, who joined forces with the Al-Hadba party of Mosul, and even the Iraqi Islamic Party in locations such as Diyala province. Arguably, this was a partially successful attempt by Sahwa leaders to normalise their relations with the Iraqi state within the framework of local governance and elections.

The rising popularity and influence of the Sahwa leaders did not go unnoticed by Al-Maliki and the Shi'a government and it explains why there was stiff opposition to integrating Sahwa members into state institutions, or at least accept the security role of the tribes within their own neighbourhoods. Rather than work with the Sahwa leaders, in 2008 the government conducted a systematic elimination and marginalisation policy, which consisted of three broad methods. The first involved depriving the Sahwa movement of the financial and material resources essential for its existence; the second was an attempt to disband tribal councils through crackdowns and arrests, which prompted the Sahwa leaders to threaten to end government cooperation; and the third, arguably the most pervasive, was Al-Maliki's strategy to set up parallel tribal structures and co-opting Sahwa leaders. This threefold strategy was successful in depriving the Sahwa movement with resources which were critical to

maintaining itself as a long-term actor. These efforts seriously damaged the Sahwa movement's political potential, which ultimately peaked at the provincial levels and then declined.

It can be argued that this was a profound miscalculation by the government. Combined with the political chaos of the 2010 legislative elections, the anti-Sahwa attitude provided breathing space for increased insurgency. This involved AQI carrying out attacks on tribal mobilisation and capitalising on the Sahwa movement's political deadlock. It also enticed tribal elements back into an armed struggle and radicalised their feelings towards the government.

5.4 GOVERNING THE NEW IRAQ

5.4.1 CPA and Sectarianism

Following the US invasion, Ambassador Paul Bremer served as the Presidential Envoy to Iraq and Administrator of the CPA from May 2003 to June 2004. He arrived in Baghdad on May 12 and enjoyed a broad mandate and plenary powers. As administrator of the CPA, he was responsible for managing the aftermath and promoting democratic ideals, which were intended to serve as a model for the wider Middle East. Bremer had full authority to utilise Iraqi assets and instruct the Iraqi governing elite, in addition to full legislative, executive and judicial authority (Dobbins et al., p. xiii; Katzman, 2011).

Just four days after arriving in Baghdad, Bremer signed CPA Order #1 and 2, which involved de-Ba`thification of Iraqi Society and disbanding of the army, security, and other organisations (Sissons & Al-Saiedi, 2013). These orders were modelled on the success of the de-Nazification of Germany after World War II. While de-Ba'thification was not Bremer's plan, it was up to him to implement it. Order #1 not only involved removing the Ba`th party but was intended to remove the top four levels of the party's chain of command, remove personnel in the top three levels of each ministry and prevent them from future employment in the public sector. Bremer estimated that approximately 20,000, or 1% of the Ba`th party membership would be affected. However, in reality, de-Ba`thification 'put at least thirty-five thousand civil servants – engineers, professors, managers – out of work', whilst Order #2 put hundreds and thousands of young men with weapons training on the streets (Pfiffner, 2010).

The general idea concerning the removal of the Ba`th was arguably the correct policy; however, its implementation proved to be significantly more challenging. Bremer thought the CPA would be unable to implement de-Ba`thification since it would not be able to discern the fine line between the hardcore members and those who were Ba`th members because they wanted to hold civil service jobs. Therefore, Iraqi participation in de-Ba'thification was required and was provided in the form of the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) (Howard, 2007).

In conjunction with the UN, the CPA created the IGC in July 2003. It was, in effect an advisory panel to the CPA but was also meant to give legitimacy to the post-invasion institutional arrangements, which the US-led coalition believed, should now shape the 'new' Iraq. The IGC was billed as 'the most representative body in Iraq's history' based on its supposedly 'balanced' membership, consisting of thirteen Shia, five Sunnis, one Christian and a Turkoman representative, many of whom, like Chalabi, had been political exiles. The sectarian nature of this arrangement was clear based on the inclusion of the Iraqi Communist Party representative, Hamid Majid Mousa, and the staunchly secular Ahmed Chalabi in the same Shia block. Despite the ideological conflict, practical politics can make strange bedfellows or can result in opposition amongst individuals within the same political sect-based grouping. This type of sectarian calculation was also used to increase the number of cabinet portfolios in the IGC to 25, which allowed the state bureaucracies to be divided according to the relevant weight of each faction (Barakat, 2013, p. 151).

Based on the IGC selection process, it was evident that Iraqi exiles forwarded primordial constructs which came to dominate the US official view of the perceived Iraqi population. The Shi'a diaspora refugees making up the IGC and the population formulas used for government structuring enforced a new sectarian political reality. Moreover, Shi'a diaspora refugees were given preference and chosen above indigenous Iraqis even from the same background. As noted in the previous chapter, the populist Muqtada Al-Sadr was side-lined and went on to create the Mahdi Army, one of the most powerful sectarian militias. In particular, criticism was directed towards the divisive selection mechanism for the IGC, with the argument that it introduced blatant sectarianism which was previously unknown in Iraqi politics (Houses of Parliament, 2003). Debate also focused on the potential damage which such a selection mechanism had on government efficiency, in addition to complaints focusing on sectarian and religious affiliations being the key criteria for job suitability rather than technical skills, competence and qualifications (Al-Rawi, 2013).

Although de-Ba`thification was the IGC's responsibly, the council handed it over to Ahmed Chalabi. De-Ba`thification was conducted promptly but arguably too quickly and at times too deeply. Moreover, it was implemented haphazardly across the country, which left the Coalition forces and Iraqis unsure about the scope of the programme. For example, one of the key directors and veterinarians at Baghdad Zoo was removed from his post because he was a low-ranking Ba`th official (Howard, 2007).

As well as being responsible for de-Ba`thification, the IGC could also propose unit and systemic level policies, approve budgets and appoint interim ministers and diplomats. However, any decision had to be approved by the CPA, which enjoyed veto power over any decision (Otterman, 2005). Despite the

possibility, in reality, the IGC had very little influence over Iraqi in the immediate aftermath of its creation. With the institutions of the state very much under the control of the CPA and amid a nationwide insurgency that threatened the very fabric of Iraq as a functioning polity, the setting of effective policies was void.

By November, the CPA had become disillusioned with the IGC's performance and branded it part of the problem. Indeed, the IGC was incapable of showing strategic leadership and was criticised by Bremer, who noted that 'at least half the council is out of the country at any given time and that at some meetings, only four or five members show up[!]' (McGlone, 2003).

Due to the increasingly negative US media press coverage of events in Iraq, including the increased US military and Iraqi civilian casualties as the insurgency took hold and perhaps acknowledging the presence of troops from other countries posing a serious threat to conflict termination (Pettersson & Wallensteen, 2015), Bremer was hastily recalled for consultations in Washington. Moreover, with increased pressure from the Security Council to transfer sovereignty to an Iraqi body, the alienation of the CPA and increased political violence meant adventurous CPA projects had to be scrapped. The US then set June 30, 2004, as the deadline for the transfer of sovereignty to a fully-fledged Iraqi government. This plan involved IGC endorsement on November 15, 2003, the drafting of new laws and a constitution by February 2004, and the creation of a transitional assembly which would guide the country to elections (United Nations Publications, 2006, p. 13).

These failures reflect the near impossibility of executing grandiose plans of social engineering whilst fighting a formidable insurgency. One of the main reasons the reconstruction was unsuccessful was not because Bremer did not comprehend the denazification upon which he modelled de-Ba`thification, but because the German resistance had been completely obliterated in World War II. Although in 2003, the regime had been defeated, Iraqi society was still functioning, and the people were willing and able to resist the dictates of an imperial force.

5.4.2 Sectarian apportionment ('*Muhassasa Ta'ifia'*) system

This system restructured the Iraqi politics around an informal version of consociationalism; that is, the destabilising effects of deep social cleavages in theory can be offset by cooperation between subcultures at the elite level (Schmidt, 2015). In Iraq, this meant empowering political parties claiming to represent the Sunni, Shi'a and Kurdish communities (Lindemann, 2008). Although the quota system is commonly attributed to Bremer, Iraqi exiles directly contributed to its formulation, and it was agreed upon in October 1992. A total of 234 Iraqi opposition activists gathered at a conference in Salahuddin (northern Iraq, which had been recently liberated from Baghdad's rule and) envisaged sharing government positions through sectarian apportionment. This conference established a

number of councils and committees which were to act as a unified opposition and government in waiting (Katzman, 2011).

Moreover, following their exile, leaders such as Chalabi established offices in Washington and maintained independent channels with US officials, but also united and shared their approach with the Kurds and worked together to be the power block in the new Iraq (Chandrasekaran, 2010). Both the Shi'a and Kurds followed a well-rehearsed official position which adhered to the US narrative referencing a democratic and united Iraq at peace with its neighbours and free of weapons of mass destruction. Within these norms, the Shi'a-Kurdish groups pushed for a power-sharing agreement based on an ethno-religious quota system (Visser, 2010). The Kurds insisted on holding onto their semi-autonomous regions but also wanted official state bureaucracies to be shared at all levels in the central government. The plan would have failed had it not been backed by Shi'a leaders even though the Kurds were the clear benefactors. Such an arrangement ensured the Arab population was split into Sunni and Shi'a factions, which meant Arabs would find it more difficult to control a democratic Iraq.

With the previously exiled Kurdish and Shi'a leaders were united in their position, it was relatively easy to convince Bremer to adopt a quota system and institutionalise identity politics. Specifically, the most important Shi'a group at the time, the SCIRI, headed by Abdul Aziz Al-Hakim (and backed by Iran) was a key body which influenced the finer details of the quota system (Homeland Security, 2015). While the CPA can be criticised for over-emphasising the relevance of identity and sectarianism, its position, as noted previously, was significantly influenced by exiled Iraqi leaders (Carnegie, 2016). The exiled leaders' obsession with identity is perhaps understandable given that many of these groups had seen their kith and kin repressed by the Ba'athist regime precisely because of their ethnic and sectarian affinities.

The Shi'a and Kurdish exiles fully backed the scheme and manipulated the commission to extract favours and pursue personal self-interests by developing their neo-patrimonial networks. The majority of those negatively impacted by the quota scheme were state employees who had not committed any crime per se but previously had Ba`th party membership. It has been estimated that approximately 85,000 Sunni professional state employees were deprived of their jobs and denied access to future state employment (Sissons & Al-Saiedi, 2013). Indeed, alongside disbanding the Iraqi army, the decision to prevent Sunni bureaucrats from returning to office was a key decision, which gravely jeopardised US chances of bringing stability to Iraq and, more than any other single decision, helped fuel the insurgency (Pfiffner, 2010).

Although the quota system was intended to ensure political participation across the sectarian divide, its institutional limitations were quickly exposed. Iraq's first democratically elected prime minister and hard-line Shi'a, Ibrahim Al-Jaafari, was accused of excluding Sunnis and even persecuting them during his term at the Interior Ministry. At a press conference, Al-Jaafari stated: 'If need be, we will be strong against the perpetrators of acts of violence, and at the same time we will be lenient with anybody who will work with us' (Rory, 2006), which actually meant leniency would not be shown towards any opposition. Despite this, the core of Sunni discontent clearly preceded any political discord at the time and the advent of democracy, if anything, entrenched ethnic and sectarian identities at the expense of the national identity: the quota system reinforced divisions instead of bridging them. Nonetheless, it should also be acknowledged that without this arrangement, political marginalisation of the Sunnis could have been far greater.

From the outset, Sunnis adopted, at best, an ambivalent approach to the post Ba`thist power dispensation whilst the political integration has been defined as a 'harsh readjustment' (Zeidel, 2008). There were also fringe elements who could not reconcile themselves with the loss of privilege which the imposition of 'democracy' entailed (Heazle & Islam, 2006, p. 82). Nonetheless, the Sunni and Shi'a political elite, if for different reasons (as discussed in the previous chapter), sought a strong centralised state, as opposed to Kurdish aspirations for greater decentralisation (Gardner, 2016, p. 25). This overarching goal explained why Iraqi Kurds have, despite key internal differences, managed to retain a modicum of unity.

5.5 Iraqi Elections

Saddam's neo-patrimonial legacy impacted the Shi'a exiles by generating feelings of unique victimhood, which were shared among a large segment of Iraqi society. This was most evident in the almost spontaneous outpouring of Shi'a identity after the 2003 invasion (Wehrey, 2018, p. 129), which arguably also contributed to the eventual failure of secular parties in the new Iraqi elections. An acute awareness of religious identity amongst different groups led to increased sectarian perceptions, similar to the period when Iraq was under UN sanctions. This perhaps became most evident when the Sadrist phenomenon (discussed in the previous chapter) came as a rude awakening to the new political elite and coalition, who were unaware of its presence in Iraq prior to 2003.

5.5.1 January and December 2005 General and Parliamentary Elections: Religious faction cleavage

The first election of 2005 was deemed a setback for democratic promotion in Iraq because this period also marked the start of the sectarian conflict. This reality gave rise to the Iraqi political arena being

termed ‘sectarian’ (Bengio, 2008, pp. 59-83; Bacik, 2008) and became the dominant norm through which the relationship between political voters and parties came to be understood.

In the absence of any true socio-political leverage because of their absence, the dominant Shi'a political elite utilised religious networks, many of which had operated clandestinely under Saddam’s regime as mediators between societies and their parties. The Shi'a political elite used the Shi'a religious elite, including the charismatic religious figure Al-Sistani, to mobilise the electorate. Moreover, figures such as Al-Sistani were not only passive facilitators of the political elite but also took the initiative to maximise Shi'a representation after the January elections. For example, Al-Sistani created a six-man committee to choose candidates for the electoral coalition to fight elections. This resulted in the parties such as Dawa forming a coalition with Shia parties as well as the religious establishment, all coalescing under the umbrella of the UIA. The UIA won 140 of 275 parliamentary seats in the January election. In contrast, Sunni politicians did not participate in the elections because of violence plaguing areas north and west of Baghdad, which made a free fair vote impossible. The head of the Iraqi Islamic party, Mohsen Abdul-Hamid stated, ‘We are not calling for a boycott, but we said we would take part only if certain conditions had been met and they have not’ (Howard, 2004).

In December 2005, a new election system was installed based on a closed list system and proportional representation. The Sunni parties formed the Iraqi National List alliance, but lacked the tools and experience needed for political organisation (Sullivan & Al-Saiedi, 2014), whilst Kurdish parties such as the PUK and the KDP formed the Kurdish Alliance. The UIA was again able to acquire a high number of seats, 128 out of 275, a clear majority, making them the ruling party. UIA leader Ibrahim Al-Jaafari became prime minister. However, this was short of a majority, which meant a coalition government was formed with the Kurdish Alliance. This left Sunni parties feeling increasingly disenfranchised. The 2005 elections witnessed a political free for all, where political elites attempted to gain as much control of the state apparatus as possible.

Jaafari resigned as prime minister following criticism of him failing to curb violence and mounting pressure from some of his partners in the ruling Shi'a Alliance. This allowed Al-Maliki to succeed him in May 2006. The tension with the Sunni population was reduced after he reached out to the Sunni political elite and following the announcement of a national reconciliation plan in June, including conditional amnesty for insurgents and intra-communal dialogue between militias, clerics, civil society representatives and politicians. However, this only took place after the displacement and death of thousands of ordinary Iraqi civilians (Turner, 2017, p. 672). However, these tentative moves towards reconciliation were contradicted by other government moves. In August 2007, six Sunni ministers found their positions untenable within the Al-Maliki government and resigned. The main points of

contention included the growing power of the Shi'a militias and their calls for greater Sunni representation. They eventually returned to their posts towards the latter end of 2008 after Al-Maliki's efforts against the Shi'a militia groups, including militias loyal to Al-Sadr in and around Basra, which proved to be successful (O'Sullivan & Al-Saiedi, 2014).

Al-Maliki attempted to bring about a coalition government comprising Shi'as, Sunnis, Kurds and Turkomans whilst resisting Iranian efforts to form a united Shi'a block (Sowell, 2014). Arguably, this was the only meaningfully attempt at forming a government along non-sectarian lines during his premiership. However, Al-Maliki has been quoted as saying the national partnership between ethnic groups inhibited government formation. Moreover, Al-Malaki has been recorded as saying: 'Partnership is another form of a sectarian quota … It is sectarianism in fact, but we accept it to move forward. The country's political process has many mistakes that need to be revised' (Mohammed, 2011).

5.5.1.1 Voter behaviour and mobilisation

Given the sectarian approach to politics, the identity and values of ethnic groups had a major impact on the 2005 January general and December parliamentary elections simply because these were their only choices. Another compounding factor was that most Sunni candidates were also former Ba'thists who, strictly speaking, should not have been permitted to campaign. As a result, the election outcome revealed that Shi'a dominated areas received the bulk of the Shi'a vote, with similar voting patterns being mirrored in Sunni and Kurdish areas (Sullivan & Al-Saiedi, 2014). The impact of political mobilisation based on sectarianism cleavages is, therefore, critical for understanding the broader discourse of sectarianism in Iraq.

It should also be noted that sectarian and ethnic lines did not become apparent until the election campaign phase started. As groups sought to mobilise voters, clear lines based on the exclusion of social groups were drawn. Sectarian inclinations, thus, truly manifested themselves following the election when political struggle translated into a violent struggle. One of the key milestones was the bombing of the Shi'a shrine in Samarra by AQI in February 2006, which led to more than 1,300 deaths in a wave of sectarian violence up and down the country (Rory, 2006). This event further morphed sectarian differences into politicised cleavages and is often cited as being the trigger for the Iraqi civil war (Dawisha, 2010). This event was also the precursor to the emergence of militia and terrorist groups operating openly in the streets of the capital and across Iraq.

Although sectarian-based violence peaked in 2006, it declined as voters started to demonstrate exhaustion towards sectarianism. Due to the high death rate, coupled with the possibility of state-based dissolution along sectarian lines, antipathy towards the sectarian civil war increased. These

feelings consisted of anti-sectarian and anti-federalist sentiment (Yamao, 2012). Whilst public perceptions were changing, so too was the political mood. Party policies now began to shift from sectarian voter reliance to the formation of a national unity government, which now looked to curb the influence of sectarian actors. This phenomenon was first witnessed by the newly formed Al-Maliki government in 2006 which, in the face of the sectarian civil war, opted to form a government of national unity by embracing parties from across the political and, by default, the sectarian spectrum. This was undertaken by co-optation across and within the sectarian divide (Yamao, 2012).

By 2008, the death squads and terrorist groups were no longer permitted to walk the streets as they had done in the two previous years. All the major power brokers within Iraq, including the US, tribal forces, security services and some armed groups, cooperated against the most extreme groups. Main roads up and down the country were lined with the Awakening Council flags, and local fighters decided to police the streets and stop the violence. This period of 'normality' permitted the army to deploy and set up checkpoints (Al-Ali, 2014b).

The Sunni Awakening consisted of two components: the Anbar Awakening and the Sons of Iraq programme, also called the Awakening councils. The former was an Iraqi grassroots initiative paid for by the government and supported by the US. Meanwhile, the Sons of Iraq programme was a US led and funded initiative, which was aimed at spreading the success of the Anbar Awakening into other Sunni areas (Al-Jabouri & Jensen, 2010). Al-Maliki alongside other officials backed the Sunni fight against AQI and were regularly visited by Anbar Awakening leaders. At the time the integration of some of these fighters into Iraqi security services was not considered a political threat to the incumbent political parties in Baghdad. These fighters were viewed as minimising the AQI threat. Even the Shi'a led government acknowledged the efficacy of the Sahwa, although it was difficult for them to accept the idea of armed paramilitaries, sometimes headed by former insurgents, functioning in proximity to sectarian areas. The US was also employing the Sons of Iraq and Awakening councils in other areas such as Baghdad and Diyala, where the Iraqi army and police were Shi'a (Al-Jabouri & Jensen, 2010). However, after the government took control of the Awakening in October 2008, it was used to gather intelligence on Sunni communities and was systematically dismantled to reduce any potential for Sunni political representation (Dodge, 2012, p. 108).

Although problems such as corruption, failing public services and unemployment were a major concern, the risk of sectarianism-based violence was radically reduced. People were studying, working and relaxing outdoors without fear of being lynched. The mainly Shi'a Iraqi army also enjoyed acceptance from the population following its disavowal of sectarianism-based allegiances.

5.5.2 March 2010 Elections

For the March 2010 parliamentary elections, Al-Maliki adopted a different strategy which no longer required him to contest power with his adversaries, mainly Ayad Allawi and his secular and cross-national Iraqiyya Party. Al-Maliki tried to build a pan-Iraqi coalition in the months leading up to the March 2010 election and wooed disaffected Sunni Arab leaders unhappy with Iraqiyya. He tried to bribe his opponents by convincing them to join a new national unity government without any prior agreement concerning ministerial positions, such as those in the Ministry of Defence and Interior Ministry (*Foreign Policy*, 2012). The intention was to re-establish strong state institutions, provide services and reduce corruption. The lawmaker in Al-Maliki's Dawa Party, Kamal Al-Sa'di stated: 'Maliki rejected the idea of rebuilding the Shi'a alliance in order to avoid a repeat of the old internal problems. We want to avoid the mistakes of the past and create a strong government that transcends sectarian quotas' (Visser, 2010).

However, when Al-Maliki's designs to win over Sunni politicians and secular votes failed, the government began moving away from national cohesion by slipping back into sectarian politics. Al-Maliki moved closer to Al-Sadr, whose militia leaders he had previously fought and arrested. De-Ba`thification laws were also used to target opponents, however, this application was selective, which meant Sunni allies were spared despite previously having high profile Ba`th positions (Congressional Research Service, 2011). Shortly before the election, Al-Sa'di stated: 'We, in the two alliances [State of Law and the INA] agree on more than the Baathism issue. In fact, we share a common, national position on all issues' (Visser, 2010).

Although there were many contentious issues between Al-Maliki's State of Law and INA, these differences became insignificant due to a reversal in Iraqi politics, that is, the repolarisation of politics along sectarian lines. This arrangement ensured Al-Maliki could control whoever was appointed and remained in important state institutions. Similarly, Al-Maliki was able to exert control over the Interior Ministry through his personal brigades, thus retaining and exerting considerable influence over domestic and foreign policy (Yaphe, 2012).

Due to a dip in success in the March 2010 elections, Al-Maliki insisted on a recount in his 'capacity as commander in chief'. Due to a divided Shi'a vote, Iraqiya, Al-Maliki's main rival was able to acquire a slim majority, winning 91 parliamentary seats to Al-Maliki's 89. Following this announcement, Al-Maliki bluntly stated, 'No way we will accept the results'. He demanded a recount to prevent a 'return to violence'. The sinister nature of this statement can be derived from its origin, that is, from Al-Maliki as the head of the country's armed forces. Following the May recount by the Elections Commission, backed by the UN, the seat and vote allocation remained unaltered (Dodge, 2013).

Although the constitution stated the party with a winning majority had the right to form a new government, the Supreme Court decided that a post-election coalition could take the right from the victors. The Al-Maliki-Al-Sadr coalition provided PM with the authority to move forward and ignore Iraqiyya (Yaphe, 2012).

In an effort to build bridges, Al-Maliki went to Erbil in April 2010, where he negotiated with the KRG and important Sunni politicians such as parliamentary leaders Al-Nujaifi and Salih al-Mutlak and Iraqiyya leader Allawi. A 15-point agenda was agreed upon. It promised greater power-sharing between the Sunni, Shi'a and Kurds and the appointment of a Sunni Arab and Shi'a Arab to head the Interior and Defence ministries. Whilst the Iraqi constitution does not set aside government posts for sects or ethnic groups, the president, the prime minister, the speaker and most ministerial posts have been unofficially allocated along sectarian and ethnic lines (Mohammed, 2011). Al-Maliki also agreed to create a National Council of Strategic Policies commission headed by Allawi which would be able to block any major legislation signed by the PM.

Following the formation of the new government in November 2010, Al-Maliki reneged on his commitment and refused to delegate ministers to the Interior and Defence ministries, deciding to occupy these roles himself, and also failed to establish the special commission promised to Allawi. Moreover, Al-Maliki also forced anti-corruption personnel from their posts and instructed officers to arrest individuals while ignoring the established chain of command. Senior military commanders were appointed directly by Al-Maliki in contradiction of the constitution (Sullivan, 2013). The PM's Special Forces began to arrest scores of young men who were taken to secret jails. Those arrested included the religiously devout, anti-corruption activists, members of the Awakening and former army officers. Many were never officially charged with specific crimes, but under the guise of anti-terrorism, these prisoners were subject to severe physical abuse and torture (Sullivan, 2013).

Although the quota system contradicted the Iraqi constitution, it was continuously used to maintain the neo-patrimonial status quo. Moreover, it was used to allocate personnel to the preeminent posts of the Interior Ministry and the Ministry of Defence, which were supposed to be Shi'a and Sunni respectively. However, the appointment system often remained deadlocked because politicians across different sectarian lines were unable to agree upon appointments and purposefully blocked each other's nominations.

For example, following the March 2010 elections, the haggling for posts continued into 2011, with Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki rejecting more than five Sunni nominations for the Ministry of Defence. In a similar vein, Iraqiya rejected many potential Shi'a nominations for the Interior Ministry, including Adnan Al-Asadi, the former deputy interior minister and known close ally of Al-Maliki. Although all

political parties' maintained rejection was based on candidate inadequacy for the post, the well-known Shi'a National Alliance lawmaker Hussein al-Mereibi alleged 'a sectarian move that pushed Iraqiya to dismiss Maliki's candidates' for different posts associated with security (Mohammed, 2011). The Kurdish parliamentarian, Mahma Khalil, claimed: 'The sectarian quota is the main reason behind the [allocation of government positions and its] deadlock, [because] we have to please everybody and to make a balance between the different sects and ethnicities' (UNHCR, 2011).

Subsequently, there were long periods where key cabinet posts remained vacant. The period between 2010 and 2011 was the longest one without a complete cabinet leading to bureaucratic inertia. Other ministerial posts were allocated approximately nine months after the elections because of the political wrangling (UNHCR, 2011).

The government formation in 2010 saw politicians once again attempting to secure neo-patrimonial rights by manipulating top positions to secure economic benefits. These events were followed by large-scale Sunni anti-corruption protests, the government labelled those involved as terrorists and they were beaten and even killed by the security forces (CMI, 2013).

5.5.2.1 Managing dissent

In the aftermath of the 2010 election and its result, the next major challenge for Al-Maliki was to mitigate popular dissent. During his first term in office, this was largely non-existent since most people were simply trying to stay alive. However, a completely new dynamic arose following the March 2010 elections. Based on the constitution, parliament was required to appoint a new government within a few weeks, but this did not take place it parliament convened for only eighteen minutes during the month following the elections. This meant campaign promises were immediately shelved and there were no new policies to be implemented. However, MPs did manage to ensure their disgracefully large salaries continued to be paid (Najm, 2010).

With summer temperatures rising and the Al-Maliki government in paralysis, Iraq experienced widespread protests on the streets organised by mainly young activists. One of the main issues for ordinary Iraqis was electricity, or the lack thereof. Coupled with a heatwave, over half of the cities in Iraq experienced large-scale marches demanding better services. This increased pressure on the government, which, being unable to resolve the situation, resorted to intimidation instead. The security forces were instructed to prevent the demonstrations and issued daily warnings amid a heavy security presence in the provincial capitals. Further impetus was provided to demonstrators because of the Arab Spring, resulting in new demonstrations taking place in Suleimaniya. These events cascaded into national demonstrations in February 2011 and were dubbed the 'day of rage' protests (Rayburn, 2014, p. 281).

The average Iraqi began to understand the implications of the Al-Maliki regime as politicians also began to voice concerns. Vice President Tariq Al-Hashimi stated: 'The government has not lived up to its commitments to the [National] Concord [Front], especially maintaining a balance among Iraq's different groups. This is because of those working in the state ministries and state institutions' (Cordesman & Davies, 2010, p. 380). Al-Hashimi also attempted to challenge the centralising authoritarianism of Al-Maliki, only to be indicted on terrorism charges, causing him to flee to the Kurdish region and then into exile (Zubaida, 2012).

Sunni finance minister Rafi Al-Issawi (also an Iraqiya member) and Deputy PM Al-Mutlaq became government targets after warning against the descent of Iraq into dictatorship. The government accused both of them of being linked to terrorist organisations. The exact timing of the arrests was unclear, especially when there were many immediate terrorist threats to life and property which were left unopposed. Nonetheless, the Sunnis of Anbar province interpreted the arrests as being motivated by sectarianism, which led to heated demonstrations (Rayburn, 2014, p. 235).

In parliament, politicians traded insults and accusations, but for the most part, these were free of sectarianism. However, a televised debate hosted by Hiwa Osman, an independent journalist from Kurdistan, between Anas Al-Tikriti, the son of a Muslim Brotherhood leader, and Saad Al-Muttalabi, a close ally of Al-Maliki, shed considerable light on institutionalised sectarianism during this period. Osman queried if there was a direct relationship between sectarianism and government performance. The interview lasted approximately 30 minutes, but it was enough time for Al-Muttalabi to exonerate the Shi'a political elite and insult everyone else (Al-Ali, 2014, p. 139). He started with the Kurds, whom he blamed for all the government failures: 'Baghdad is most likely the worst place to live in and thanks to the Kurdish ministers Iraq has failed [because] they have miserably failed doing their work in Baghdad and are famous for being corrupt and a group of thugs and most likely even worse' (Al-Ali, 2014, p. 139).

Later in the interview, Al-Tikriti compared Al-Maliki with Saddam, a comparison commonly made as a means of provocation. Al-Muttalabi responded by accusing his interlocutor of previously supporting the Saddam regime. He declared: 'Perhaps you weren't part of the Baath party, but you were part of the institutions which allowed Saddam Hussein the authority to rule over Iraq. Don't be mistaken, everyone knows who you are, your organisation gave Saddam Hussein the political authority [needed] to rule over Iraq' (Al-Ali, 2014, p. 140).

It was well-known Al-Tikriti was a Sunni born in exile because his father was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood (Stakelbeck, 2013, p. 159). This added insult to injury and infuriated Al-Tikriti. Based on Al-Muttalabi's logic, Al-Tikriti was guilty simply through association. This event can be framed as a

milestone which categorised the tit for tat gutter politics for which senior politicians across Iraq came to be known. The palpable disdain for the ruling Shi'a elite reached acute levels during the run-up to the 2013 provincial elections, even with Shi'a voters who protested by withholding their votes. This growing sense of voter apathy was viewed as an existential threat to the ruling Shi'a elite because it became difficult to determine how people would vote. Nonetheless, an effort was undertaken to mobilise voters, which required the explicit use of sectarianism in public spaces. This was given impetus by the sectarian conflict in neighbouring Syria (Potter, 2014, p. 83).

Sectarianism was used to exonerate any wrongdoing of the ruling elites. The message was clear: the greatest imperative was to defend the interests of the sect. This was perhaps exaggerated due to the 243 political entities, which caused confusion and helped ensure that many Iraqis voted along sectarian lines (Cordesman, 2014, p. 107). For example, campaigning in Shi'a regions mainly revolved around concerns about possible Sunni reprisals should they return to power. This pushed many to vote for Shi'a candidates out of fear rather than for any attraction to party political platforms.

Due to marginalisation, Sunnis protests were seen to be riding the wave of protests to make political gains. However, many Sunnis stayed away from the polls because of a lack of confidence in their own political parties as well as the institutions of the state (BBC News, 2014a). Accordingly, the protests between 2011 and 2013 became manifestations of Sunni identity. Osama al-Nujaifi, a powerful Sunni politician, who had been a former Vice-President and former speaker of the Iraqi Parliament, 'alluded to the possibility of Sunni federalism and even separatism if progress was not achieved on a number of political issues' (Haddad, 2014).

Sunni political retaliation came through the AJL, spearheaded by a Shi'a called Falah Hasan al-Shanshul, who sought to oust the prime minister's ally, Chief Justice Medhat Al-Mahmoud. Al-Maliki countered almost immediately by sending an official letter to the AJC ordering the dismissal of Shanshul and appointing a temporary replacement. Al-Maliki enjoyed the power to do this even though the commission was ostensibly an independent oversight body and Shanshul had been elected to the role by the AJC's members (Isakhan, 2015). Although parliament reinstated Shanshul in July 2013, he came to appreciate that de-Ba`thification was not a neutral law to be applied evenly: it was a political tool which could be used at the discretion of the government to undermine its opponents.

Another example of the government flexing its sectarian muscles involved Sunni judge Rahim Al-Ugaili, who was forced to resign from the election integrity commission. He subsequently assumed a low-profile political life, occasionally criticising the government, but would rarely feature in any of the media in Iraq or internationally. Despite this, the newly appointed head at the integrity commission claimed Al-Ugaili was corrupt, was spying for the Americans and had been operating secret prisons

used for torture. Bizarrely, a press conference held by the integrity commission in August 2013 focused on the 'crimes' of Al-Ugaili instead of releasing its annual report (Al-Ali, 2014, p. 137). With all ethnic groups within Iraq complaining about the government performance, Al-Maliki once again used sectarianism to navigate turbulent waters. It left him in a cynical predicament: the only way to remain in power was to ensure he was a Shi'a candidate instead of the national candidate which he once had aspired to become.

5.5.3 April 2014 Elections

The run-up to the 2014 parliamentary elections, party-owned satellite stations featured fiery religious leaders in a bid to mobilise voters. Sheikh Subhi Al-Tufaili is a prime example of Shi'a using sectarianism as a campaign tool. His speeches differed in terms of sectarian rhetoric, but one speech given in December 2012 was especially incendiary:

> [E]lections are coming… what are people in our community been saying? Do not vote… that is not how things work… Who should take power then? Izzat Al-Douri [the Sunni leader of the Ba'th party] who will force Umayyad rule on us? Let the person who governs us, come from us… Use your vote to change the odds. We are broadcasting live [I, therefore, cannot be explicit] however, you know who 'us' and 'them' are… support our community. Vote for anyone, even if the government is corrupt, even if it has problems every day and even if we curse them daily. Despite that, they have done what was needed of them. At least they know Ali is God's divine patron… Even if they are dishonest… it does not matter. Even if they just talk and do not fulfil their promises, forget that for now. At least they [like you] recognise Ali is God's appointee]. (Haddad, 2013b)

The essence of this sermon was the Shi'a should be grateful for their identity and rituals which they were now able to express freely across Iraq. Despite the government failure to deliver basic services, endemic corruption and institutional incompetence, voters were openly and brazenly being told that all of this was irrelevant as long as politicians acted to preserve their sectarian group interests. It also appeared to be too much to expect politicians to exhibit genuine support for their co-religionists, so voters were told instead that they should be happy that politicians were at least making the effort to lie to them. Unlike the 2010 elections, in 2014, security and identity were dominant themes (ISW, 2014) and most of the political campaigns were focused entirely on sectarianism. Voters were no longer deciding on policy but who best represented Sunni and Shi'a interests most effectively.

Following the 2014 elections, key positions in the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Interior were again purposefully left vacant. Tahseen al-Sheikhli, who was Al-Maliki's deputy government representative, stated that Al-Maliki, as commander in chief, would assume control of all security, adding: 'Security is a challenge at all times in Iraq' (Mohammed, 2011). Many criticised this approach as another example of 'power grab' tactics in addition to stating the potential negative implications

which could occur following the December US withdrawal. For example, the caretaker minister in the Ministry of Defence would be unable to purchase military equipment or sign defence contracts. This prompted a response from Muttalabi, who argued: '[Although] security is not impacted, the ability for a ministry to build itself up is…. American forces will withdraw on 31st December 2011 irrespective of the ability of the Iraqi forces, or if ministers have been appointed or not' (UNHCR, 2011).

Nonetheless, Al-Maliki was able to stay in power for eight of the eleven years following regime change. During these years, he initiated an extensive consolidation of authoritarian and neo-patrimonial power (discussed in detail in the next section). Subsequently, Al-Maliki's Shi'a party transformed itself into a powerful ruling network which came to dominate Iraqi politics and was able to control virtually all the national government institutions. Surprisingly, none of the Al-Maliki's political opponents seriously demanded the overhauling of these over centralised structures and the extensive financial and administrative powers wich came to reside in the prime minister's office. Neither did the opposition seriously oppose Al-Maliki's habit of hand-picking personal allies in key posts throughout the government.

In hindsight, it becomes apparent the limited resistance offered was most likely because political rivals hoped to benefit themselves. Similarly, there was no crackdown on the huge economic corruption, which become a norm among senior government officials and their associates. As one commentator noted: 'In a sense, Shia, Kurdish, Sunni and other elites all benefitted from both Iraq's oil wealth and American cash intended to help to rebuild efforts after the invasion. This wealth has not trickled down to Iraq's citizens, leading to a crisis of governance that can explain collapses' (Mansour, 2018, p. 12). Perhaps the most telling indictment of the sectarian system which flourished under Al-Maliki has been the number of officials who have been tried for corruption throughout this research. Despite this, there is no evidence to suggest any of the political Shi'a elite were ever tried.

The figures below represent the neo-patrimonial web spun by the main parties and their alliances in 2014. At the heart of the web reside the central characters, who form coalitions with other elites, allowing them to embed their parties within lower levels of the web hierarchy. However, these figures had to be simplified to aid comprehension but should provide an understanding of the complex and fragmented political system upon which Iraq relies.

Where:

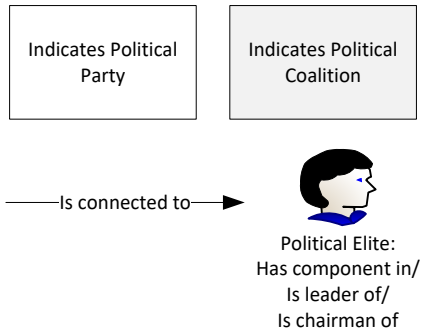


Figure 6.1 Patrimony legend

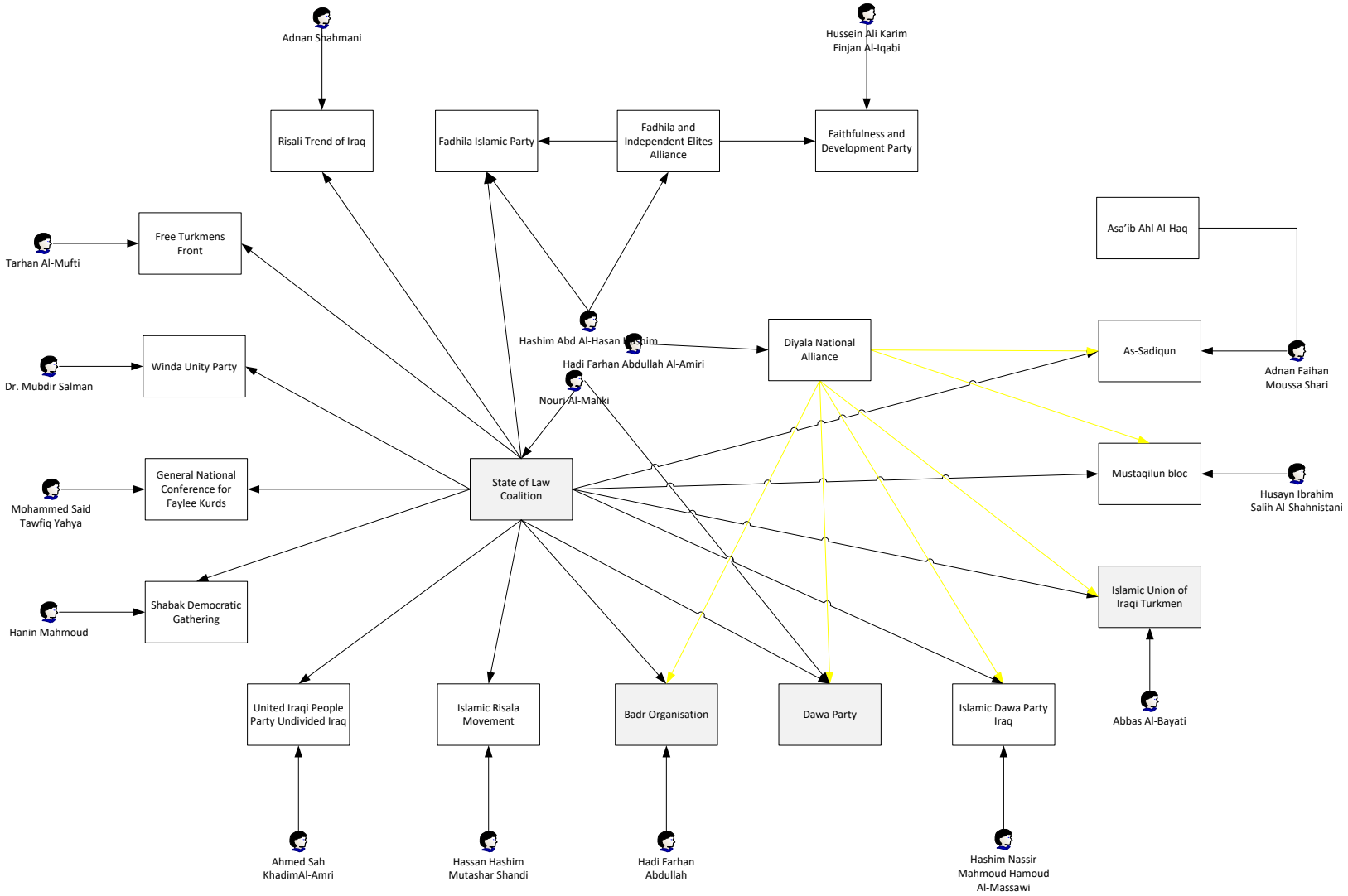


Figure 6.2 The State of Law Alliance and affiliated Coalitions

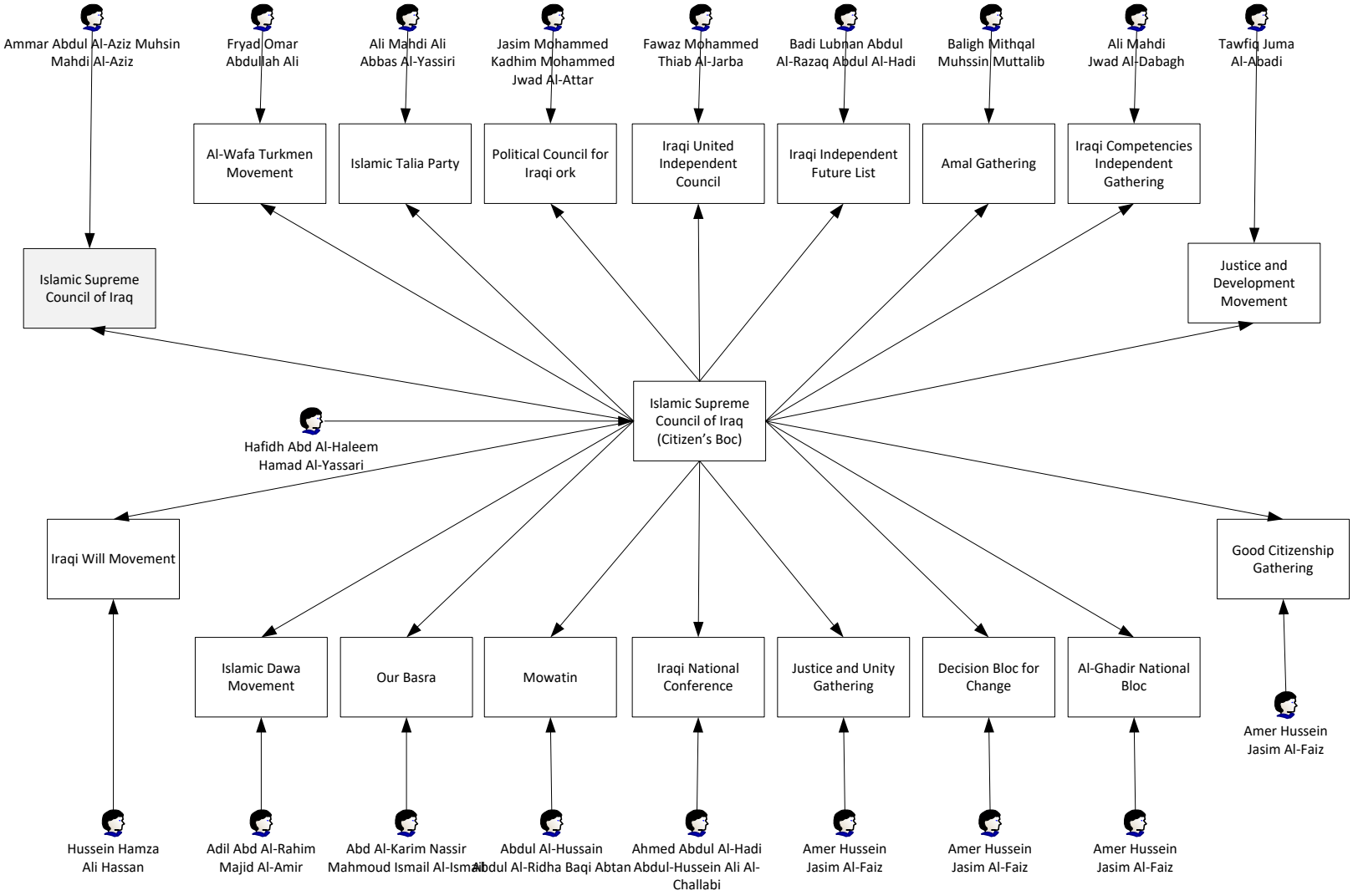


Figure 6.3 Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (Shi'a)

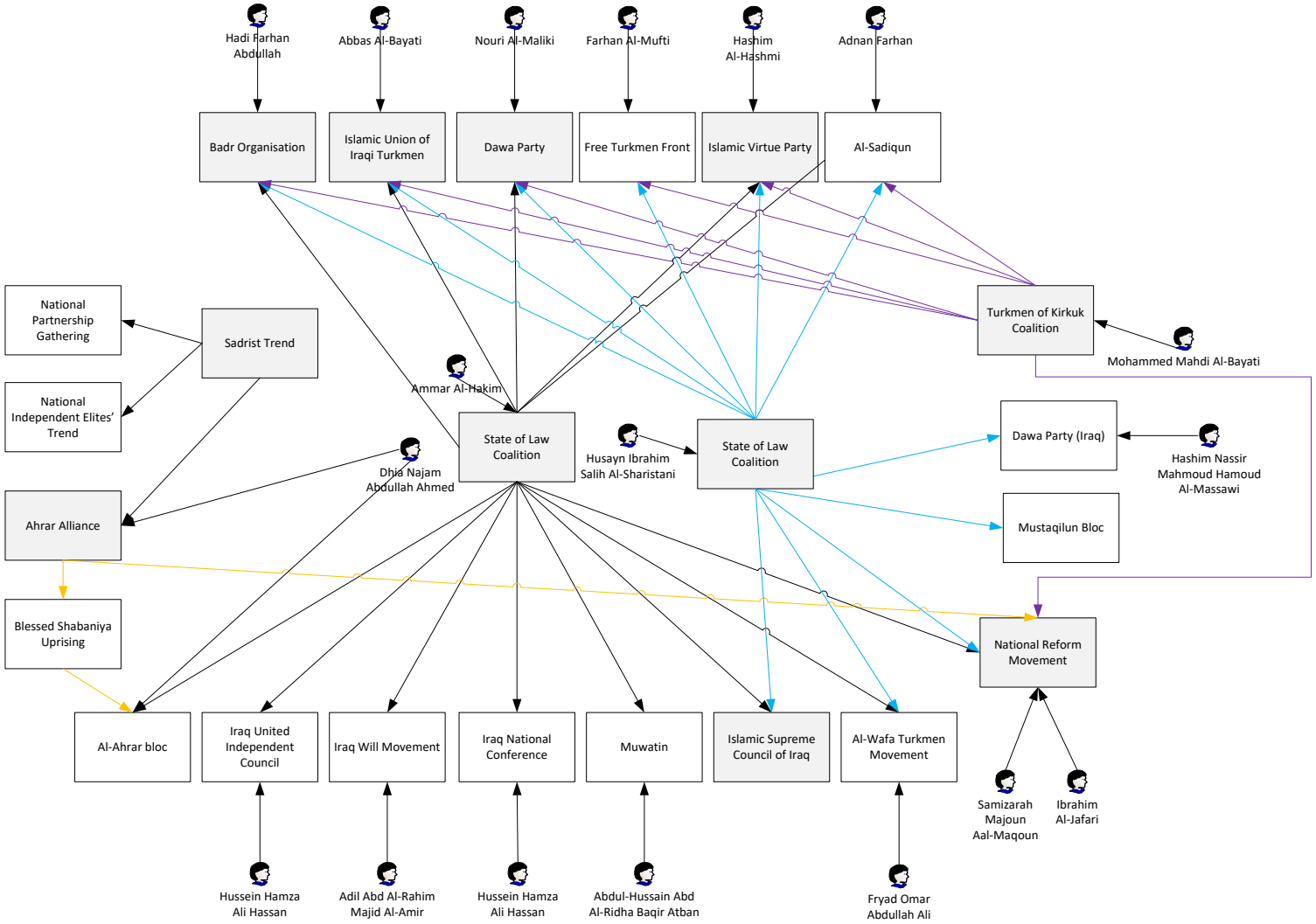


Figure 6.4 Al-Ahrar Alliance and Sadrist-affiliated coalitions (Shi'a)

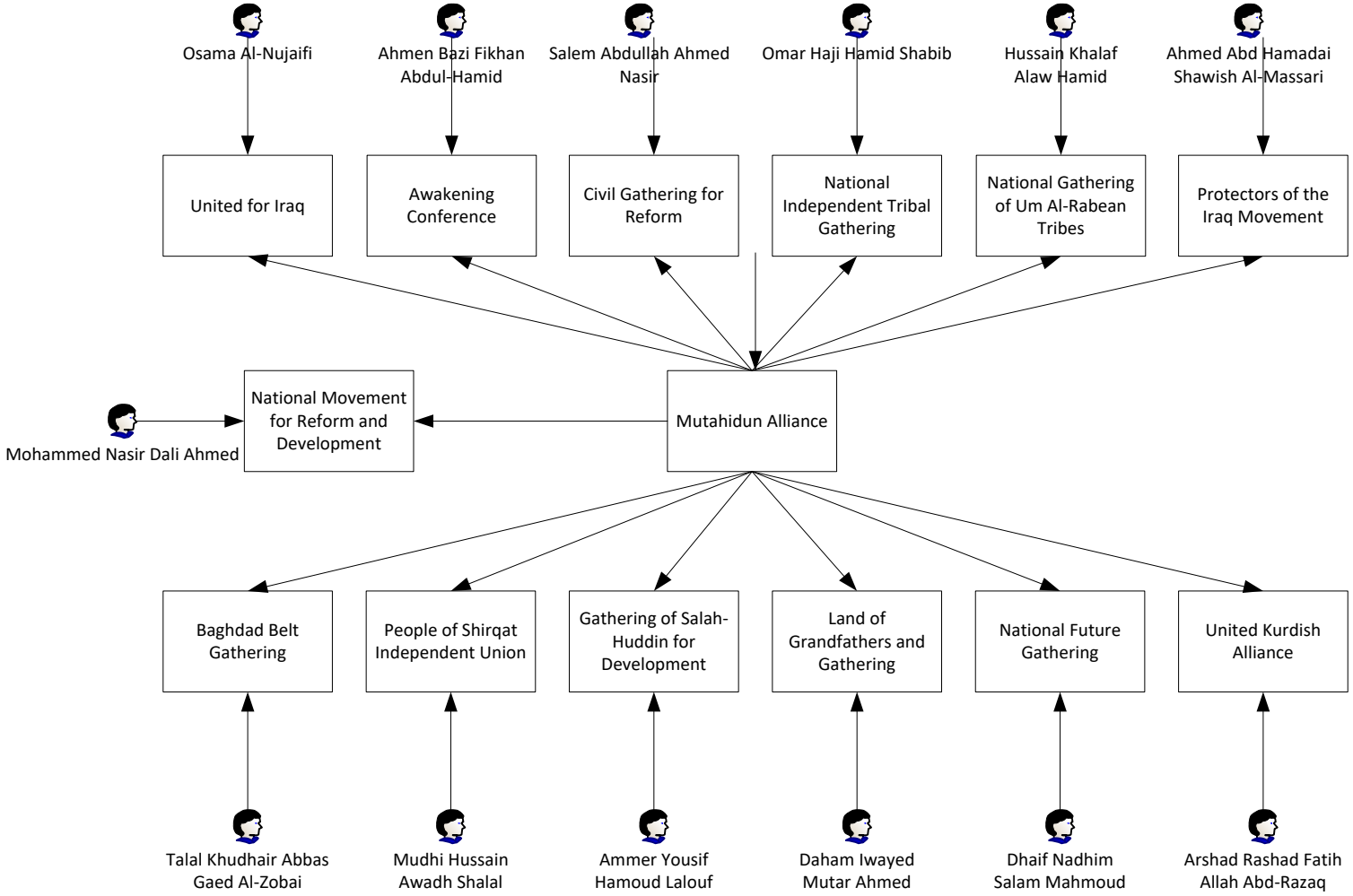


Figure 6.5 Mutahidun Coalition (Sunni)

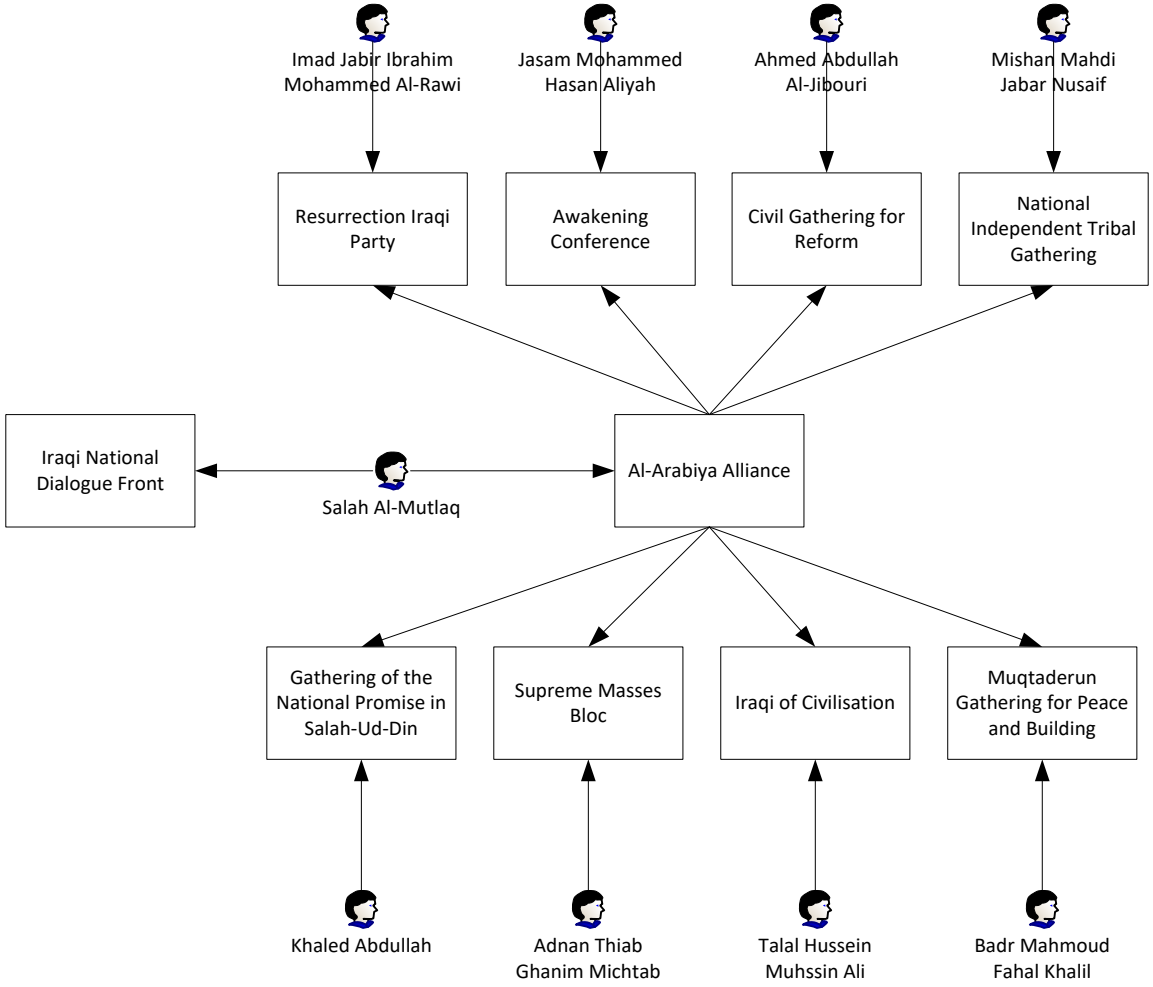


Figure 6.6 Al-Arabiya Coalition (Sunni)

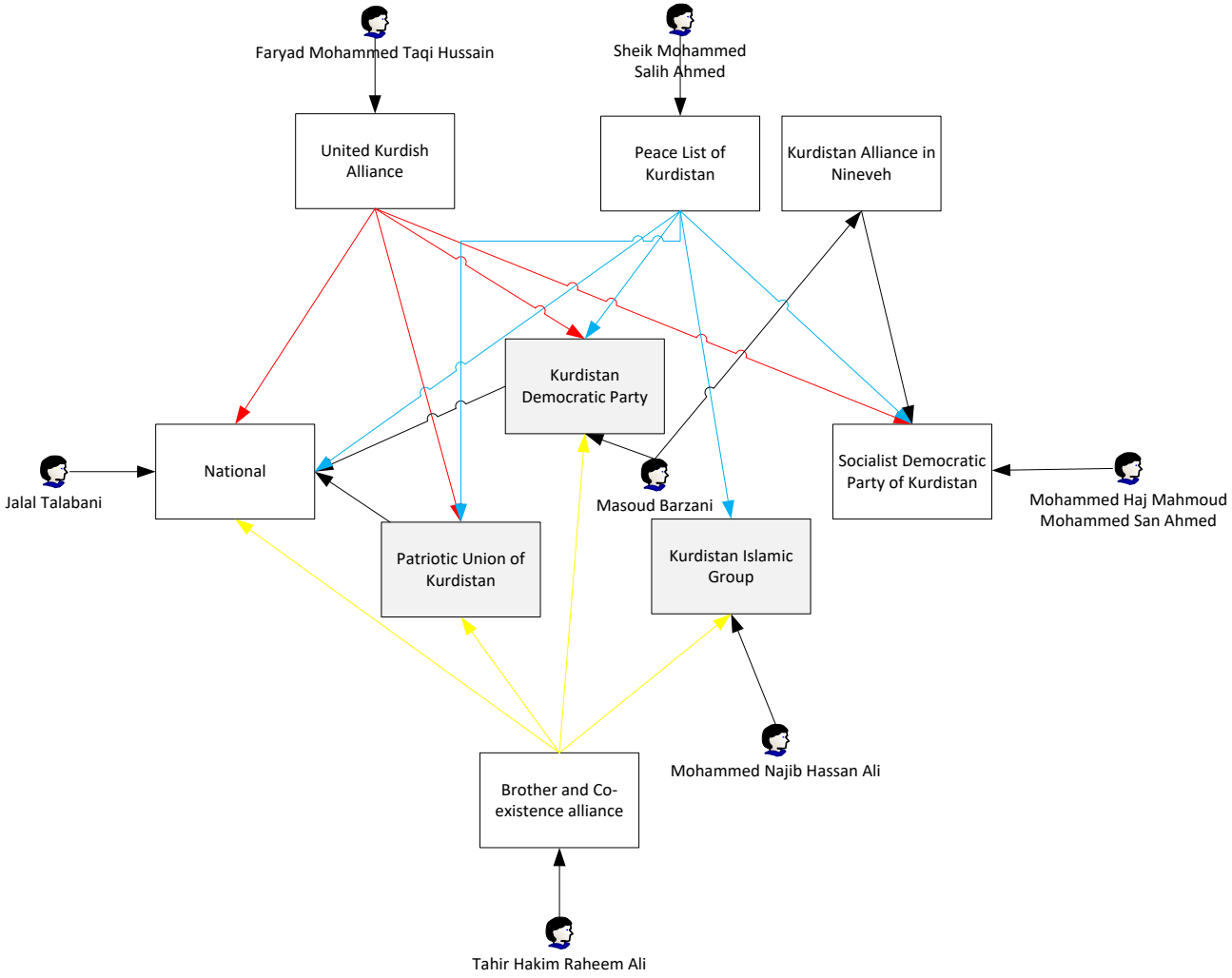


Figure 6.7 Kurdish coalitions

5.6 DISPENSATION OF POWER IN IRAQI STATE BUREAUCRACIES

After becoming prime minister in 2006, Al-Maliki's primary approach towards consolidating power was to create a cohesive group of functionaries with strong ties to him. These have been typically referred to as 'Al-Malikiyoun' within the literature and consisted of two groups: his extended family and loyal members of the Dawa party. Having inherited a fractured political system, Al-Maliki was able to place Al-Malikiyoun at the centre of a neo-patrimonial network, which bypassed the cabinet by linking state bureaucracies to the PM's office. Positions of power were supposed to be temporary; however, they were typically occupied indefinitely (Dodge, 2013). After taking office, Al-Maliki sought to acquire increased state power in a system which can be referred to as competitive authoritarianism in Iraq. These exploits have been documented below.

5.6.1 Security Services

By the end of March 2008, it was clear that Al-Maliki was using the security services to protect himself not only personally but politically. He placed his son, Ahmed Al-Maliki, as deputy chief of staff, providing him with an oversight role over all of Iraq's security services in addition to making him responsible for his father's security (Crompton, 2014).

A plot to unseat him was quickly uncovered. It involved a conspiracy involving the use of militia violence in the port city of Basra to form a pretext for a vote of no confidence in parliament. To quash the plot before its realisation, Al-Maliki pre-empted the conspiracy by launching a military campaign called the 'Charge of Knights' on the 25th March 2008 (Dodge, 2013). This campaign involved four Iraqi army divisions tasked with wrestling control back from the militias and supporting his rule (McClathcy, 2008). The timing was significant because the British forces had been losing the ongoing battles with the Shi'a militias.

The reestablishment of law and order in Basra proved to be an immensely popular move with Iraqi populace, which had long been subject to sectarian violence. Al-Maliki further boosted his popularity in May 2008 by taking back control of Sadr City from Al-Sadr's Mahdi Army, one of the primary antagonists in the sectarian civil war. Al-Maliki used these victories to cement his authority over the armed forces and the government. It was also a key moment, which allowed him to reshape his political image as the saviour of Iraq and as a nationalist (Aaron, 2013).

5.6.2 Control of the Intelligence services

The international coalition sought to separate the intelligence services from the executive authority to avoid a replication of Saddam's secret police. Similarly, the military and civilian intelligence agencies were also separated. However, in 2006, the intelligence community became a battlefield, with the INIS under virtual assault from the extra-constitutional MSNSA. The MSNSA was supposed to be a

coordinating body; however, over time it developed an operational role. Under the stewardship of Shirwan Al-Waeli (who became known for providing the Mahdi Army intelligence on US troops), the MSNSA came to mimic the responsibilities of INIS, with operatives numbering in the thousands. Unlike INIS, it developed close ties with the Iranian regime (Cordesman, 2007).

In 2009, Al-Maliki was able to take over the MSNSA by appointing Falah Fayadh, a member of the Dawa party and national security adviser. Al-Maliki showed no hesitation concerning the use of the intelligence resources in his battles with political rivals. The use of the intelligence apparatus by Al-Maliki grew and by 2011, he was able to confront rivals with incriminating phone conversations. The intelligence services, which had been previously split into distinct groups to prevent politicisation, became an important factor in Al-Maliki's build-up and centralisation of political power (Swarts, 2017, p. 89).

5.6.3 Ministry of Defence and the Interior Ministry

After becoming prime minister, Al-Maliki set himself against the ministers of the Ministry of Defence and Interior Ministry. These positions were allocated through cross-party debate and US vetting. However, it was not uncommon for these ministers to sharply disagree with Al-Maliki over a range of issues, which often led to tense standoffs (Hann et al., 2015, p. 9). Consequently, there was never any haste concerning appointments to sensitive positions in the Al-Maliki regime. The delaying tactics continued and in 2010, Saad al-Muttalabi, a former adviser and top aid to Al-Maliki, stated: '[The appointment of security ministers is] very complicated…. [and nominations] will be delayed further…. This won't be resolved soon' (Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 2011). This led to parties such as Iraqiya to criticise Al-Maliki claiming he was purposefully delaying the appointments of ministers. Following the 2010 elections and in a similar vein, newspapers such as Baghdad's '*Al-Mashriq'* also reported on Al-Maliki's antipathy to even discussing security posts nominations (Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 2011).

Given the poor security record of the country at the time, common sense would have dictated that ministerial posts for the Interior Ministry and the Ministry of Defence should have been designated immediately. Not only were these the most powerful institutions in Iraq but they were also the most crucial in the context of security.

Following the 2010 elections and after heading both the Ministry of Defence and the Interior Ministry 'temporarily' for eight months, Al-Maliki appointed Saddoun Al-Dulaimi as Minister of Defence in early 2011 (WSJ, 2013). The unilateral nomination of sensitive posts was in clear contradiction of the constitution, in addition to defying the logic keeping these powers separate. Moreover, according to the constitution, independent institutions were answerable only to parliament. Many of these

bureaucracies were powerful: They included the Iraqi Trade Bank, Iraqi Central Bank, Martyrs Commission, the Board of Supreme Audit, the Committee for Public Integrity and the Electoral Commission. Slowly but surely, Al-Maliki was able to assume direct control, making them answerable to the PM's office, primarily through pressurising them and then later by receiving favourable Supreme Court rulings (Constitute Project, 2018).

With an acquisition of power not yet seen in Iraq since the fall of Saddam, the Al-Maliki government began to intimidate and coerce. Moreover, it either investigated or jailed heads of various independent bodies (Rayburn, 2014, p. 62) and carried out repeated waves of arrests against alleged Baathists in Sunni-governed areas where Iraqiya had a strong presence, including Dyala, Ninewa, Anbar and Salahuddin. For example, in August 2013, a small Sunni Arab coalition which had previously been allied with Al-Maliki was subject to a raid by the security forces following a refusal to support several Al-Maliki candidates for provincial governors (Al-Ali, 2014, p. 137).

5.6.4 The Supreme Court

The takeover of Iraqi bureaucracies and the consolidation of Al-Maliki's power could not have taken place without a compliant judiciary. So, whilst this was the first time in Iraqi history when there was the potential for an independent Supreme Court, patrimonial politics now decided otherwise. Medhat Al-Mahmoud was the chief justice of the federal Supreme Court and was well known in the Arab world. During the early years of the US occupation, he successfully insulated the judiciary against patrimonial claims at a time when much of the country was engulfed in ethno-religious strife. Al-Mahmoud stated: 'The status of the Iraqi justice system has advanced [in the post-Saddam period]' (US Institute of Peace, 2014). Moreover, to his credit, it was possible to clearly differentiate between political forces and the Supreme Court. However, as more power became centralised by Al-Maliki, this increased the pressure on the judiciary to make rulings in favour of the ruling party. In theory, all Al-Maliki had to do was lean on Al-Mahmoud and those working with him. With most Sunni judges coming from the Saddam era, accommodating political power was not something they were unaccustomed to. Moreover, judges suffered a great deal of sectarian violence, which meant any threat had to be taken seriously (ISW, 2013).

Although the Supreme Court was considerably easier to capture, it can be argued it was just as important as the Ministry of Defence and Interior Ministry because, based on the 2005 constitution, it had the authority to interpret the constitution (Constitute Project, 2018). In the wrong hands, this could easily be manipulated into a potent political weapon. A compliant Supreme Court provided Al-Maliki with a convenient way to argue that he was merely applying the law as per the interpretation of the highest court in the land.

Since 2010, the Shi'a led Al-Maliki government has brought many cases to the Supreme Court (Rayburn, 2014, p. 62). These cases have typically been used to determine how constitutional provisions should be understood and then enacted: in the vast majority of these cases the court has ruled in favour of the interpretation adopted by the government (Yaphe, 2012).

One such case involved the de-Ba`thification commission and its decision to ban 511 electoral candidates. An appeals court stated the candidates should be allowed to stand pending a confirmation of the ban; however, Al-Mahmoud and Al-Maliki, as well as key allies, met and overturned the appeals court ruling (Jurist, 2013). Although the Supreme Court has sometimes overturned rulings, this case had a sectarian dimension to it. Not only was the original decision nullified just a few days after being pronounced, it came on the heels of a high-profile meeting between the prime minister and the Supreme Court.

There were three significant rulings made by the Al-Mahmoud as head of the Supreme Court in favour of the prime minister which helped Al-Maliki increase his influence over the remaining state bureaucracies (Pimentel, 2013). The first incident took place in 2010: It involved Al-Mahmoud reinterpreting the constitution to allow Al-Maliki to have the first chance at forming a government even though his party had not won the parliamentary elections. The second ruling came in 2011: It permitted Al-Maliki to control previously independent bodies such as the Elections Commission. This made previously independent state bureaucracies answerable to his government even though the constitution demanded parliamentary attachment. The third ruling came in 2012: It permitted Al-Maliki and his cabinet, and not the parliament, to initiate legislation. For all intents and purposes, these decisions rendered the Iraqi legislature obsolete (Pimentel, 2013).

5.6.5 The Iraqi Central Bank

Another Al-Maliki opponent was the respected economist and governor of the Iraqi Central Bank, Sinan Al-Shabibi. The main contention with Al-Shabibi was his insistence on maintaining large currency reserves to preserve the value of the Iraqi dinar. However, the dispute was overcome in October 2012 when a parliamentary committee headed by Al-Maliki charged Al-Shabibi and 15 other bank officials with supposed inconsistencies over foreign exchange transactions and improprieties over capital rules at local banks (Wilson, 2012). Al-Shabibi was quickly forced into exile and replaced with Abdul-Basit Turki, who had previously been appointed by Maliki as head of the anti-corruption organisation, the Board of Supreme Audit (Latif, 2012).

Critics believed Al- Shabibi was targeted because he was preventing Al-Maliki from accessing the bank's reserves and funding government programs which served his interests. However, it was also believed Al-Maliki had been pressured by the Iranians into removing Al- Shabibi. The motive was the

governor's alarm at vast quantities of US dollar sales, something in the region of $300 to $400 million a week between 2011 and 2012 (Risen & Adnan, 2012), being transferred to the Iranian regime currency traders, who were using Iraq to gain foreign currency in contravention of international sanctions against Tehran(Rayburn, 2014, p. 63). This prompted the Obama administration to single out and bar the '*Elaf*' Islamic Bank from dealing with American institutions (US Department of the Treasury, 2012).

5.6.6 Foreign Ministry

For most of 2003 to 2014, Hoshyar Zebari was the Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs. This position was allocated in 2003 by the IGC and was a post he maintained in the interim and transitional governments. Under Al-Maliki's tenure and immediately beyond it, Zebari held the same position, from 2006 to 2014 (Dougherty, 2019, p. 831). Within Iraq, Zebari was the highest-profile Kurd and, as foreign minister, accompanied Al-Maliki on international visits and was widely considered the face of Iraqi diplomacy.

Whilst the Foreign Ministry was relatively free of overt patrimonial control which plagued other state bureaucracies, under Zebari, it remained functionally effective despite the internal unrest across Iraq. But although it had the potential to project Iraqi foreign policy in a unified manner, it was relegated to minor responsibilities following Al-Maliki's power grab, with all major decisions regarding Iraq's external relations being taken by the prime minister's office. This undermined Zebari's position on the regional and international stage. For example, in 2013, Zebari had stated Iraq was pursuing a neutral foreign policy towards the Syrian conflict, wherein it would neither help nor hinder the other actors in the region, that is, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey. However, at the time Al-Maliki was working with Iran to send Iraqi fighters to Syria to shore up Damascus and the Assad regime. It can be argued that whilst Zebari was unable to implement important foreign policies, this fragmented approach did help him pursue more benign policies linked to Kurdish interests. So, whilst Zebari was being undermined by the prime minister's office, he was able to use his position to push Iraqi Kurdish. For example, concerning the former, the dispute between Kurds and Arabs over Kirkuk, Zebari argued in favour of a referendum which could have led to Kirkuk's integration into other regions controlled by the KRG (Mansour, 2016).

In 2014, Zebari was replaced by Hussain Shahristani (Alkhshali & Martinez, 2014), an Al-Maliki adviser and Shi'a, who had previously held the post of Minister of Energy Affairs. At the same time, Kurds were seizing areas rich in oil left by the Iraqi army as jihadist militants of IS advanced towards areas such as Mosul. Al-Maliki accused the Kurds of supporting IS militants, an accusation which was vehemently denied, leading the KRG to boycott cabinet meetings in Baghdad (Al-Jazeera, 2014). The

situation was made worse because of the KRG's desire to have a referendum over independence, a position opposed by Al-Maliki, not only because it threatened the territorial integrity of Iraq but because of the oil fields in Iraqi Kurdistan, a vital source of government revenue. This strained ties between the two governments led Zebari to comment: '[relations have] never been so poisonous' (BBC News, 2014b). Senior Kurds accused Al-Maliki of first sectarianizing the conflict between the Shi'a government and Sunnis, and then framing the conflict as one between Kurds and Arabs. Zebari's ouster was part of the fallout caused by these events (Alkhshali & Martinez).

5.6.7 Shadow ministries and the end of checks and balances

With all the major ministries, including the Ministry of Defence, Interior Ministry and the Supreme Court, under Al-Maliki's control, the government was able to manipulate the remaining pockets of power using a dual strategy. The government had a choice of either moving against other state institutions through using its legal authority and installing their own administration or, where this was not possible, it could rely on heavy-handed tactics to achieve its objectives. In the case of the former, Al-Maliki's inner circle would provide 'advice' to targeted agencies to ensure their policies would be acceptable. If this approach encountered resistance, Al-Maliki would be able to take control of the agencies' senior administrations. As noted in September 2011, the head of the Integrity Commission, Sunni judge Rahim Al-Ugaili was forced to resign; his position was given subsequently to Al-Malikiyoun (Ismael, 2015, p. 121).

Al-Maliki also set his sights on the few remaining independent bodies, notably the Electoral Commission. Taking over this body would ensure future elections would yield favourable results for the ruling party. Despite the flawed nature of the commission, it had been, until that point, able to distance itself from the major political parties in Iraq, thus permitting the elections to be considered credible, albeit imperfect. Based on the 2010 election result and Al-Maliki's reaction, that independence was clearly at risk.

Smaller and less important state bureaucracies, such as the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Ministry of Displacement and Migration, were also left vulnerable because, unlike larger state institutions, no major political actors were willing to come to their defence. Moreover, bureaucracies became prized and the more institutions which were taken the greater the amount of patrimonial influence which could be exercised. This, in theory, could impact corruption prosecutions, elections and even the economy. Al-Maliki's government was effective in the de-prioritising of rules and regulations and exploited the sectarian quota system through the appointment of party loyalists via the administrative level in state institutions. This prevented specific ministries from making progress or as a means of becoming the alternative focus of opposition.

Although the Al-Maliki regime was in power, it was also setting up rogue or parallel bureaucratic systems which resembled fifth columns bound by few limitations .The pervasive nature of Al-Maliki and his consolidation of power is perhaps best summarised by Sawaiba Zangana, the former deputy minister of Commerce, who resigned after four years of service because of corruption. In a newspaper interview, Zangana stated that Al-Maliki was:

> worse than Saddam, as he directly gets involved in the affairs of every ministry for the purposes of achieving private gains […] the ministries are headed by ministers, but in every case the real administrator is Al-Maliki, through his chief of staff … [and with regards] the Ministry of Commerce [it] became the ministry of looters, where everyone steals from the ration of the people for the Dawa party. (Ismael, 2015, p. 122)

On the 21 October, Obama and his national security committee made their most important conference call to date with Al-Maliki, whom they have previously backed as a second-term leader. The agenda for the meeting included the extension of the US presence in Iraq. However, Al-Maliki was in no mood for cooperation (Chulov & Ackerman, 2014).

During Al-Maliki's eight-year tenure, both parties had been partners of sorts, but now there was increasingly a divergence of interests. Al-Maliki had decided to press ahead, without the US. This made some in the US administration wonder if, after 4,500 troops killed in action, thousands more injured and approximately $1 trillion dollars spent, Iraq really wanted a strategic relationship with the US at all. The US then removed support for Al-Maliki whilst stating that the Iraqi government had failed in its commitment to tackle sectarianism (Chulov & Ackerman, 2014).

In a similar vein, Iran followed the US precedent. Due to the internal friction between Al-Maliki and the Shi'a political elite, in addition to Sunni and Kurdish pressure, Iran stepped up to take a greater role, which proved to be decisive. Although Iran had previously supported Al-Maliki, it sacrificed him for the greater good, that is, Shi'a unity in Iraq. Moreover, in the run-up to the March 2010 election, it became clear to Iran that Al-Maliki has amassed too much power and independence. Iran subsequently backed Al-Maliki's rivals, the INA and ISCI (Dodge, 2012, p. 187). The gravity of the scenario is also highlighted through the intervention of Shi'a clerics such as Al-Sistani, who wanted Al-Maliki removed (Arango, 2014).

On August 12th 2014, Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of Iran's powerful Supreme National Security Council, formally endorsed Iraq's new prime minister-designate, Haider al-Abadi, while making clear that Tehran believes Al-Maliki's time in office is over (Dreazen, 2014). Following the 2014 election result and subsequent Al-Abadi victory, it showed Al-Maliki couldn't survive without US or Iranian support. Michael Eisenstadt, of the Washington Institute of Near East Policy, argued that Al-Maliki had

lost domestic and international support, with 38 of the 96 lawmakers in his state of law bloc backing Al-Abadi, whilst the US and Iran were simultaneously telling him to step down (Dreazen, 2014).

This episode and others like it point to inadequacies of democracy promotion in the sense that even though there are elections, power and how it was exercised was framed by sectarian interests and pursued through the politics of neo-patrimony and cemented by cronyism. This came to define politics in Iraq, a far cry from the hopes of good governance and open democracy promotion that had been the leitmotiv of the CPA as it sought to bring stability to Iraq.

5.7 CONCLUSION

Sectarianism is a norm which is difficult to clearly define. However, depending on context, it can be something practised and felt, or a mindset which dictates policy at the unit and systemic levels. In the context of this thesis, the term has been associated with identity-centric politics and in worst-case scenarios, it has led to intercommunal hate and violence. This chapter sought to explain the centrality of sectarianism and demonstrated its potential relevance within a political context. What is contested is not the various phenomena which fall under a broad definition of 'sectarianism', but that this word is used as shorthand for what in reality are complex manifestations of identities and relations. Since sectarianism is capable of amalgamating a range of elements, it can be religious, social and political in nature. This has led to faction centricity being a marker of modern political identity in Iraq.

The origins of the sectarian norm in Iraq can be categorised as internal and external linkages to economics and poor governance, and regional dynamics and foreign powers respectively (World Bank, 2017). These features provide an explanatory power concerning what made sectarian identity a likely feature of Iraq, which has led to divergent sectarian imaginings of Iraqi history. It is argued that, internally, it was these imaginings and visions of victimhood in segments of society which led some actors to behave in modes which can be described as being sectarian. Externally, one of the key drivers of this behaviour was the Iran-Iraq war. Although this took place between 1980 and 1988, its legacy was profound and was manifested in different ways, including through its use as a strategic foreign policy which was first used by Saddam and then later by successive Shi'a governments.

Under both pre and post-2003 regimes, the political elite created a culture which permitted sectarian discrimination often indirectly but sometimes directly – for example, through the conflation of politics and tribalism – and through state policies towards sectarian identity respectively. This has resulted in different Sunni and Shi'a positions concerning the pre and post 2003 orders and these have emerged as salient factors capable of being divisive political mobilisers. Moreover, in terms of regime change, it was the presence of these opposing stances which made sectarian entrenchment more likely, that

is, the widely held perception or reality of extreme Shi'a victimhood under Saddam regarded the 2003 invasion as their salvation just as equally as it was Iraq's. By contrast, even if the Sunnis were happy to be rid of Saddam and to see the back of the Ba`th regime, they were never going to connect to a celebration which, in part, was largely based on another group's sense of entitlement and victimhood. Moreover, the Sunnis did not possess a significant sense of themselves as a differentiated group; nor did they have a myth upon which to base communal victimhood. This led to inevitable feelings of encirclement and fear, which were made worse by the political elite, who did little to reassure them. Thus, two distinct historical narratives emerged formulated upon ethnic experiences, resulting in sectarian overtones impacting all aspects of Iraqi life.

Following the toppling of Saddam, the uneven distribution of power resources throughout the ethno-sectarian communities (which had once favoured Sunni Arabs) became a non-institutionalised, unwritten and informal reality of political life. So, whilst the toppling of Saddam Hussein can be considered the start of a new chapter for Iraq, the legacy of sectarianism was still a major factor, which determined the dispensation of power internally and, by extension, the relationships that Iraq now looked to establish with a range of state actors.

The war in Iraq has profoundly changed the Middle East, although not in ways the US had anticipated (Nasr, 2006). The occupation of Iraq brought to the fore otherwise avoidable conditions wherein sectarianism was permitted to occupy the centre political stage and foster suspicions and fears by releasing and exasperating existing sectarian fissures in society which had been shaped and nurtured under Saddam's brutal rule. The extreme demonisation of Saddam and the Ba`th, even without ethnic bias, complemented the sectarian understanding of Iraq's recent history. The pre-2003 assumption of exiled leaders concerning what the Ba`th signified to the Iraqi people, proved in hindsight to be a dangerous simplification and unduly influenced the myopic CPA policies. Whilst it was expected that all Iraqis would be grateful after being 'liberated', what transpired was a people divided on the Ba`th memory.

Bremer introduced a new sectarian dynamic into Iraq which helped create and maintain the neo-patrimonial interests of the Shi'a and Kurdish political elite, firstly through de-Ba`thification and then through the *muhassasa* quota system. De-Ba`thification involved removing key Sunni officials from government and disbanding the army. This Order fuelled the insurgency by alienating hundreds of thousands of young Iraqi men with weapons training and by undermining the traditional norms required for social and economic functioning because of a lack of security. Through the Sunni paradigm, it was necessary to fight against the new order because they thought they were fighting for ethnic survival. Nonetheless, within a few short years, they had laid down their weapons and joined

the Sons of Iraq program, which was supported by the US. This program was significantly helped by the AQI excesses, which were arguably more responsible for Sunni pacification than US counterinsurgency tactics in Anbar.

On the other hand, the *muhassasa* quota system permitted Shi'a and Kurdish exiles to assume representative roles in Iraqi communalism. Ethno-sectarian politics helped previously exiled leaders find new constituents, usurp state power and attract voters, allowing them to claim legitimacy and solidify their power base. However, long term ramifications resulted in a series of non-representative politicians who have been reliant upon sectarian mobilisation as a central pillar of support. The inherited neo-patrimonial structure of the government affected successive Iraqi regimes, which have used different vehicles to frame unit and systemic level policies; this included traditional secular approaches, religion and most conveniently overt sectarianism. Whilst it would be an exaggeration to state that all political exiles used sectarianism for neo-patrimonial gains, it can be argued that even secular exiles working with their religious counterparts facilitated and widened sectarian differences whilst developing, expanding and maintaining their own networks.

Although Bremer is credited with the *muhassasa* quota system, its origin dates to 1992 and can be attributed to Shi'a and Kurdish political exiles. At the unit level, it was overtly expressed through electoral mobilisation during 2005, 2010 and 2014 elections. The *muhassasa* system restructured the state and the political field, empowering the political elite, who were championing sectarian identities as the only way to reclassify the social world. Even the Communist Party, Iraq's oldest and most secular political party shared power along ethno-religious parties. More importantly for the political elite, it provided political parties with access to resources of the state. This had the effect of dividing the cabinet and ministries, and their economic resources, which were allotted to sectarian-driven parties as a recompense for acquiring votes and allowing them to form part of the national unity government.

The intention behind the *muhassasa* quota system was to promote Iraqi representation in the government. However, in reality, it came close to being an existential threat to Iraq's fledgling democracy. The ensuing government makeup was based on complex formulations of religious and ethnic power-sharing configurations. It was, therefore, no surprise that the bureaucratic institutions of Iraq were subject to political regression as the politics of neo-patronage increasingly determined who was appointed in key positions. At the unit level, this meant people seeking government employment would only be recruited after pledging allegiance to the party in charge of the ministry. In turn, this perpetuated and strengthened the *muhassasa* quota system. For the Iraqi Kurds and Shi'a, the rise of identity politics was arguably the best safeguard against any return of Sunni rule.

Following the institutionalisation of ethno-sectarian representation, the *muhassasa* system proved impossible to modify or remove.

After coming to power primarily as a nationalist and then failing, Al-Maliki took every opportunity to aggressively target Sunni and Kurdish political adversaries through the explicit or implicit threat of force and increase his control over state bureaucracies and independent bodies such as the central bank, elections commission and the anti-corruption watchdog. This allowed Al-Maliki to successfully create extra-constitutional security bodies capable of bypassing parliament by attaching state bureaucracies to his office. These actions led to a subversion of the checks and balances which had been previously installed by the coalition forces and tarnished the efficacy and legitimacy of these bodies, especially the Supreme Court.

The ability of Al-Maliki to ensure his supporters took control of state bureaucracies was a testament to the neo-patrimony and cronyism being used as tools of political influence. Although people may not have voted to preserve the neo-patrimonial benefits of the political elite per se, the outcome was a sectarian government whose primary goal was to milk the system. Overall, Al-Maliki's use of neo-patrimonial efforts was successful in centralising and consolidating power. Oil-funded state neo-patrimony and the use of communal differences for 'divide and rule' strategies remained crucial factors in Al-Maliki's politics (Chatham House, 2013a).

Along with his relatives, tribesmen and friends, Al-Maliki used the electoral process to centralise power, represent Shi'a interests and marginalise his opponents.

The Shi'a victim identity which emerged from this situation largely reflected the conduct of Iraqi bilateral relations, especially with its dealings with Iran, which has permitted a previously unthinkable alignment over issues related to religion, economics and politics to emerge. Whilst Saudi Arabia downgraded its ties with Iraq because of its Shi'a identity, Iranian involvement with Iraq was both deep and broad in its scope. The nature of Iraqi policy towards Iran involved balancing its strategic alliance with Tehran with that of the US (Kinninmont et al., 2013). This approach created uncertainty for the international community, especially the US, and domestically to some extent even with the Shi'a population. Iraqi reliance on the outside world allowed Iranian allies to acquire high ranking government positions in Iraq, and the Iraqi constitution which called for a federalised state ensured a government incapable of projecting power. This fragmentation significantly favoured Iran, which prefers a weak Iraq that is both malleable and permeable (Felter & Fishman, 2008).

Iran has dominated its neighbour so thoroughly that Iraq has sided with Iran instead of the US on most key geopolitical decisions. In addition to hard power, Iran has also successfully influenced the Iraqi political elite to accept the status quo. For example, it has enacted trade policies and protectionist

measures which have proven disadvantageous to Iraq; attempted to overtake the Najaf-based Shi'a clerical network; and tried to influence public activities through information activities. Iranian success has been made easier through the manipulation of the Iraqi political elite which has maintained a mainly contiguous Shi'a political bloc. Iran's policy of maintaining influence in Iraq has been to form a Shi'a-led, centralised government's reliance upon imports of food and power while making sure they do not become too powerful.

International relations fused with sectarian allegiances were exasperated further following the Syrian civil war. The analysis highlights how the uptake of Iraq's sectarian norm increased with its security concerns. Although Iraqi bi-lateral relations had been exercised through their own subjectivity in defining non-interference in other regions states, Baghdad became an essential actor in the axis consisting of the Assad regime (which whom it was previously at odds), Hezbollah and Iran, with underlying support from China and Russia. Although relations viewed through a sectarian prism make it easy to understand Iraq's relations with some of its neighbours, this approach is much more problematic with other countries which are geographically further afield.

Sectarianism became the only means of ensuring regime coherence and legitimacy amid widespread state failure, civil war, a faltering economy and a fractured society. However, this thesis argues, sectarianism was never the primary objective of the political elite, but merely a tool to realise their neo-patrimonial ambitions. Whilst it can be argued the actions of Al-Maliki may have stemmed from a political ambition to succeed at any cost, his continued presence in office resulted in the fragmentation of Iraqi policies at the unit and systemic levels and significantly hurt national reconciliation efforts and relations with the Sunni Arab world.

The following chapters build upon this chapter by analysing the field data. Since the majority of the respondents formed part of the civil service within Iraq, a first-hand account of neo-patrimony, and sectarianism and its impact of foreign policy is necessary.

6 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS – FIELD WORK PART 1

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis has discussed the constructivist paradigm and neo-patrimonial and sectarian norms within the Iraqi state. A synergy of these previous chapters is now applied to the field data to help answer the research question. This is using two modes of analysis: firstly, by qualitatively analysing the aforementioned norms at the unit level within several Iraqi bureaucracies and, secondly, by quantitatively analysing these norms at the systemic level (in the next chapter). The analysis uses constructivism to understand the key themes extracted from this chapter and their impact on foreign policy.

This section of the thesis analyses the experience of the interviewees, which include, but are not limited to, ex-prime ministers, military officers and political leaders who are or have headed bureaucracies of the Iraqi state, charged with overseeing and implementing its external relations. These interviewees, collectively and individually, have been at the epicentre of a nexus consisting of sectarian challenges and demands whilst working in a political structure imbued with neo-patrimonial logic.

The majority of Iraqi foreign policy literature focusses on the pre-2003 period, wherein the Saddam regime is described as a rational actor who was unmotivated by ideational factors. However, rather than providing analytical primacy to the international system's constraints on states' foreign policy, such as in the realist tradition, this thesis uses a new view of Iraqi foreign policy behaviour, one based within a holistic constructivist approach, which focuses on analysing social constructions. This allows the study of historical events and political changes to take place, which may be considered irrational for established positivist theories (Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001).

In the context of post-2003 Iraq, this method is still underrepresented in the academic debate; however, the contours of this approach are taking shape and the insights yielded in this thesis should prove invaluable when attempting to understand neo-patrimony and sectarianism within Iraq. It is argued the dual mode of study will provide a greater understanding of participant responses and will help aid the comprehension and impact of neo-patrimonial politics on the conduct of Iraqi external relations between 2003 and 2014.

A society which is relatively new to power and where the rules of governance remain opaque provides a case which allows this type of study to be undertaken. Unlike nation-states, where the nation and state identification are typically synonymous, in a fractured state such as Iraq, the sectarian identity has become primary, wherein those in power deployed (amongst other things) 'religious heritage as

a primary marker of modern political identity' (Makdisi, 2000, p. 7). Although the data suggests the Shi'a attempted to synonymise their sectarian affiliations with an Iraqi identity, sometimes referred to as 'Shia-centric state building' (Haddad, 2016), this relegated the identities of others to a secondary or even tertiary position. For example, in 2005 an internal document circulated in the UIA, the largest Shi'a political alliance (of which Allawi was a representative at the time), which outlined in unequivocal terms the proposed vision for Iraq's future – 'Iraq is the Shi'a. . . . And the Shi'a are Iraq' (Haddad, 2016). Allawi described the document writing: 'It also marked the abandonment of the western ideal of citizenship, in favour of a constellation of lesser sects and ethnicities revolving around a Shi'a sun' (Allawi, 2007, p. 438). Many of the responses acquired from the participants fit neatly within this understanding. This demonstrates that in order to understand Iraqi external relations, relationships are subjective because of the sectarian nature of the opinions and views decision-makers held. This also justifies the focus on the intersection of sectarian identity and bureaucratic practices.

Since constructivism considers the interpretation of norms, ideas and identities (as opposed to measuring material capabilities), the resultant epistemological programme and ontology of what makes up the social world can be considered. Epistemologically, constructivism can be used to analyse how people create and understand meaning through intersubjective social interactions. Ontologically, unlike realism, constructivism holds that there is no objectively measurable reality independent from social interpretation and the meaning of reality is what people ascribe to it. This permits the same event to be understood by unique actors in different ways (Onuf, 1989). Through an ontology of the social world being construed through social interactions, constructivism can be used to assess different overlapping definitions of Arab, Muslim, Sunni, Shi'a, and Kurdish identities to better comprehend the often-self-contradicting Iraqi foreign policy discourse.

From a constructivist perspective, it can be argued that the removal of the Saddam regime was a milestone in Iraqi history. Iraq shifted from a dictatorial government towards a fragmented neo-patrimonial leadership, wherein a significant amount of resentment amongst competing sectarian groups began to fester. This thesis argues that this led to a blurring of the Iraqi national identity and its interests.

Both Sunni and Shi'as Iraqis committed terrible acts of sectarian-based violence against each other in the period covered by this thesis. As a consequence, this pain was still raw in many of the people who were interviewed. Remarkably, the two communities have been expected to cooperate even though their respective communities have become segregated. Based on the constitution and from a legal perspective, the government was responsible for ensuring employment is implemented fairly

between Arabs, both Sunni and Shi'a, as well as Kurds, and that each group is represented within the government bureaucracies evenly.

This must be set against Iraq having endured one the greatest sectarian-based conflicts in modern history, with a recorded 268,000 violent deaths between 2003 and 2018 (Al-Jazeera, 2018), in addition to countless kidnappings and injuries. Successive governments failed to address this sectarian schism and, instead, focused on preserving their neo-patrimonial interests through sectarianism, which often led to violence. Moreover, they have, at times deliberately exacerbated tensions through emphasising the particularities of clan, tribal, religious and ethnic identity. This was used to strengthen the neo-patrimonial hold on bureaucracies through the allocation of public resources, decision-making processes and, most notably, recruitment and selection processes.

Due to overlapping histories, languages and cultures, it would be incorrect to state the Sunni and Shi'a are diametrically opposed to each other. Nonetheless, the differences in geographic locations in and around Baghdad which cross sectarian lines have increased due to the way in which power was centralised in Iraq by the Shi'a governments following the invasion. This also led to institutions being labelled with sectarian descriptors. For example, the Interior Ministry has been termed a 'Shi'a'+9 stronghold. Therefore, those of other groupings within their workspaces have been marginalised, reduced in number or replaced with those associated with those in charge.

Article 14 of Iraq's constitution states: '[All] Iraqis are equal before the law without discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, origin, colour, religion, creed, belief or opinion, or economic and social status' (ILO, 2005). It is, therefore, illegal for organisations, let alone government institutions, to employ individuals in a bid to strengthen their own positions. Despite the presence of a shared workplace, this has not obscured differences between the workforce or ensured amicable working relationships. The result has been bureaucratic decisions being made based on unsound methodologies. Whilst the elite strengthened neo-patrimony within state institutions, sectarianism became etched in the psyche of many of the people who were interviewed and is, therefore, an unpalatable feature, which has fed into government processes, both knowingly and unknowingly.

As per the outlined framework, this section of the research details the unit level impact of neo-patrimony and sectarianism in the workplace.

6.2 NEO-PATRIMONY AND BUREAUCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

The presence of neo-patrimony within Iraqi institutions has led to relational conflict, which has had a profoundly negative impact on the state bureaucracies. Neo-patrimony causal mechanisms associated with it, such as *wasta,* require particular attention since they are directly responsible for the

sectarianism that has so blighted Iraq. This has resulted in 'a system of attitudes, actions, beliefs, and structures…. which arises as a distorted expression of positive, human needs especially for belonging, identity, and the free expression of difference…. and is expressed in destructive patterns of relating' (Liechty and Clegg, 2001, pp. 102-103).

This thesis has demonstrated that neo-patrimony in the case of Iraq has political and religious dimensions, but the differences between both Sunnis and Shi'as are not limited to these. It also reflects a unique sense of belonging, culture and tradition. Therefore, sectarianism in Iraq cannot be simply categorised as being the binary product of political and ethnic differences but needs to be viewed through social and historical narratives.

Respondents have been subject to behaviour which can be classed as being sectarian in nature but may not have been premediated or intentional, for example, the use of religious attire or flags or symbols belonging to specific groups used to emphasise neo-patrimonial exclusivity or sectarian loyalties.

State bureaucracies highlighted in this chapter demonstrated neo-patrimonial traits based on three tiers:

I. actions associated with individuals
II. attitudes and beliefs
III. ideas which affected both domestic and foreign bureaucratic decisions

Primarily, direct discrimination and inequality at the structural level in human resource areas such as selection and recruitment have historically hindered the Shi'a population. Secondly, the phenomenon of neo-patrimony has been strengthened because of popular beliefs and attitudes towards 'other' groups. The final method through which neo-patrimony was manifested was through the actions of individuals via violence, harassment, intimidation, threat, personalised discrimination based on religious, political and ethnic differences. These constructs have been documented in this chapter and then analysed further in the next.

In addition to markers alluding to identity and group membership, neo-patrimonial nodes in the hierarchy can manifest themselves through ethno-religious symbols, such as dress code, and the deliberate non-use of state language in the case of the Kurds. Shi'a neo-patrimonial claims tended to be greater than other groups since Shi'as tended to concur with sentiments such as 'Iraq is the Shi'a … And the Shi'a are Iraq' and viewed others as '… a constellation of lesser sects and ethnicities revolving around a Shi'a sun' (Allawi, 2007, p. 438). However, the literature indicates workforce segmentation through the differentiation of groups can lead to workforce discord, animosity and

increase hostility (Alberti, 2016). Icons such as dress, adornments and religious symbols flags have been seen within Iraqi bureaucratic institutions.

The debates concerning institutional arrangements and diversity management of people in Iraqi bureaucratic management have not been discussed as they fall outside of the research scope. Nonetheless, the Iraqi political elite, in theory, is constrained by the constitution, although it can be surmised that these individuals, whilst attempting to adhere to the law, have done so based on a minimalist approach which intermittently fulfils the letter but not the spirit of the law. This qualitative analysis links three common narratives found within respondent answers, which describe harassment in the workplace based on sectarianism, the ways in which it has been manifested and its impact on foreign policy.

This analysis uses the narratives of employees using inductive approaches. This has been used to provide answers concerning the 'what', 'how' and 'why' of a phenomenon, as opposed to 'how much' or 'how many'. This qualitative approach is important since it provides insights concerning experiences, attitudes, feelings, behaviours, processes and interactions (Colleen, 2009).

6.3 PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

Due to the extensive network of contacts the researcher has been able to forge over the years, several different bureaucratic institutions could have been included in this section of the research. However, a conscious decision was made by the researcher to include only large institutions because smaller organisations were less likely to reflect cross-ethnic diversity. Moreover, smaller bureaucracies were also less likely to be involved in foreign policy decision-making. Geographical dispersion was another factor considered, which provided variability in terms of the major concentrations of power. From a total of ten institutions, five were used in this part of the research. Due to the ethical constraints of this research, anonymity was accorded to the respondents but not their respective locations of employment. Therefore, aliases were used to identify individuals. A summary has been provided below with a corresponding workforce composition:

I. PM's office. Headed by a Shi'a and considered a neo-patrimonial stronghold consisting of mainly Shi'a management and Shi'a low-level employees with a small number of Sunni low-level employees. The number of questionnaires completed was seven.
II. Interior Ministry. Led by a Shi'a and considered a neo-patrimonial stronghold consisting of mainly Shi'a management and Shi'a low-level employees with a small number of Sunni low-level employees. The number of questionnaires completed was eight.

III. Ministry of Defence. This has been both a Sunni and Shi'a patrimonial stronghold depending on the minister in charge. When a new minister arrived, he would typically bring an entourage which replaced much of the organisation's middle management. The number of questionnaires completed was eight.

IV. Foreign Ministry. Headed by a Kurd but not considered a neo-patrimonial stronghold consisting of Kurdish, Sunni and Shi'a management and Kurdish, Sunni and Shi'a employees. The number of questionnaires completed was ten.

V. Ministry of Electricity. Headed by a Sunni and considered a neo-patrimonial stronghold consisting of mainly Sunni management and Sunni employees but with a significant number of Shi'a employees. The number of questionnaires completed was seven.

6.4 DATA SAMPLING

Following the acquisition of completed questionnaires, it was possible to apply a stratified sampling procedure based on respondent profiles such as work locations, job and sectarian affiliation. The responses from those employees in managerial positions were specifically chosen since it was more likely they had greater encounters with either exercising or witnessing neo-patrimonial persuasions which lead to sectarian differences between employees. The selected respondents can be considered key to providing unique perspectives on how neo-patrimony was manifested in the government bureaucracies and how it influenced foreign policy. The level of respondent experience acquired in their employment ranged between 5 and 13 years, with an average of 7.5 years.

6.5 METHOD

Based on the extensive interviews and subsequently generated data, it was possible to generate detailed accounts of personal perceptions and experiences by allowing respondents to express neo-patrimonial norms in the workplace. Moreover, the questionnaire was crafted in such a manner to allow these details to be acquired whilst taking into consideration the sensitivity of the topic. The episodes which were narrated were required to be first-hand experiences.

6.6 LIMITATIONS

Based on the way the data has been collated, there is a need to acknowledge the limitations of this research. Due to the descriptive nature of this section of the analysis, there could be different explanations concerning the use of neo-patrimony and its persistence. However, this latter finding could be explained through social desirability bias, that is, respondents may have been responding in a manner they deem socially acceptable compared to their 'true' answer (Lavrakas, 2008). Therefore,

whilst it was likely hidden prejudices amongst respondents is inevitable, they didn't need to admit that neo-patrimony and its repercussions were ever-present but still conceded its existence.

Whilst this chapter is qualitative in nature, it has been useful because it 'can address real-life issues not amenable to quantitative research' (Isaacs, 2016). Moreover, the use of quantitative data through the use of survey-based tools for deriving generalisations on the extent of sectarianism in the population has also been fruitful. However, since the grassroots nature of this research has not yet taken place in Iraq, it was not possible to determine the total grievances of people exposed to neo-patrimony in other government bureaucracies. This research focused on several large, government bureaucracies, which means the findings may not automatically apply to smaller organisations with different ethnic compositions.

6.7 RESULTS

Based on the questionnaire results, it was possible to analyse the data using a thematic approach. Five primary themes were derived from the data, with differing levels of complexity, in addition to other identifiable subthemes:

I. Neo-patrimonial extent
II. Neo-patrimonial sources
III. Sectarian expressions
IV. Acceptable sectarianism
V. Impact on foreign policy

6.7.1 Theme 1: Neo-patrimonial extent

In relation to this theme, two distinct narratives emerged, the first relative to the pervasive nature of neo-patrimony and a willingness to enforce it. The second narrative compared the levels of neo-patrimony following the first election in 2005 and then in 2010.

i. Past and present neo-patrimony: When comparing past and present perceived levels of neo-patrimony, approximately four-fifths of respondents painted a picture of a government which previously enjoyed lower levels of acceptability because of high levels of neo-patrimony, whilst in the latter years of the research period, that is, after 2010, it appeared that it was moving tentatively in the opposite direction. A Sunni communications officer working in the PM's office stated:

> The earlier years of the occupation were really bad. Blatant enforcement of neo-patrimony was present in the state institutions which allowed flags and celebrations which were attached to specific sectarian groups, mainly Shi'a. Although overt neo-patrimonial enforcement has been dealt with, the environment is still not neutral. (Baghdad, 2015)

i. Blatant enforcement of neo-patrimony through sectarianism: In limited cases, approximately 10% of respondents complained of blatant sectarianism as a tool for strengthening neo-patrimony; however, whilst attempting to not play down these incidents, most respondents indicated that sectarianism within institutions did not occur overtly. Rather, it was restricted to bureaucratic sectarian and neo-patrimonial overtones. Nonetheless, the attempt to strengthen neo-patrimonial structures was present in each of the bureaucratic institutions selected, as per the respondent experiences. This indicated a wider sectarian issue, which was reported to have peaked following events in the country. However, the majority of respondents reported sectarianism within the workplace was something they disapproved of but was occurring more often than not. A manager from the Ministry of Defence stated:

ii. 'There are typically a few sectarian related events taking place in our department during the space of a working week, sometimes they come to my attention. These events are often tied to what happens in the local community and other state bureaucracies, and differ in terms of seriousness, although the majority are minor' (Baghdad, 2015).

Conversely, there was also a minority view which stated that institutions offered a cocoon-like safety by providing insulation to employees, allowing them to free themselves from tribalized and sectarian tensions. A manager from the Foreign Ministry stated:

'There are many problematic areas in and around Bagdad, this means many employees come to work in a frame of mind which is not balanced because of external strains and stresses, there are also employees who come to work to get it away from it, we try hard to avoid sectarianism here.' (Baghdad, 2015)

6.7.2 Theme 2: Neo-patrimonial sources

The causes of potential offence and threat resulted in the following subtheme:

i. HRM and neo-patrimony: When neo-patrimonial structures were being strengthened through the promotion of junior employees, complaints were typically directed towards the perpetrator instead of attempting to address the issues directly with superiors. In one case, a high-level HRM employee from the Interior Ministry noted that when several promotional posts became available, the most likely candidates, in his opinion, did not acquire the positions, the vacancies being allocated to Shi'a staff with lower levels of education and experience. This prompted the HRM employee to check the records of these newly promoted members of staff. He discovered they had the same tribal affiliations with other senior members of staff.

6.7.3 Theme 3: Acceptable neo-patrimony

Although from a legal perspective any neo-patrimonial expression, no matter how minor, would invite repercussions for the perpetrator, an unofficial threshold appeared to have developed which

permitted both victims and management to overlook infringements. With respect to this phenomenon, three subthemes emerged which have been summarised below:

i. Neo-patrimonial extent: This subtheme can be linked to theme 1 and aligned with those findings. It seemed that actions associated with neo-patrimonial enforcement were a major concern for around two-thirds of the questionnaire respondents. The majority of those complaining about these actions were Sunni Arabs and Kurds. However, although this was the reality, most employees attempted to sanitise their environments and get on with work responsibilities. A Sunni secretary in the PM's office stated: 'Although I am aware of how things work around here, I try to block it out when I come to work. I know people may judge me by my ethnic origin, but I always try to get on with colleagues' (Baghdad, 2015).

   In a similar vein, a Shi'a employee in the Ministry of Defence stated:

   > Many of my responsibilities mean that I have to work in teams with people with different backgrounds, I always leave non-state allegiances at the office door because I believe this shouldn't have any impact on my job. That said, I have noticed nepotism increased with the appointment of positions allocated on non-professional credentials, the new employees incapable of doing their jobs also appeared unwilling to learn. (Baghdad, 2015)

   It was also common to find contradictory views, but the overall mood of respondents showed that there were limited islands of neutrality in a sea of neo-patrimonial institutions which were split along sectarian lines, indicating neo-patrimony was an ingrained phenomenon. A Sunni manager from the Ministry of Electricity stated: 'I think sectarianism is tolerated more than it should be in my workplace. It always builds up from innocent jokes into employees falling out and segregating themselves' (Baghdad, 2015).

   Over half of the respondents indicated a reduction of neo-patrimonial enforcement in the workplace compared to previous levels. A Sunni from the Interior Ministry stated: 'Between 2010 and 2014 things got a lot better' (Baghdad, 2015). The events in wider society also tended to have an impact on neo-patrimonial structures within state bureaucracies. A Sunni manager working in the PM's office stated: 'I always dreaded large scale sectarian events because of the backlash it has on two levels, personal and professional. Personally, it makes me feel uneasy, and professionally it impacts employee cohesion and performance' (Baghdad, 2015).

ii. Conflict management: Multiple steps were taken by managers in a bid to reduce sectarian friction within the workspace, including humour, avoiding contentious discussions, promoting harmony through dialogue and dealing with diversity. Light-hearted conversation or banter was one tool used to discuss problematic topics in the absence of individuals taking offence.

Employees in some organisations tended to have an acute awareness of sectarian differences and tried to be diplomatic in their approach to differences. A Sunni employee from the Foreign Ministry stated: 'We always try to avoid confrontation in the workforce because we are a minority in society. So, whenever there are any issues relating to sectarianism we try to resolve then straight away' (Baghdad, 2015).

A key strategy which aimed to prevent sensitive topics from being discussed was avoidance. A Sunni manager in the Interior Ministry of stated: 'All the workers have known each other a really long time so everyone knows what everyone else is, but we tend to avoid the elephant in the room' (Baghdad, 2015).

Although in Sunni bureaucracies, the enforcement of neo-patrimony was relatively lower, in Shi'a institutions this was not so much the case, according to a high ranking Shi'a official in the PM's office: 'The Sunnis had a good time with Saddam, if we strengthen our positions in the government then who can blame us' (Baghdad, 2015).

Despite the presence of neo-patrimonial behaviour throughout the research period, respondents indicated, this was less severe after 2010. Moreover, within most institutions, even those dominated by a single faction or ethnic group, there was a mood indicating neo-patrimony was being institutionalised less and less. One Sunni clerk working in a Shi'a-dominated Interior Ministry stated: 'I used to complain a lot about neo-patrimony to my friends outside of work, but nowadays I am a lot less inclined to do so' (Baghdad, 2015). Whilst this phenomenon could be attributed to individuals being scared to speak out, the general mood was because it was becoming less obvious. Nonetheless, employees working a bureaucracy claimed that social mobility and even safety could be guaranteed if an individual fully backed their institution. On a practical note, this meant that employees no longer considered themselves Iraqis but were members of religious communities affiliated with a patriarch, which provided access to social and political rights.

Although all major state bureaucracies operated from within the Green Zone, which ensured building and employee safety, many remained vulnerable to the repercussions of power concentrations occurring in the wider community. For example, the Ministry of Interior is positioned outside the Green Zone. A Sunni manager stated:

> It was always a sombre moment walking into the office following an attack on the Shi'a. I never knew if I would be put on the spot and asked if I believed what happened was wrong. Of course, I thought it was wrong, any human being would say it was wrong, for some reason my Shi'a colleagues would intermittently check my views, as if I was a spokesperson for all Sunnis. Events in news also impacted the relationship between state institutions. (Baghdad, 2015)

iii. Survivable neo-patrimony: This subtheme refers to types of behaviour which, despite the legal norms imposed by statute, remained ingrained in the workplace. It was to be a theme which was reiterated by nearly half of the respondents. A Shi'a manager from the Interior Ministry stated:

> We know nepotism and neo-patrimonial based actions were banned and against the law, even our religion. But it always seems to find a way through to the surface. People were subject to low levels of discrimination based on identity through expressions such as humour. I mean, there are policies in place, but these are not always black and white, they can be interpreted differently and take time to implement. Therefore, people tended to just get on with it. (Baghdad, 2015)

This non-confrontational use of 'othering' was typically ignored by victims, most likely because they thought it was not worth pursuing due to long-term negative consequences or perhaps because no substantial offence was caused. It was not always possible for victims to differentiate between acceptable and unacceptable forms of discrimination because of neo-patrimony. It was often tolerated because minorities did not want to draw unnecessary attention to themselves or because people wanted to avoid being stigmatised. A Sunni clerk in the prime minister's office stated: 'It's just not worth the headache' (Baghdad, 2015).

A theme which repeated itself several times amongst Sunni respondents working in Shi'a bureaucracies was low levels of resentment. Sunnis in these workplaces had few issues about Shi'a attire being worn at work. However, it was only Shi'a symbolism which was ever on display. A Sunni manager in the Ministry of Defence stated: 'To be honest they can wear what they [Shi'a workers] want, but how come we cannot express ourselves in the same way?' (Baghdad, 2015).

Although loaded comments could offend, respondents felt that this usually took place when groups loyal to different patriarchs engaged in banter with each other which then reached critical levels. Following this phase, this erupted into spiteful dialogue. Irrespective of the policies in place to stop neo-patrimonial behaviour, it was clear that to keep a bureaucracy functioning, it was common for management to turn a blind eye to cases where they perceived this to be for the greater good. A Shia official in the Ministry of Defence stated:

> It just wasn't practical for us to chase up every case, if we did that we wouldn't have got anything else done, we tried our best to stamp out neo-patrimonial behaviour in its worst forms, but for the sake of practicality, we had to prioritise, and laying down more [policies] would have been pointless as well. (Baghdad, 2015)

Participants also indicated at times that they would also felt compelled to engage in low levels of acts associated with neo-patrimony either through language or through practical

demonstrations. This usually meant putting down a rival faction and elevating their own. Although belonging to the same sect, they often felt uneasy about doing this but felt compelled to prove themselves. These actions were said to be more common amongst new employees until they had acquired permanent employment contracts.

6.7.4 Theme 4: Neo-patrimonial expressions

This category explains how neo-patrimony was enforced through various manifestations and how groups were pressured by others.

i. Expressions using paraphernalia. This included the use of religious and ethnic symbols and was the most common form of 'othering'. It was mentioned by over two-thirds of respondents. Manifestations included the use of ethnically charged emblems such as Shi'a and Kurdish flags in addition to religious posters by mid-tier managers.

   A Sunni official from the Ministry of Defence stated sectarian symbols had been set up in buildings belonging to them, which was against official policy. In this instance, this form of intimidation was directed towards minority employees working there. These acts were typically directed towards single individuals and perpetrated by small groups. A Sunni police force captain stated:

   > Shi'a in different state security departments became known for decorating their vehicles with Shi'a flags and pictures of Shi'a leaders both Iraqi and Iranians including Qasim Sulaimani, thus intimidating the local Sunni residents which they were tasked with protecting. In my opinion, this fuelled sectarianism when patrolling Shi'a areas and created mistrust in Sunni areas. This made us wary about specific ministries and their true agenda. (Baghdad, 2015)

   Lesser forms of sectarianism in the Ministry of Defence included the use of blatant graffiti; this would be typically aimed Sunnis and Kurds and written on toilet doors. Naming individuals would make the offence more serious and personal in nature.

   Overall, all large bureaucracies with minorities reported the common use of sectarian expressions through paraphernalia were used to emphasise ethnic, political and religious associations.

ii. Direct threat. This was the most serious type of threat experienced by respondents and involved threats of injury and in extreme cases death by decapitation or execution. Approximately a fifth of respondents were subject to this form of threat. One such incident involved an account from a foreman from the Ministry of Electricity, who narrated a story from several employees engaged in a project working in a rundown Shi'a neighbourhood. Shortly after the group arrived and began their work, they noticed the street became eerily quiet. Then a group of approximately ten balaclava-clad militia arrived in pickup trucks, each with a weapon. Fortunately for the group, there was a Shi'a present with a familiar family

name, so the group was permitted to leave unscathed following a brief interrogation. Another common case was reported by an official from the Interior Ministry, where employees were receiving sectarian-based harassment on their mobile phones and government emails which mentioned the religious and ethnic origins of the employee. It was reckoned that work associates from different sectarian groups were leaking this data.

iii. Impact of neo-patrimony on internal institutional decision-making: The key theme here was that there was a common belief amongst minority employees who believed they were being disadvantaged. This was due to the decision-making process observed by senior members of staff. This process affected them negatively because of their religious affiliation, and not their experience or qualifications. Approximately one-fifth of incidents mentioned in the fieldwork were of this nature.

A Sunni official in the Interior Ministry, who was indirectly responsible for several members of staff, related an event where a clerk belonging to the same ethnic and religious group claimed he was being set close to impossible tasks and timeframes. This led the clerk to raise a complaint along the lines of unfair treatment, which was rebuffed by senior management (who were of a different ethnic and religious background). The Sunni official claimed unfair targets were linked to high levels of minority redundancies within his institute. He recollected a former employee's statement, who said: 'Soon there will be no Sunnis left [in the Interior Ministry]: they just want all of us gone by playing silly games' (Baghdad, 2015).

Whilst most ministries remained either Sunni or Shi'a strongholds, there were a select few which would alternate between being Sunni and Shi'a, the Ministry of Defence being a good example. When new ministers were appointed, this had a considerable negative impact on staff morale and motivation because many of the existing mid-level management could be replaced. A third of Sunnis indicated a high level of resentment following the appointment of a Shi'a minister in the Ministry of Defence. In retaliation, a common theme emerged which saw workers covertly resisting imposed changes. These sabotage tactics were executed in different ways the most common involving agreeing to carry out tasks but then stalling, and the most involving an existing employee wiping several databases and then resigning. A Sunni manager in the Ministry of Defence stated: 'People don't like change and people resisted as much as possible when it happened. Many people didn't know if they were going to be here the next day. This created an unhealthy environment where people no longer cared' (Baghdad, 2015). Employees indicated they would form coalitions and bypass the chain of command; however, extreme tactics were typically avoided except as a last resort.

iv. Offence caused through miscommunication: This subtheme differs from those previously mentioned because it covers communication amongst individuals with insufficient rapport and included humour with sectarian connotations. However, whilst humour was intended, the message being conveyed had the dual possibility of being perceived as offensive. These people were not usually part of the conversation, which makes it understandable as to why they felt that way. A Sunni working at the Ministry of Defence stated: 'People like to make statements in passing against other groups and state institutions; this is a regular thing here' (Baghdad, 2015).

v. Cynical expressions of sectarianism: This was the least reported form of neo-patrimonial expression reported by the respondents. The main difference between this subtheme and those previously mentioned was the legal application to further one's career ambitions and involved the use of or the threat to use legislation set up to prevent nepotism and sectarianism in the workforce. One example was from a Sunni manager in the Ministry of Electricity who stated a Shi'a employee had hinted at using legislation if his annual review did not result in promotion from his current position, thereby putting pressure on the Sunni management.

6.7.5 Theme 5: Neo-patrimonial impact on foreign policy decision-making

The impact of neo-patrimony on foreign policy was exhibited at multiple levels and manifested itself differently depending on the organisation, its sectarian demographic and the social events taking place at the time. Subsequently, three distinct subthemes emerged and are documented as follows:

i. Blatant choices to reinforce neo-patrimonial structures

Approximately two-thirds of respondents who belonged to Sunni minorities within the PM's Office and the Interior Ministry indicated that foreign policy choices were being decided with a disregard for standard procedures. Instead of formulating decisions based on the interests of Iraq, there were many occasions when the PM would unilaterally and often spontaneously make decisions after being provided with 'information' from a single or a limited number of advisers. A Sunni manager in the PM's office stated:

> Often, it's painful, I don't really know what I am doing here. I sometimes think I am here as a mascot, a ghost employee or here to shuffle papers and files. Everyone knows [name omitted] has the PM's ear, what he [the PM] can't see is that every time a decision is made, [name omitted] gets richer. (Baghdad, 2015).

Whether or not the PM's confidantes were benefitting financially from foreign policy decisions through kickbacks was not possible to ascertain; however, it was a theme which appeared in questionnaire responses. What was clear was that foreign policy decisions in the PM's prime

minister' office were being made by the PM and a small circle of advisers operating in non-transparent ways, who were beyond liaising with their subordinates and other bureaucracies. This meant that decisions were devoid of typical protocol constraints. Even a Shi'a manager complained: 'I came to the PM's Office with high hopes, I thought I was going to make a difference, but the organisation is highly fragmented and disjointed – nothing ever gets done around here' (Baghdad, 2015).

Although the decisions made in the PM's office typically favoured Shi'a relations with Iran, the use of the word 'sectarianism' to describe the decision-making process was surprisingly rare, even amongst Sunni employees. Whilst most of the evidence points towards sectarian influences on the decision-making process, one Shi'a manager in the PM's office rebuffed this allegation, stating:

> We were shunned by the Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia, although we are also Arab. It was clear the Shi'a government was unpalatable to them and therefore they withdrew from the country. Although it's been many years, now they want to re-engage, what do they expect us to do, forget the past? Even now they only want to engage with us to stop Iran's influence expanding. It might be too late for that. (Baghdad, 2015)

It is clear from this and other statements that many professional Shi'a held similar sentiments about feeling betrayed and abandoned by the Gulf States. The same Shi'a manager stated: 'We may have needed them at the beginning of the occupation but they [Gulf States] showed their colours. Anyway, I think we [the Shi'a of Iraq] have done quite well for ourselves considering the way things have panned out …. as Bush stated, it's "mission accomplished"' (Baghdad, 2015).

This was perhaps the most candid statement coming from any of the Sunni and Shi'a respondents. This statement is telling on many fronts and alluded to a new psychological disposition of the Shi'a believing themselves to be the preeminent rulers of Iraq.

ii. Going through the motions

Whereas in the PM's office, there was a blatant disregard for the SOPs, in the Interior Ministry, the foreign policy decision-making process involved following SOPs but then disregarding the results. Put another way, foreign policy decision-making would be pragmatically approached using a bottom-up method involving the input of multiple employees across different departments within the organisation, but when the synergy was subsequently presented to decision-makers, it was completely ignored.

It was clear through statements made from managers in this organisation that there was a sincere intention to place Iraqi interests at the heart of all decisions. However, respondents typically stated that on key decisions, following the presentation of the best-perceived options, none of

these would be considered and that the decisions would be unilaterally made by the PM's office reflecting neo-patrimonial interests. A Sunni manager in the Interior Ministry stated: 'We work really hard here. But the department heads have no appreciation for how complicated our work is and appear to make decisions using non-standard metrics. From a nationalistic point of view, many of their decisions don't make sense' (Baghdad, 2015).

Whereas in the PM's Office, the selection of foreign policy decisions was made based on neo-patrimony with sectarian overtones, in the Ministry of Electricity, a Sunni majority organisation, there appeared to be a desire to avoid selecting foreign policy options which involved Shi'a solutions. A Sunni individual in the Ministry of Electricity stated:

> The management here is definitely averse to working with Iranian organisations. Just recently we could have saved $5 million if they selected [organisation name], but instead of choosing the obvious option they went for one which was not even a tender on the shortlist[!] Occasionally they might select one of the options we propose; however, it doesn't take place too often because we are viewed as being different. (Baghdad, 2015)

iii. Mixed foreign policy approaches

In the case of the Foreign Ministry, the way foreign policy decisions made appeared to be a hybrid of those methods mentioned in points (i) and (ii). Interviewee statements such as those below, indicated decisions were made based on the geographic location of the target country. When dealing with the US and European governments and organisations, a pragmatic approach was used for foreign policy decision-making based on a logical approach and considering the national interest, for example, the downgrading of the Iraqi-US relationship in favour of Iran. In addition to sharing ideational constructs, the argument can be made that Iran and Iraq need to cooperate on trade, water and energy as well as strengthening diplomatic ties. However, when dealing with Sunni Arab governments, decisions often appeared to be made subjectively. One manager involved in decision-making with European organisations stated:

> My team have developed the necessary skills to help the foreign policy decision-making process, so we are either on par or have excelled over the people who were working here before us [during the Saddam era]; we continue to make good progress. However, my counterpart who manages Arab relations, has complained concerning his situation because his budget is significantly lower than mine and he manages about half the number of staff (Baghdad, 2015).

Based on this statement, it can be argued that Iraqi foreign policy has been purposely kept weak and fragmented within the foreign ministry through a systematic process of underfunding and a lack of human resources. A Sunni official who was transferred to a team tasked with developing European foreign policy stated:

My previous manager was appointed directly by the PM and also shared his family name; after a week into the job, I knew he knew nothing about international relations. Some of the staff said he was a civil engineer by profession. He didn't communicate; to compensate he allocated additional powers to staff or he would say, 'I have been told to do this or that'. It didn't help much; foreign policy is all about leadership. (Baghdad, 2015)

A Shi'a manager also stated:

A lot of the time the staff, myself included, were confused about how to go about our responsibilities because there was no strategic goal. This also made people raise questions because they needed guidance but it [i.e., the guidance] just never came. Of course, this led to conflict and turf battles within the organisation. Sometimes I felt it was what the government wanted. (Baghdad, 2015)

In theory, such a proposition would make it easier for other organisations such as the PM's office to overrule or simply bypass foreign policy decisions made by other bureaucracies such as the Foreign Ministry. Depending on the policy in question, opposition would stem from different bureaucratic sources, including specific ministers, parliament and the other state institutions.

The position of the PM's office towards Syria was a common example cited by respondents where Al-Maliki led the Iraqi position in the Middle East in favour of an axis led by Iran. One prominent parliamentarian stated:

The situation in Syria has made the traditional sectarianism divide worse in Iraq since the PM and other Shi'a leaders have become closer to Assad whilst the Sunnis identify with the people [of Syria]. Iran is critical to Syria, in a similar way, Iran is also critical for Al-Maliki. Therefore, he [Al-Maliki] finds himself in a difficult situation where he may be already compromised. (Baghdad, 2015)

A senior manager in the Foreign Ministry stated:

Based on official Iraqi doctrine, the Foreign Minister insists the country remain a neutral player in Middle East conflicts, especially in places such as Syria, where any support for the [Assad] government can hurt our relationship with our Arab neighbours, the US and EU partners. Naturally, we were shocked, but not entirely surprised when we learnt our land and airspace was being used by Iran for the purpose of transferring military assets. (Baghdad, 2015)

With regards to Iranian planes, the Foreign Minister assured the US all planes to and from Iraq would be inspected and stated:

We were about to send out an advisory memo to all international airports instructing them that all Iranian planes must be thoroughly examined. Shortly after, I received a message from the PM's office stating not to bother because the PM's office and Interior Ministry was dealing with the matter directly (Baghdad, 2015).

Although the Foreign Ministry was incapable of standing up to the PM's office, there were still examples where the PM's office was forced to change its policies following debate. The failure of the Al-Maliki government to create an effective US and Iraqi strategic agreement was an example cited by some respondents. Following lengthy and intense debates, including a brawl amongst

parliamentarians, a watered-down agreement was confirmed in late November 2008. This new framework was subsequently rejected by the US because it subjected its troops to Iraqi prosecution, compelling them to leave by the end of 2011 (Crook, 2009).

In 2012, Al-Maliki's neo-patrimonial position was strengthened when he received a ruling from the Supreme Court which severely limited the ability of parliament to question ministers. The ruling stipulated ministerial questioning had to be predicated upon specific constitutional infractions or criminal charges. A prominent lawyer in Iraq stated:

> This ruling applies to the PM and ministers alike because according to section 61-7-C of the constitution both are to be treated equally. This ruling comes in the context of potential questioning of Ali Al-Abid, the minister for Higher Education and staunch Al-Maliki ally. The obvious question arises is, 'will it be possible for the PM's critics to satisfy the new and more restrictive criteria needed for parliamentary questioning?' (Baghdad, 2015)

In short, the government was free of the typical opposition it would face when trying to implement foreign policy decisions. This phenomenon also impacted domestic policy implementation, which would also face opposition irrespective of how trivial or serious its nature.

Another finding was that over a third of the Foreign Ministry respondents indicated that in addition to the ministry's regular activities, information was being channelled to the Kurdish government to help them make their own foreign policy decisions. A high-ranking official from the Foreign Ministry stated: 'The Minister would intermittently assign me projects associated with the Kurdish regions which I would delegate accordingly. However, whenever this took place, I noticed over a period of years, the decisions were never being taken in the Foreign Ministry' (Baghdad, 2015).

Although this would be an amazing occurrence in any other country, the use of state resources to develop an autonomous area's foreign interests at the expense of centralised regions appeared to be an open secret. One Sunni manager in the Foreign Ministry stated: 'It is well-known the Minister is using the Ministry to promote the Kurdish agenda' (Baghdad, 2015). This open secret placed other state bureaucracies at loggerheads with the Foreign Ministry, especially the PM's Office and the Interior Ministry.

A Sunni manager in the Foreign Ministry also complained about Kurdish activities:

> Barzani had previously denied supporting the Syrian Kurds, but now openly declares he is helping to arm and train fighters from the Kurdish National Council. Moreover, he has engaged in foreign policy initiatives by meeting with foreign ministers such as Ahmet Davutoglu [of Turkey]. Our own Foreign Minister [Kurdish Hoshyar Zebari] will not even discuss the matter. (Baghdad, 2015)

Moreover, amid the many intelligence agencies within Iraq, the PUK and the KDP have developed their own intelligence apparatus, which has been used to increase their own powerbase.

A Kurdish official in the Foreign Ministry stated:

> The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan's intelligence service is called the 'Information Apparatus' and can be likened to the secret police. However, their data collection activities are not limited to the Kurdish regions but extend all the way to Baghdad. The 'Information Apparatus' is in direct competition with state intelligence services which report to Al-Maliki and even operate their own detention centres (Baghdad, 2015.)

A high-ranking Shi'a official in the Interior Ministry stated:

> The use of intelligence bodies is a hugely problematic affair. We cannot accept their existence, especially when their leaders pledge allegiance to their political masters in Kurdistan-Iraq instead of the central government. They should be forced to disband, or at least provide us with information about the role they play and their status, so we can clarify their relationship with the government… Instead, the government often works with them, for example, when security has been arranged at polling stations during elections. All parties have attempted to consolidate power, which is inherently anti-democratic. (Baghdad, 2015)

Whilst the Kurdish intelligence agencies were tolerated, the Al-Maliki government appeared to have been ruthless when pursuing Sunni intelligence officers. A high-ranking Sunni official in the Ministry of Defence stated:

> It is well known the Al-Maliki regime has used the intelligence services for cracking down on perceived threats. Sunnis are the main political rivals, and anyone associated with those bureaucracies is eligible for abduction. This has included politicians, police officers, colonels from the army and intelligence officers, all under the guise of being former members of the Ba`th party, even though the main threat is the Kurds, but they are important political allies at the moment. (Baghdad, 2015)

6.8 DISCUSSION

Constructivism provides an effective means of understanding the sectarianism between the conflicting social groups within the state bureaucracies and can be used to highlight the identities of Sunni, Shi'a and Kurdish communities. This approach can also be used to emphasise the oppressive historical link between not only the Sunni and the Shi'a but between Arabs and Kurds. In effect, each group sought to impose their own identity on state bureaucracies and then attempted to minimise the infiltration of other groups. Finally, they contrasted identities and proclaimed their own policies as a solution to the alleged conflict between them.

The responses showed that although sectarianism was used as a vehicle for implementing neo-patrimonial policies, sectarianism was never the elite end goal per se; rather there were interests associated with social, political, and economic factors. At least for the political elite, the differences between the factions were more to do with political power as opposed to ideological dogma.

Nonetheless, the Shi'a participants did call upon their historical experiences and traumatic experiences, which were also mirrored by Sunnis – a 'fear of the future, lived through the past' (Paige, 2009). This encouraged both an intra- and inter-group dynamic, which led to violence.

The data show that over time, the dangers associated with strengthening neo-patrimonial structures within the government shifted away from the most extreme manifestations. Although the violence levels towards the end of the research phase indicated a considerable reduction based on the changes of areas, targets and reported incidents, it was still far from being eradicated. The neo-patrimonial legacy inherited by Iraqis from the era of Saddam Hussein continued to influence the political landscape and was clearly visible in all the state bureaucracies examined. Moreover, the impact of bureaucratic neo-patrimony resulted in a distinct social phenomenon. For example, there remain marked delimiters used to separate Sunni and Shi'a neighbourhoods and while this existed previously, it was much less pronounced. The political pursuit of strengthening neo-patrimony structures within state bureaucracies appeared to have had a ratcheting effect on social tensions, which have continued to endure despite the significant reduction in sectarian violent related incidents in Iraq.

As a united Iraq, the country is dependent on the division of labour, involving the participation of all major ethnoreligious and political groups. Since Iraqi law mandates this and because cross-community engagement takes place therein, this thesis investigates at first-hand the pervasive nature and extent of neo-patrimony within bureaucratic institutions, the way in which neo-patrimony has been strengthened through sectarianism, and its impact on foreign policy orientation because of fragmentation. The latter is discussed in detail in the next chapter. Thus, the narrative has been structured along these lines and supported by established theories to facilitate the analysis.

6.8.1 Neo-patrimony extent

Based on the actual and potential dangers for which the strengthening of neo-patrimonial structures have been responsible, the findings in this section of the analysis do not come as a great surprise. Through the data acquisition methods utilised in this research, which targeted employees within key foreign policy decision-making bureaucracies, there has been a general mood that neo-patrimony and the resultant sectarianism were significant problems and followed a discernible pattern. Firstly, they brought about a sense of fear. Within state bureaucracies, minority groupings typically feared what the future held. This fear was for their livelihoods but also extended to being marginalised in society, in other words, a fear of decreased economic security. Secondly, in terms of identification, majority groupings tended to implement sectarian policies through increased identification and affiliation with their own grouping, which was achieved by specific faction-affiliated behaviour and social traits. Although it can be surmised that these strategies aimed to enrich their own sectarian group, this did

not occur. Rather, it typically benefitted the patriarch who headed the neo-patrimonial hierarchy in charge of the bureaucracy. Thirdly, there is the faction security dilemma: the domestic environment affected sectarian groups in a similar way to how the realist logic affects states. When viewing sectarianism groups as unitary, the logic of the security dilemma can be applied to sectarian groups when anarchy emerges. This means as one group attempts to maximise its power, the security of other groups is reduced, and it then mobilises to counterbalance this threat. Fourthly, there is a conflict spiral: sectarian violence on the streets of Iraqi cities resulted in cyclic violence against other groups. This also affected the bureaucracies of state through the speeding up of, and enforcement of, points one, two and three.

The use of sectarianism within these institutions peaked in the early years of this thesis and then decreased to somewhat more manageable levels towards the end. This can be explained through the solidification of neo-patrimonial structures. At the bureaucratic level, this may have occurred because it was no longer possible for a group to acquire increased control over public sector positions and resources, the key source of neo-patronage.

Participants also demonstrated self-categorisation within the workplace. This concept can be viewed as a highly inclusive spectrum, for example, all people belonging to humanity, to examples of lower levels of inclusiveness, such as office peers from the same sectarian group who were born in the same town. Employees relied on the importance of the exact category being called upon during the ongoing circumstances. Proponents such as Oakes et al. (1994) have stated that this importance is a feature of the degree of 'fit' with the realities of social context being faced and the category accessibility to the individual. Practically, this concept manifested itself through employees making alliances with fellow workers, most commonly along the same sectarian lines. It should be noted, though, that this was not always the case. For example, it was also common for Kurds and Sunnis, and Shi'a and Kurds to create informal alliances with each other in the face of dominant management categorised as the 'other'.

It has been stated that 'for many people their professional and/or organizational identity may be more pervasive and important than ascribing identities based on gender, age, ethnicity, race, or nationality' (Hogg & Terry, 2014, p. 2). However, in Iraq, the recasting of an 'in and out' group differentiation of 'us and them' was a common occurrence, defined by social facets, such as those listed above as a single group unit of 'we'. Whilst it would have been possible for the PM's office and other ministries to lead by example through effective cross-sectarian relationships, this did not occur.

It is also possible professional imperatives based on organisational processes could have had a positive impact on the relations between employees. The equal opportunities enshrined in Iraqi law, coupled with organisational policies in the long term, had a positive impact by preventing gross acts of

sectarianism as well as more subtle forms, including anthems and poetry associated with group identity. Respondents in general exhibited a negative tendency towards overt religious markers associated with government employees. A significant number of employees indicated an evolution in sectarian positions and, by 2014, those working in Iraqi bureaucracies began to adhere to more formal rules and regulations, minimising neo-patrimonial repercussions, because:

I. They thought it was the right thing to do.
II. Over time, people started obeying the rules.
III. There was a 'mission accomplished' mentality.

Alternative explanations require further research to be carried out. Nonetheless, through the data acquired and with personal meetings with respondents, there was a general mood which indicated that by 2014, overt strengthening of neo-patrimonial structures in state bureaucratic institutions did not have a place or was no longer required.

6.8.2 Neo-patrimonial expressions

This chapter shows sectarianism was the main way in which neo-patrimony was expressed and strengthened, a concern in all the investigated bureaucracies. It was overtly expressed in a bottom-up manner by low-level workers on their peers as well as being implemented in a more clandestine top-down manner through othering of groups and other state bureaucracies. Moreover, the amount of sectarianism in the workplace typically spiked and was fed by sectarian attacks across Iraqi society. This is perhaps to be expected since 'state bureaucracies are not islands operating in isolation from their wider environments' (Point & Singh, 2003). Subsequently, in extreme cases, it was common to find workers who were targeted when working in 'no go areas'. Although none of the respondents interviewed in this research suffered physical attack, they either knew someone directly affected or, through third party individuals, people who were physically harmed or, in limited cases, killed in sectarian violence.

The use of subtle expressions in the form of symbols such as flags and attire were the most common way in which neo-patrimonial allegiance was expressed. The impact of these and other types of symbols on identity on the perpetrator and victim were contrasting. Whilst the former experiences a positive emotion, the latter experiences negativity through emotions associated with being humiliated and feeling threatened. One of the notable outcomes of symbol removal from the workspace was the elimination of situational cues, which reduced the saliency of religious differences. This was important since, according to Hogg and Mullin (1999), the use of sectarian symbols can lead to employees vying with each other to validate a definition of the circumstances which enforce group categorisation leading to entrenched identity politics.

Preventing the use of sectarianism symbols which would otherwise be used for social differentiation purposes made it easier for management to provide an alternate prism through which employees were able to define collectives in the work environment. This also compelled employees of the same faction to engage in sectarian expressions in a bid to prove their loyalty. Nonetheless, based on the respondent statements, it appeared the initiative required to remove symbols was not always a management priority. Indeed, there were instances where it was promoted and used to separate more 'reliable' workers from others. This meant opportunities which could have led to quicker worker cohesion were missed. However, it should also be accepted that for a small minority, a specific categorisation was perpetually or even 'chronically accessible' (Brown, 2000, p. 275). It is, therefore, possible to account for an inevitable degree of prejudice because of the grouping mentality; that is, sectarianism has been the preeminent method through which social collectives have been placed. In Iraq, factors such as religion, ethnicity, history and language have all been used, and are good examples of social constructs used for employee differentiation.

The data gathered showed that most employee complaints about being subject to sectarianism symbolism were carried out by those occupying the lower levels of the employment hierarchy, that is, those with lower qualifications and experience levels. This inverse linear relationship between education and expressions of sectarianism was typically articulated by working-class males, especially those recruited from tribal areas. Those recruited without qualifications and the correct skill set typically had minimal expectations outside their tribal areas of origin, had low educational levels, and few prospects of finding gainful employment. There was also evidence to suggest sectarianism was exhibited by professionals belonging to the middle tier employment level, for example, managers with high education levels, through prejudicial employment practices.

However, the nature of neo-patrimony in Iraq meant sectarianism has been expressed in many ways depending on the context. In this research, neo-patrimony and neo-patrimonial preservation have been responsible for ministers making decisions despite being against the national interest, causing employees to exhibit organisational behaviour which can only be described as sabotage.

The notion of acceptable expressions of neo-patrimony and their levels that were offensive or harmful was usually acknowledged by the higher levels of management. It was often stated that this form of low-level sectarian expression did not cause offence and was often ignored by management anyway since implementing prevention policies was simply too time-consuming.

Depending on the bureaucracy in question, there appeared to be levels of acceptable neo-patrimonial expressions; the PM's office had a higher threshold for rival groups but a low threshold for the Shi'a. In the case of the Foreign Ministry, sectarian threshold levels were much lower. Nonetheless, aligned

with the findings of Jarman (2004), sectarianism within the workspace is typically left unrecorded. In a similar vein, Pratt (2001) has stated that employees belonging to different sectarian backgrounds working together could have different perceptions regarding workplace diversity, especially those belonging to the majority. However, there were many low-level instances where sectarianism was an acceptable category of banter and did not cause offence.

From a management perspective, avoidance is not always the best method through which worker cohesion is optimised (Yang, 2015); however, managers did report that it was effective in the short term. It was also found that respondents were typically sensitive to apparent differences of identity and remained conscious of managing contact with those who belonged to the majority. This was made easier by avoiding contentious constructs such as religion. Respondents indicated that those belonging to the minority in the workplace typically avoided conversations which were loaded with religious and political overtones to reduce the potential for disagreements along sectarian lines.

Another mechanism through which conflict was avoided was humour. This trait has been researched by social scientists, who believe it is often used as a means of social cohesion in the workplace (Magnus et al., 2012). Another theory indicates humour can be used to manage a diverse workforce (Cecily, 2008), in addition to negotiating workplace paradoxes and consistencies (Jarzabkowski & Lê, 2016). During this research, the data indicated humour was used to manage the interactions between Sunni and Shi'as and most commonly took the form of banter. Workplace banter is a normal occurrence of both spoken and written interactions and is often justified by employers as an important part of team dynamics and social interactions (Middlemiss, 2017).

However, whilst most instances of banter were considered 'normal' or 'tolerable', there were instances where individuals thought some kinds of gestures, jokes or language went beyond humour and were intolerable. This occurred when employees thought they or other factional bureaucracies were targeted due to specific characteristics and subsequently found verbal behaviour offensive and insulting. Moreover, it was found that specific types of banter occurred within specific circles; that is, sectarian-based banter was more likely when the victim was known to the perpetrators. Although limited, the research showed that in some cases, banter went too far and resulted in grave offence, showing that whilst it could be used as a force for promoting cross-sectarian cohesion, it could also have the opposite effect.

6.9 Chapter Conclusion

One of the key challenges in contemporary public administration concerns the capacity of the government to cope with extraordinary events and calamities of diverse kinds (Rosenthal et al., 1991).

The collected data indicated the neo-patrimonial practices of the elite took place in differing domestic conditions; nonetheless, despite different internal dynamics, the influence of neo-patrimonial politics remained persistent.

When neo-patrimonial structures and bureaucracies were being contested, this was reflected in increased domestic sectarianism, which led to internal violence. On the other hand, when neo-patrimonial structures had solidified, the resultant sectarian influence, although present, was not coupled with sectarianism leading to widescale violence. Thus, the research period can be described as one which fell into one of two stages.

The first stage relates to the early years of the study. It appears that during this period, a concerted effort was undertaken to institutionalise neo-patrimony through its insertion into the bureaucracies of the state. This occurred more aggressively during the 'scramble for power' period between 2003 and 2010 following the CPA creation of the IGC and elections and years of power consolidation. This resulted in state failure because of fragmentation; moreover, sectarianism and communal segregation led to the entrenchment of group identity which reinforced divisions and fuelled intercommunal conflict. This stage also had an exploitive feature through which elite actors advanced sectarianism even though they could have stopped or at least reduced the violence. This included prime ministers, members of parliament and other elites, who attempted to preserve their power bases through state institutions.

During 2010 and 2014, the politics of neo-patrimony continued to play a significant role by continuing to enrich elite actors and, at the national level, where elite decision-makers chose to sacrifice the national interest for personal gains. This phase of neo-patrimony appeared to be more deliberate and was highly centralised under actors such as Al-Maliki. However, unlike previously, this mode of neo-patrimony in state bureaucracies can be described as being benign; that is, overt expressions of sectarianism were reduced even though society remained fragmented.

Irrespective of the time period, state bureaucracies provided employees with rules concerning what was considered acceptable behaviour. These rules were aligned with historical settings that prescribed a value system centred around different versions of Islamic and secular understandings, which were used as a focal point. Based on this characterisation, bureaucratic interests came to the fore driven by sectarian influences. This caused bureaucracies to reduce their involvement with other institutions, especially those associated with other sects, but also led to change resistance when overtaken by a rival faction. These processes ensured the neo-patrimonial interests of the patriarch in charge of the bureaucracy remained intact as long as possible.

Employees working in bureaucracies championed their own factions but were also involved in the negative construction of other group identities. This at times compelled employees to follow the lead of others in proving their sectarian loyalties and dedication. Sectarianism was practised overtly by low-level employees whilst higher-level employees employed more discrete strategies. The former consisted mainly of actions which constituted organisational violations against policies contrary to religious symbolism. Workers used these symbols to reinforce their sectarian stronghold through the use of social constructs linked to religious or ethnic identities, but also inadvertently solidified the neo-patrimonial hold over that bureaucracy in the process. The process of othering was a concern for minority groups, which made greater efforts to ensure harmonious relations with the majority in a bid to avoid offence or contention. In many cases, sectarian expression although unwanted was tolerated as opposed to being reported. Although a limited number of Shi'a comments tried to align sectarianism and Iraqi identity, this thesis argues that they are distinct phenomena, which proved to be largely antagonistic because of opposing views of the self and other.

Through the spread of narratives which involved depicting other factions as wanting to regain lost power in the case of the Sunnis, separate from Iraq as in the case of the Kurds, or take over Iraq by consolidating power as in the case of the Shi'a government, the bureaucratic elite constructed an image of other groups and institutions which were intrinsically opposed to their own views and values informing their situational awareness. Each bureaucracy then homogenised itself and others through the use of sectarian descriptors. It can therefore be argued, the three identities mutually facilitated the construction of each other. By depicting rival bureaucracies as either uncooperative or allying with rival groups, established bureaucracies tended to distrust one another. This approach to running the state highlights why identity-based and not the national interest became employee priorities. As per the norm life cycle, this further compounded the existing norms, which provided expectations concerning the behaviour of other bureaucracies resulting in a self-reinforcing cycle.

By framing bureaucracies such as the Interior Ministry and the Ministry of Defence as being unable to defend ordinary Iraqis from internal and external threats, it was easy for the elite to dismiss power centres and pursue their own or challenge the foreign policies of other bureaucracies. It is possible here to juxtapose faction identity with that of the mainly Shi'a government, which broadly alienated itself from the wider community over time. This vacuum allowed the rival political elite to further their interests and made it easier to position a neo-patrimonial patriarch as the only alternative to social movement and protecting faction identity from internal and external threats. This system effectively trapped people working in the bureaucracies, whereby their existence in the modern nation-state and access to employment were contingent upon the neo-patrimonial patriarchs and sectarian affiliations.

This phenomenon clearly demonstrates the dynamic impact of neo-patrimony. However, for the elite, the race for power and, with it, the ability to accumulate state resources paradoxically created a unity despite their own sectarian differences. In other words, the array of actors had one common denominator: they were all highly committed to preserving their positions in the grander scheme, and where possible institutionalised their paradigms through actions, attitudes, beliefs and their ideas.

Based on a historical legacy, neo-patrimony has always been a cornerstone of the Iraqi political system. In other words, patrimonial networks were deeply engrained within the system but arguably amplified by Saddam's regime. However, what is surprising is the ability of new political parties and the manner in which they have been able to adopt centres of power such as the prime minister's office, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Electricity to the pre-existing system. It can be argued these structures tend to persist since different identities within Iraq used them as their main source of income. Therefore, in theory, the average Sunni, Shi'a and Kurd could have benefited from favours bestowed on areas by specific political parties. Due to neo-patrimony becoming a norm, it has managed to permeate throughout Iraqi politics and influence foreign policy decision making in a bid to ensure the system survives. The next chapter develops these conclusions further by focusing on the quantitative data acquired from the research participants.

7 QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS – FIELD WORK PART 2

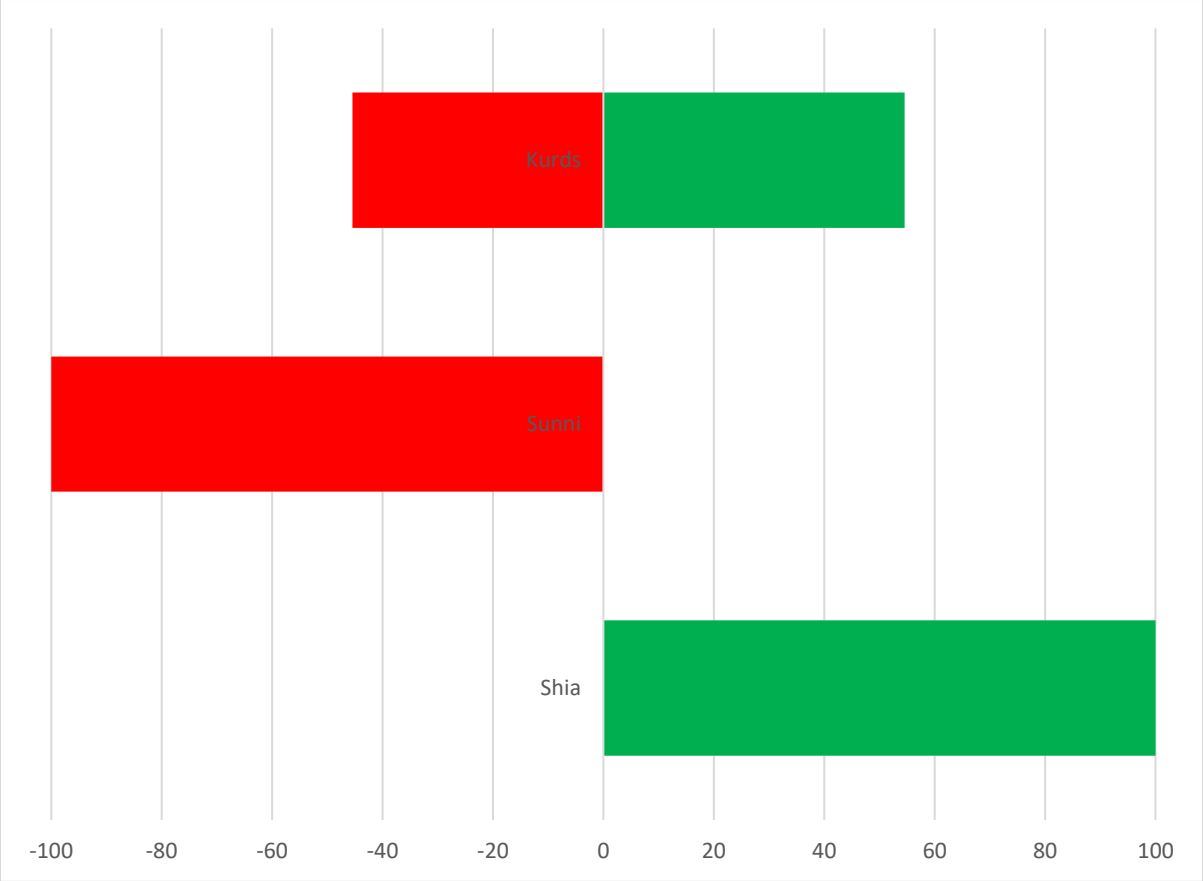
This chapter builds upon the previous chapter using quantitative data by linking several of the key themes highlighted in the qualitative analysis. A key difference in this chapter is its focus on how neo-patrimony and sectarianism impacted the state at the systemic level.

The field data were gathered during August 2015 and between December 2016 and January 2017, when the researcher carried out field trips in both Iraq and Jordan. The cities visited comprised Baghdad, Erbil and Amman. In total, 93 participants filled in the questionnaire, comprising 33 Shi'a, 16 Kurds and 44 Sunni Iraqis. To quantify the responses, the number of participants in each group was converted into a percentage. Then the responses were reproduced in a mathematical form by converting them to numbers in a range of 2 to -2, where:

- 2 indicates high neo-patrimonial perceptions and high question proposition agreement
- 1 indicates low neo-patrimonial perceptions and low question proposition agreement
- 0 indicates no neo-patrimonial perceptions
- -1 indicates low neo-patrimonial perceptions and low question proposition disagreement
- -2 indicates high neo-patrimonial perceptions and high question proposition disagreement

In a further bid to aid comprehension, the above range was multiplied by 50, thus extending the range to -100 to 100 instead of -2 to 2.

The results for each faction are represented using a horizontal bar. A positive result is indicated with a green bar whilst a negative result is indicated with a red bar. These bars are used to illustrate the level of agreement for each question and the perceived level of neo-patrimony or its manifestations, that is, sectarianism and fragmentation, based on the question. As illustrated in the example figure below, 100% of Sunni agreed, 100% of Shi'a disagreed, while the Kurds were divided: 55% agreed and 45% disagreed.



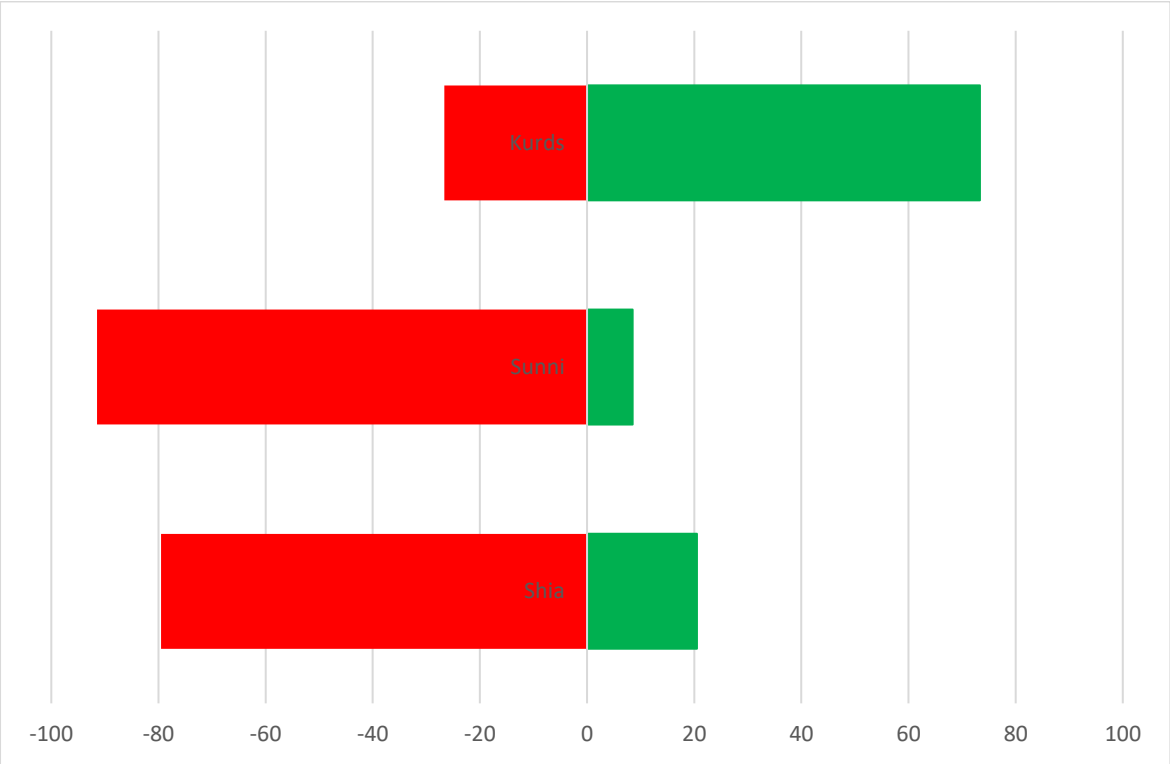
		Shi'a		Sunni		Kurds	
		Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%
Agree		33	100	0	0	9	55
Disagree		0	0	44	-100	7	-45

Figure 7.1 Sample chart

The data were further developed by determining the perception of neo-patrimony and its manifestations based on negative question responses for each faction and analysing the data. This data was then made into a pie chart, where all the sectarianism perceptions per faction were grouped.

The field data revealed the following:

7.1 IS THE NEO-PATRIMONIAL COMPOSITION OF BUREAUCRACIES PREVENTING A COHERENT FOREIGN POLICY FROM BEING PURSUED?



		Shi'a		Sunni		Kurds	
		Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%
Agree		7	21	4	9	12	73
Disagree		26	-79	40	-91	4	-27

Figure 7.2 Is the neo-patrimonial composition of bureaucracies preventing a coherent foreign policy from being pursued?

The figure above shows that most Kurds agreed with the question proposition, with most Sunni and Shi'a participants disagreeing. The Sunni respondents had the highest negative percentage, closely followed by the Shi'a. However, it should be noted that the majority of comments made by the participants were contrary to the above responses. As noted previously, this can be explained through the social desirability bias; that is both Shi'a and Sunnis thought it inappropriate to agree with the question proposition. However, when given the opportunity, they provided contrary information. For example, a Shi'a working in the Interior Ministry stated:

> I think the neo-patrimonial composition of the ministry was not good for foreign policy because it prevented Shi'a managers from making nuanced decisions. Sometimes they would make decisions which were opposed to the national interest simply because they perceived their actions legitimate because they were aligned with the PM's office (Baghdad, 2015).

Within fragmented state bureaucracies, it would be logical to infer that the political elite, that is, the Shi'a, wanted to represent Shi'a interests, Sunni-Sunni interests and Kurd-Kurdish interests. However, although the neo-patrimonial positions of each bureaucracy were well entrenched, the resultant benefits typically coalesced around those at the epicentre of the neo-patrimonial web. In other words, the interest of the average Sunni, Shi'a or Kurd was never a primary concern of those in power. The benefits acquired by the sectarian-based political elite did not trickle down to unit level. 'Iraqi leaders remain hard-pressed to translate macroeconomic gains into an improved standard of living for the Iraqi populace' (Cordesman, 2019). In contrast to this, there were many examples of managers in bureaucracies attempting to benefit their ethnic group over others. One notable example was recorded in the statement of a high-ranking Sunni from the Ministry of Electricity:

> Many professionals sought to strengthen neo-patrimonial structures within their workspace through sectarianism. In our case, this began with hiring people who were known to us, friends and family, people with the same values. This was taking place across most state bureaucracies. This was also taken a step further by allowing benefits to flow more freely to our communities. This meant on average, there was slightly more amounts of power flowing to Sunni areas at the expense of Shi'a areas [in Baghdad]. This mindset also made it hard for ministry officials and employees to work with the Iranians when the government decided they were going to take their electricity and integrate both systems (Baghdad, 2015).

There was no evidence to suggest the dispensation of benefits such as utilities was an elite desire; rather, it was a strategy pursued by non-political elite employees who had the freedom to do so. Similar responses were also recorded by those working in the ministries of Planning, Education, and Communication and Trade.

In a similar vein, a study carried out by Grissom et al (2009) is useful for generating expectations within divided groups. This research found black people working in the southern states of the US were more likely to represent black people within their locality when compared to northern states. It can therefore be inferred that in socially divided environments or in the case of Iraq, where new power-sharing forms of governance have been used, employees are more likely to cling to a sectarian identity.

A Sunni manager from the Foreign Ministry stated:

> There are often contradictory voices being heard between the PM's office, intelligence apparatus, Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Ministry. The statements on Syria are a good example. To be honest, we are not in charge of these [highly sensitive] relationships. In this case, the PM's office sent Al-Maliki ally Abd al-Halim Al-Zuhayri to Syria in 2010 to mend ties and is known for holding the 'Syria-Iran' file. And whilst Iraqi foreign policy may seem incoherent, if one focuses on substantive

> policy based on what comes out of the PM's office on Kuwait, Turkey, Syria, Iran and the US, you can see Iraqi foreign policy is actually very coherent (Baghdad, 2015).
>
> The same situation also exists with the military, the defence minister is Sunni Arab Saadun Al-Dulaymi, and the Chief of Staff is Kurdish, Babakir Zebari; however, these men do not have real power. Al-Maliki has bypassed the formal institutions through the Office of the Commander in Chief, which is headed by a Shi'a general, Faruq Al-Araji which is how Al-Maliki maintains control of the military (Baghdad, 2015).

Despite this overall negative sentiment, there were also glimpses of positivity. According to the literature, when organisations depersonalise worker relations, it can potentially give rise to a work ethos which is non-sectarian in nature (Radaelli & O'Connor, 2009). In the case of the Foreign Ministry, there appeared to a unique set of norms and values which had appeared to supersede neo-patrimonial interests and traditional sectarian-based differences. Subsequently, respondents from within the Foreign Ministry indicated that instead of Sunnis, Shi'as and Kurds representing their own interests, they represented their common technocratic and professional interests.

Shi'a manager in the Foreign Ministry stated:

> We are immensely proud of our ministry. Zebari has always tried to incorporate qualified professionals. This has allowed us to operate professionally by incorporating professional values into the bureaucracy itself. This has allowed for an organisational culture which is based on the founding ideas of the institute and allowed the ministry to remain robust to challenges from other government bureaucracies which have helped in its survival. However, paradoxically, such a strong culture also had the reverse impact of decreasing its ability to influence other bureaucracies, and thus restricting its ability to implement the broader foreign policy agenda. I think we were also subject to greater pressures relative to subservient agencies.

In a similar vein, another Shi'a employee from the Foreign Ministry stated:

> Our strong organisational culture helped us fend of aggressive attempts at incorporating our bureaucracy into the neo-patrimonial networks of others, however, I also think our objective approach limited the influence of new ideas upon the other bureaucracies engaged in foreign policy such as the PM's office. They expected us to follow suit; that rarely happened.

The literature suggests that whenever there are significant differences between bureaucratic cultures, it leads to bureaucracies distrusting the ability of other institutions and their contributions to foreign policy. It also creates harmful competition, producing alternative policy outputs aimed at curbing the influence of others (Bendor, 1987).

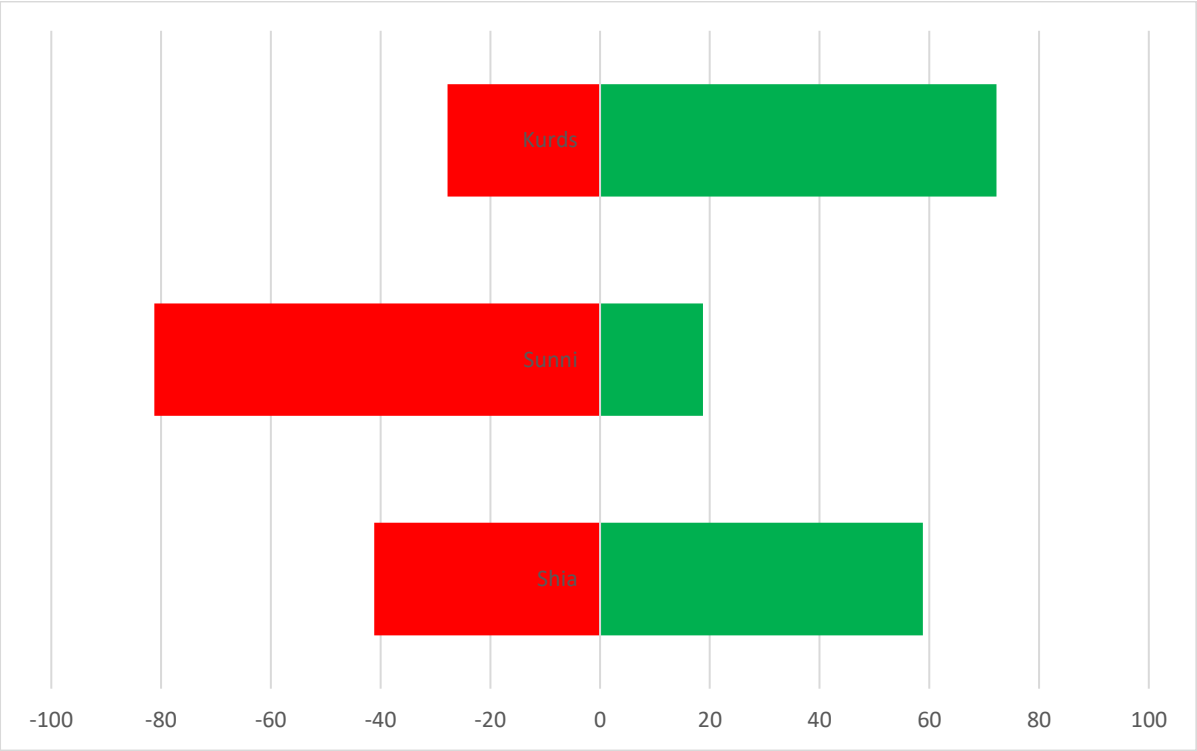
The responses to this question showed the primary elite concerns were about preserving and strengthening of the neo-patrimonial structures. The overwhelming majority claimed that when a ministry engaged in foreign policy gained numerical sufficiency, this would typically benefit foreign allies. For example, respondents from the Ministry of Communications, Ministry of Industry and

Minerals, and the Ministry of Transportation stated Iranian companies were given special treatment when infrastructure contracts were being tendered. In some limited cases, it would also benefit the faction associated with those in control.

During the early years after the occupation, sectarian constructs became embedded within the state bureaucracies. This had a direct impact at the unit level in Iraq and it was common for the security apparatus to engage in violence along sectarian lines, which resulted in detention and torture. This had a negative impact on Sunnis, in particular, because the foreign and domestic policy of state bureaucracies became characterised by suspicion. Sunnis questioned the loyalty of state bureaucracies which were carrying out a sectarian agenda and turned to foreign actors to repel this threat. To counter these Shi'a militias using the threat of increasing Sunni militancy to extend their influence and reach by intensifying their relationship with Iran. The binary sectarian divisions were made worse by the penetration of Iran and Saudi Arabia, which had vested interests in Iraq.

The participants' responses to this question shows that the Iraqi understanding of sectarianism as a social construct goes beyond the typical reference to ethnic groups or religion and encompasses 'the tendency to undermine social cohesion by pushing for the reproduction of ancient beliefs and separations' (Mabon & Ardovini, 2018, p. 15). At its core, this definition of sectarianism in Iraq can be understood as a combination of all those practices which have resulted in conflict because of the weaponisation and politicisation of ideas of identity into cleavages between the 'self' and 'other'.

7.2 WAS THE FOREIGN POLICY DECISION-MAKING PROCESS CENTRALISED, UNFRAGMENTED AND FREE OF NEO-PATRIMONY?



		Shi'a		Sunni		Kurds	
		Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%
Agree		19	59	8	19	12	72
Disagree		14	-41	36	-81	4	-28

Figure 7.3 Was the foreign policy decision-making process centralised, unfragmented and free of neo-patrimony?

The graph above indicated that 59% of Shi'a and 72% of Kurdish respondents agreed that Iraqi foreign policy was centralised, while only 19% of Sunni respondents agreed with the question proposition. Upon analysis, respondents answered in one of three ways. That is, those who believed the (1) foreign policy decision-making process was centralised and not fragmented, (2) the foreign policy decision-making process was not centralised and fragmented because of neo-patrimony, and (3) the foreign policy decision-making process was not centralised and fragmented, but this was not because of neo-patrimony.

An ex-cabinet minister who is Shi'a stated: 'Foreign policy was centralised and controlled by the Prime Minister who was kept abreast of events and provided guidance and council by the Foreign Ministry and the cabinet and has not been linked to neo-patrimony' (Baghdad, 2015). One well-known political commentator stated: 'Iraqi foreign policy has been coherent and was controlled by the Prime

Minister's Office; individuals such as the Foreign Minister had no power to make independent and meaningful decisions, this decentralised the [the decision-making] process' (Baghdad, 2015).

One Kurdish member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party and doctor of Sociology stated: 'Although the government has been working hard on the economy and international diplomacy, it has had limited success because of its perceived weakness; in terms of foreign policy, the PM's office does more policy setting, the Foreign Ministry is not in control. This allows it [i.e., the PM's office] to make decisions aligned with its neo-patrimonial interests' (Erbil 2016).

Some also believed the foreign policy decision-making process was not centralised. Rather, it was fragmented and beholden to neo-patrimonial politics. In an interview, a Kurdish doctor revealed that: 'Political parties, clerics and businessmen have been interfering in foreign policy activities and its subversion, all are guilty to some degree' (Erbil 2015). A Shi'a manager from the Interior Ministry stated:

> The foreign policy decision-making process is fragmented, mainly because of contrasting differences between government bureaucracies and [even] within the ruling Shi'a coalition and their competing neo-patrimonial interests. I think these were the biggest obstacles. A fragmented government will inevitably lead to a fragmented foreign policy because it lacks authority domestically and is unable to negotiate deals and guarantee their implementation. [Another reason is because] sectarian-based terrorism has alienated us from international partners leaving few choices and has prevented foreign investment. [Another reason has been] the use of radical militias, which have increased the number of foreign fighters – these factors have prevented centralising foreign policy and complicated its implementation. (Baghdad 21st December 2016).

A Sunni member of parliament offered insights into the underlying reasons why Iraqi foreign policy was so fragmented:

> The Shi'a led government has had major problems with implementing foreign policy. The reasons are many: when the government was formed after 2003, the Shi'a became the main power; however, it failed in strengthening the democratic processes and quickly tried to block anyone it saw as a threat; [secondly] although we have vast oil resources, the differences between politicians and ordinary citizens has widened [in terms of quality of life], especially for Sunnis and in some ways for many Shi'a. [Thirdly] although the US wanted an independent Iraq, it achieved the exact opposite: Iraq increased its dependency on the US and then Iran, resulting in different factions setting foreign policies aimed at pleasing these actors. [Fourthly] a loss of a power base as the population became fed up reduced the government's legitimacy. Foreign policy decision-making was not centralised within the government. These factors led to fragmented policies because politicians were not interested in anyone else except themselves. (Baghdad, 24 August 2015)

The participant data in this chapter indicate both official and unofficial foreign policies were made by the Iraqi government in addition to other state and non-state actors. According to a former Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister:

> Foreign policy has been set by the PM's office and other ministries; however, these often compete amongst themselves. Prior to 2003, the foreign policy was very aggressive but arguably coherent; however, the foreign policy during 2003 and 2014 has been fragmented, mainly because of the political and post-war realities on the ground, which are the result of the neo-patrimonial legacy. (Baghdad 24th December 2016).

The Sunni Grand Mufti of Iraq, and religious head of the Sunni group, '*Ahl As-Sunnah wal Jamaa'ah',* stated: 'Foreign policy was fragmented and exhibited Shi'a preferences which were aligned with neo-patrimonial interests' (Baghdad, 2015). Moreover, the Mufti's brother, a doctor and teacher in the international Islamic Science Department in a Jordanian university, stated:

> After 2003, the political process was not based on nationalism, but by elites embedded in the system who wanted to keep their [neo-patrimonial] benefits. The PM's office and the Interior Ministry was exploited by the Shi'a, the Foreign Ministry by the Kurds [whilst] the Sunni have had little success in any official foreign policy'. (Amman 2017)

An independent political researcher stated: 'Foreign policy was being controlled by multiple government blocs but was biased towards the Shi'a majority … the parliament was conflicted with a power struggle for more seats… and the Kurds were never interested in a unified foreign policy' (Amman 2017). An interviewee who was on the US list of most-wanted Iraqis stated: 'The foreign policy was highly fragmented and can be described as a joke. Foreign policy was carved up between multiple government departments and non-government organisations, in addition to the US and Iran' (Amman, 13 January 2017).

One Sunni Member of Parliament stated:

> The fragmentation of foreign policy can be compared with the Iraqi administrative law, which was heavily skewed and fragmented in favour of the provincial and regional governments at the expense of Baghdad. [Practically this meant] the central government could only exhibit limited, and highly specific powers based on the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL). Per TAL interpretation the Al-Maliki government could only devise fiscal policies but not implement them. The government had no means of raising taxes and paying for key civil services such as the police and military. (Baghdad 2016)

An experimental tourism minister stated: 'Many government individuals wanted to extend their influence into foreign policy, in this regard, the Iraqi parliament was highly fractured, full of vying ministers' (Baghdad, 2015).

A common rhetorical response from interviewees was, 'How can the government have a strong foreign policy when the domestic policy is so weak?' (Baghdad, Amman, Erbil 2015). The internal neo-patrimonial drive fuelled by sectarianism led to fragmentation between Iraq's ethnic groups. This made Iraq pivotal for, and vulnerable to, the foreign policies and strategies of other countries. Since the political elite has been unable to or unwilling to focus on developing the economy and state bureaucracies by concentrating on and creating a more secular Iraqi identity, significant episodes of sectarian violence have occurred, coupled with a poor democratic apparatus and large sections of the populace given to religious fervour. Foreign policy has not been centralised or coherent but has been exploited by actors for neo-patrimonial gains. In the case of the Sunnis, this resulted in unofficial foreign policies aligned with foreign fighters, with support and sanctuary in Iraq and Syria. For Al-Maliki, it meant consolidating power and limiting the foreign policy potential of rival bureaucracies, and for the Kurds, it meant pressing ahead with their own pseudo-state-to state relations regardless of Baghdad.

Concerning the latter, 2008 was a significant breakthrough and a momentous period for Kurdish-Turkish bilateral relations, as Turkey officially recognised the KRG in deeds and not just in words. The first high level meeting between the two parties was on 1st May, when Nechirvan Barzani, Kurdistan's prime minister met with Murat Özçelik, a Turkish Special Envoy, and Ahmet Davutoğlu, Turkey's foreign policy adviser. Despite the existing tensions, both parties agreed to set aside their differences and develop political and economic ties, including an agreement to find a peaceful solution on the PKK issue. In 2010, Erdoğan became the first Turkish leader to visit the Kurdish north since the creation of Iraq as a modern state, which was followed by several other visits.

These developments were significant since, until 2008, Ankara did not accept Iraqi Kurdistan as being outside of Baghdad's jurisdiction. Subsequently, there was no direct interaction between the two parties. For example, after 2003 Turkey established consulates in Basra and Mosul, but not in Erbil. However, the KRG's hand was significantly strengthened because of a series of variables which shifted in their favour. This included the unit level sectarian politics between Al-Maliki and the Sunni opposition, and, at the systemic level, the strengthening of Al-Maliki's ties to Iran, Iraqi isolation in the region and the Arab Spring in 2010.

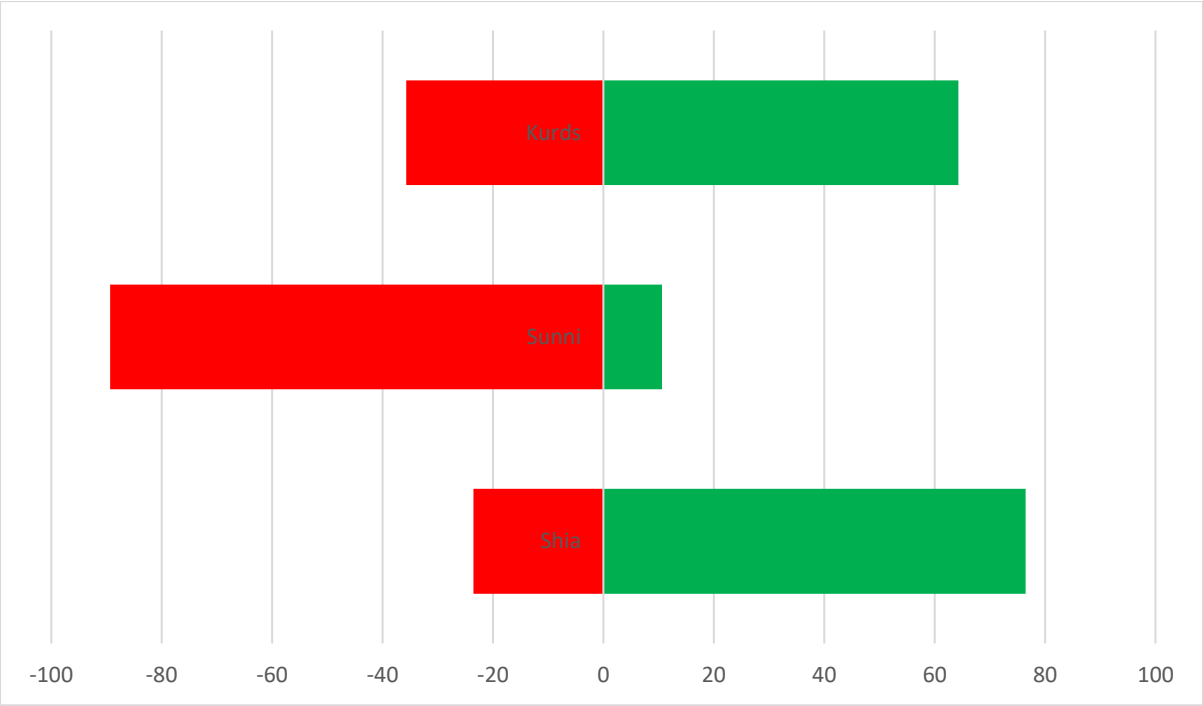
The Kurds also benefited from Turkey's accusations that Al-Maliki was suppressing Sunnis and monopolising power. In response, Al-Maliki accused Ankara of hostile policies and direct interference

in Iraqi affairs following Davutoğlu's visit to Erbil and Kirkuk without notifying the Iraqi foreign minister. Baghdad then denied visas to Turkish officials who were intending to travel to Kurdish regions via Baghdad (Hurriyet Daily News, 2012).

Barzani also mediated on behalf of Ankara concerning Turkey's own Kurdish problem. However, it also benefited when Turkey was required to deal with Kurdish representatives from Syria who gained control over cities situated along the Turkish border, and when it had to deal with leaders from the Syrian opposition following the internal crisis in Syria. These events left Turkey with few options in the region. However, it was not until the US withdrawal from Iraq that the two parties were able to develop a strategic alliance. For example, in 2013, the KRG and Turkey tabled ideas of building a dedicated oil pipeline capable of carrying one million barrels of oil a day, along with an expansion of the Kirkuk-Ceyhan pipeline, which begins in Basra, by 2014 (Charountaki, 2015).

The culmination of these events allowed the KRG to optimise their pseudo-state-to state initiatives. Indeed, one of the core disputes between the KRG and the central government in Baghdad was the independent nature of the KRG with the outside world (Charountaki, 2015).

7.3 Are elite groups represented equally in terms of Iraqi foreign policy?



	Shi'a		Sunni		Kurds	
	Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%
Agree	25	76	5	11	10	64

Figure 7.4 Are elite groups represented equally in terms of Iraqi foreign policy?

The Shi'a and Kurdish respondents answered similarly and agreed there was equal representation of elite groups in terms of Iraqi foreign policy. However, Sunni respondents strongly denied different elite groups were equally represented within foreign policy at the systemic level.

An independent Shi'a politician stated:

> I do not believe all elite groups were represented equally but this is an impossible task to achieve given a diverse and rich background. It would be impossible to please everyone. However, I believe it has been more than equitable when using a grouping method according to Arab and Kurds. The central government developed their own policies and the autonomous regions in Kurdistan even though this was not in Iraq's interest. But it is fair to say the Sunni Arab population had to follow the Shi'a lead on foreign policy. (Baghdad, 2015)

Another Shi'a politician stated:

> The different elite groups have always pursued different goals through foreign policy. More recently, one would have to admit the government has been supporting the Syrian regime; however, the Sunnis and Kurds have also been supporting the rebels. This has fragmented the government by pushing the Shi'a elite closer to Iran [another Asaad supporter] and brought the Sunni and Kurds closer to the Gulf States and Turkey. (Baghdad 2016)

On the other hand, the questionnaire responses indicated that Sunni elites were wary of an Iraq-Iran -Syria axis with systemic level repercussions. This fear emanated from a potentially strong Assad regime, which would also result in stronger Iraqi ties with Syria and Iran. Arguably, any regime change in Syria would also compel Baghdad to reconsider its systemic alignments and empower alternative Iraqi power centres.

After 2010, the Iraqi-Turkish relations soured as Ankara refocussed its efforts on acquiring allies against Al-Maliki and Shi'a elite influence by developing relations with the Sunnis and Kurds. Relations between Ankara and the Kurdistan government peaked after Barazani offered the Turks access to energy resources and construction deals, and reciprocal promises were made by President Erdogan to address Kurdish problems in Turkey. Barzani also visited Ankara whilst Turkey opened a consulate in Erbil in the same year (Işıksal & Göksel, 2017).

One Sunni anthropologist stated:

> At present we have a very narrow foreign policy which has allied us with Iran. The government should have a more centrist foreign policy, which would best serve Iraqi interests. We should forget about the strengthening of elite [neo-patrimonial] structures and pursue strategic and economic goals with different countries in the

> region and other international players. In other words, there is no equal representation of different groups within Iraqi foreign policy. Just look at what has been happening. Different leaders and groups within not only the Sunni, but Shi'a groups such as the Sadrists have all dabbled in their own foreign policies. (Amman 2017)

This claim is mostly accurate and there is ample evidence to suggest Iraqi politicians developed person-to-state or political party-to-state relationships with Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar and Iran. This should be of no surprise since these practices started in the 1990s, when the main Shi'a parties, including SCIRI, and, to a lesser extent, different Dawa wings, the main Kurdish parties, including PUK and the KDP, and other non-sectarian groupings, such as the INC and INA, had already formulated their unique visions of post-Saddam Iraq and so began formulating their own tentative foreign policies. At times these policies were unified under coalitions, for example, the post 1998 INC and later groupings of SCIRI, the Kurds, the INC and the INA. However, the individual – largely communally focused – parties maintained their own visions with their own aspirations and enjoyed their own relationships with neighbouring foreign states (Stansfield, 2010).

Khamis Al-Khanjar is a good example of person-to-state relations and is someone who has been described as a 'businessman and millionaire who enjoys significant power on a regional and international level' (Hearst, 2020). Al-Khanjar was from Anbar but had long been based outside Iraq. He was an influential figure in Sunni politics, but mainly as a behind-the-scenes operator as a funnel for money from Arab states. For example, he is considered one of the key financiers of the mainly Sunni Iraqiya in 2010 (Hearst, 2020). His vision for Iraq was similar to the Kurds and some Shi'a, who wanted a defacto breakup of Iraq as a means to carve out a Sunni region that he presumably expected to inherit.

His links with external players are extensive and include Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed, the late Soleimani, as well as western diplomats such as the Iraq specialist and former US presidential envoy to the anti-Islamic State coalition, Brett McGurk, and the former British ambassador in Baghdad, John Jenkins. Organisations such as the CIA also worked with Al-Khanjar (Hearst, 2020).

Al-Khanjar supported the Sahwa and saw it as a method of getting rid of AQI. The Americans agreed to pay and train Sunni fighters who would be eventually absorbed into the regular Iraqi army following the defeat of AQI. However, the army which had been created by Bremer had already purged Sunnis through de-Baathification and was now under Al-Maliki's control. It ended up taking on just 20% of the Sunni fighters. The mainly Shi'a army then took over Sunni areas and became known for harassing its residents: some were even killed. For Sunnis, this was considered a betrayal of the Sahwa and what

it stood for. The situation was made worse because those involved in mobilising the Sahwa fighters were branded as terrorists by the government (Hearst, 2020).

In 2014, Al-Khanjar sponsored the Kirama coalition, which ran vast numbers of ads on Sunni TV channels. However, the results were poor, with only one seat being won in Salahuddin province. Whilst this must have been a blow, his reputation was damaged further when in 2014, he famously called the Islamic State's invasion of Sunni provinces a 'revolution' coming to 'liberate' Sunnis in a highly enthused interview on al-Arabiya, in which he all but endorsed the terrorist group. Al-Khanjar stated: 'We support this revolution. . . . I call all tribal leaders, businessmen and people of good will to support this revolution' (Sowell, 2020).

In 2015, an arrest warrant was issued in accordance with Article 4 of the counter terrorism law, where he was accused of having ties with ISIS. Three Nineveh Provincial Council members filed charges against him for facilitating the Turkish military presence in the province (Sowell, 2020).

Dhafer Al-Ain, a Sunni political leader, member of parliament and member of the Iraqiya coalition argued:

> The Shi'a politicians have [close] relations with Iran, Syria and Russia … The Arab Sunnis – and I am one of them – have special relationships with Arab states, and the Kurds have a special relationship with the international community . . . Therefore, the US call or discuss Iraqi issues with three separated delegations from the Iraqi government who represent the Shi'a, Arab Sunnis and the Kurds. (Gulmohamad, 2021, p. 30)

Al-Ani demonstrated the divergence in positions of all major Iraqi components and the position of the Sunni stance to which he belonged (Gulmohamad, 2021, p. 30).

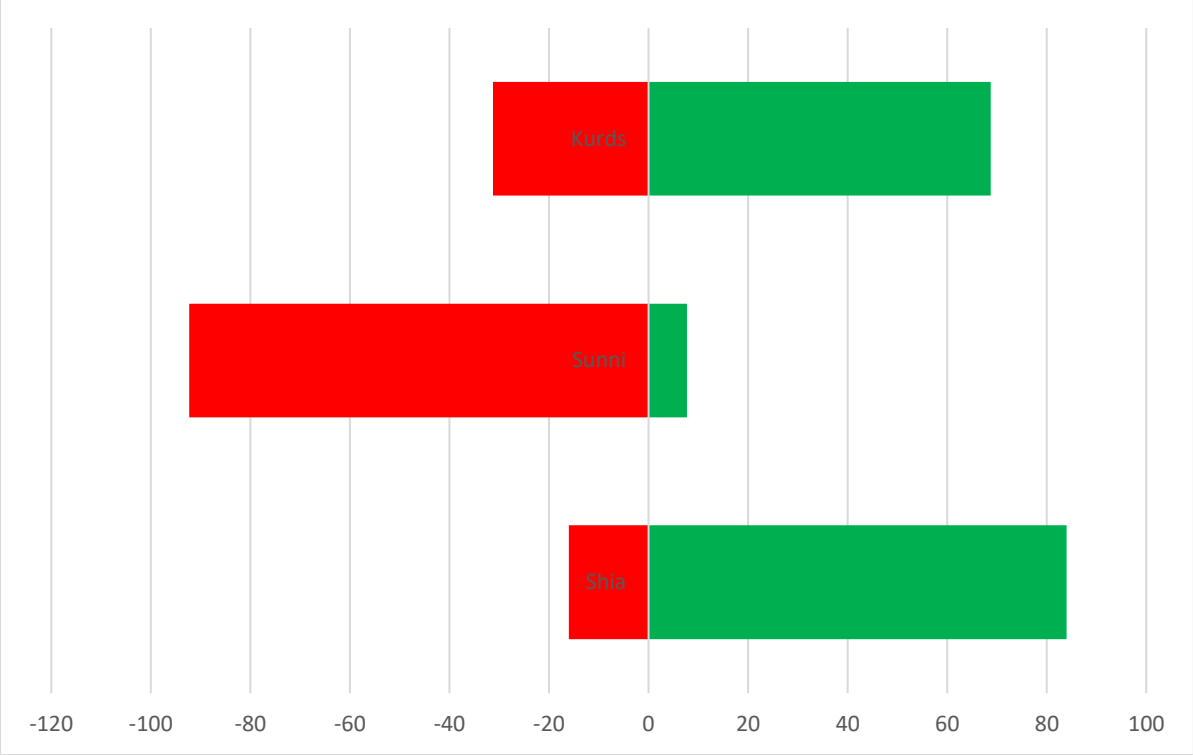
A Sunni ex-aide to the PM stated: 'Whilst the Americans were here, they had a big say over the domestic and foreign policy of Iraq. At this time, elite groups were represented more fairly. Following their departure in 2011, things changed and their [i.e., US] influence was diminished whilst Iranian influence increased' (Baghdad, 2015).

Respondents indicated the Al-Maliki government has not felt significant unit-level pressure to reflect national interests, while another complaint detailed the government's inability to influence the Kurdish government or other politicians from pursuing their own interest-based foreign relations.

It can be argued the different strands of foreign policy pursued by the political elite were reflections of sectarian biases and constructs, which were used to comprehend their reality and were not exclusively the result of assessments based on objective reality. These concerns defined the state, its enemies and friends and what is possible and threatening. It is clear that perceptions concerning

identity impacted decision-makers, who used these external observations to reinforce themselves against other groups operating in the same realm. Whilst effective foreign policy is typically based on a sense of national identity, the sectarian narrative and constructs pushed by the political elite based on historical facts have effectively prevented foreign policy being represented equitably.

7.4 HAS NEO-PATRIMONY INFLUENCED THE PROCESS OF FOREIGN POLICY DECISION-MAKING IN IRAQ, AND CAN IRAQI FOREIGN POLICY IN THE REGION BE CHARACTERISED AS CLEAR AND UNDERSTANDABLE?



		Shi'a		Sunni		Kurds	
		Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%
Agree		28	84	4	8	11	69
Disagree		5	-16	40	-92	5	-31

Figure 7.5 Has neo-patrimony influenced the process of foreign policy decision-making in Iraq and can foreign policy in the region be characterised as clear and understandable?

The figure above shows that most Sunnis believed that foreign policy was not clear and understandable, which is in stark contrast when compared to the Shi'a and Kurdish respondents.

A Sunni administrator in the Interior Ministry stated:

> The main communities have been long integrated into a tight network of mutual interaction across many government layers. However, there are differences, which meant it has been possible [for actors] to bypass the foreign policy directions of the

> core executive. Different parts of the government have been unwilling to help each other in a neutral mode which has impacted foreign policy in negative terms making it unclear. (Baghdad, 2015).

An Undersecretary at the Foreign Ministry stated:

> The Foreign Ministry was not always informed or consulted on important matters because the PM's office only informed us on a need to know basis. There was a lack of communication on their part. This meant processes were often duplicated by us and them. This led to a great deal of tension between our offices, it also meant, internally, resources were wasted and, outwardly, it meant foreign policy was not clear (Baghdad, 2015).

In addition to differences between bureaucracies resulting in foreign policy decision-making ambiguity at the systemic level, many Sunnis mentioned the Kurds were exploiting these weaknesses to further their own foreign policy agenda.

A Sunni tribal leader stated:

> The way decisions were being made in Iraq were based on the security requirements of the country, which has led Iraq down a very compromising road where it has often made sacrifices which would have been unthinkable during the Saddam era. However, being realistic the dynamics of the country have radically changed because of the federal nature of the country which was previously centralised. The federalisation of Iraq has also been a cause of concern for foreign policy and has allowed groups, especially the Kurds, to set their own competing foreign policy. This has contributed to an unclear and weaker Iraqi foreign policy. (Amman 2017)

A Sunni lawmaker also suggested that the federalisation of Iraq has been a major factor of the unclear foreign policy:

> The Iraqi constitution hardly touches on the issue of external relations, and in this regard, the constitutional provisions are very primitive. This is most likely the case because when the constitution was drafted, it was expected the CPA would be in control indefinitely or it was not expected that any Iraqi government would dare not differ from US policies in the region. Therefore, there was an absence of any provision conferred to the government to modulate foreign policy decision-making which has been fully exploited by government ministries, the Kurdistan Regional Government and non-state actors (Baghdad 2016).

Considering the Iraqi experience of federalism shaping foreign policy and the accusations of Kurdish exploitation, it is prudent to explore the extent to which the activities of decision-makers have influenced Iraqi foreign policy. However, there should be no doubt concerning the foreign policy initiatives of the different elite groups within Iraq. Indeed, different actors have demonstrated a keen willingness to press for their interests on the global scene. To cite two examples, the Kurdish public relations campaign, called 'The Other Iraq', which aimed to frame the Kurdistan region as a 'second

Dubai (Anderson & Rogers, 2006), and KRG's development of economic and trade ties with Iran, Turkey and Syria have been major foreign policy objectives. Moreover, and as noted, the Kurdish government has shown a keen willingness to develop an energy relationship with Turkey and acquire Turkish recognition of a unitary Kurdish de facto state.

At the unit level, Iraqi Kurds may also have viewed the rest of Iraq as a foreign entity, which explains why Kurdish politicians have not ventured outside of their own areas. However, it has been possible for the Kurds to remain relevant in Iraq by ensuring Kurdish ministers occupy positions of power. Hoshyar Zerbari, Barham Salih and Jalal Talabani have occupied positions as foreign minister, deputy PM and president respectively. Active engagement has also allowed Kurds to lobby Kurdish foreign policy interests within and outside of Iraq, including in the US and Australia, concerning:

I. Speedy resolution of Article 140, which outlines a plan to resolve disputed land claims

II. Decentralisation of oil and gas law giving each region the capacity to manage its own hydrocarbons

III. Agreements which ensured the newly founded Iraqi air force would not be permitted to bomb Kurdish regions

(US Institute of Peace, 2011)

Subsequently, whilst the Baghdad and Kurdish government relationship before 2013 can be described as being a state-to-political party relationship, this changed to a government-to-state or to a state-to-state like relationship.

Federalisation and its exploitation for neo-patrimonial gains by the elite was a common theme mentioned by respondents, leading to a longstanding rivalry between groups and contributing to an unclear foreign policy. This rivalry was also said to be particularly acute in defence and intelligence matters, giving rise to Shi'a-Shi'a neo-patrimonial rivalry.

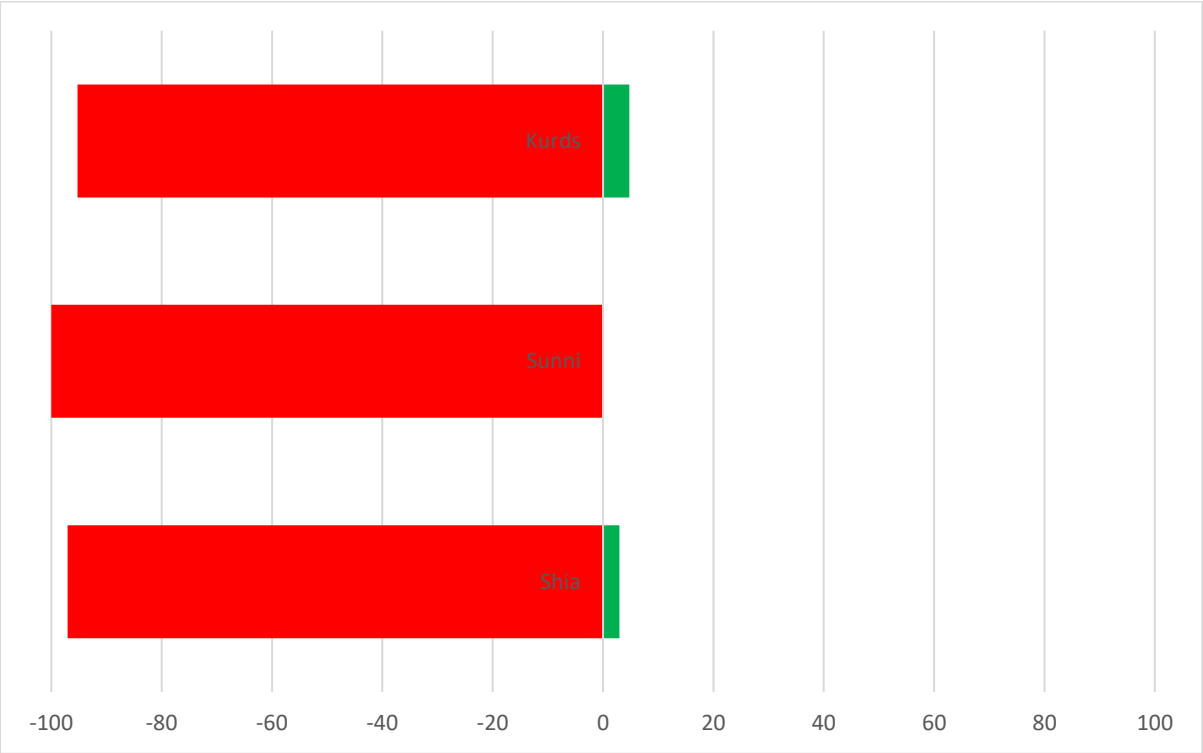
As the government centralised its power and hollowed out other bureaucracies, formal institutions such as the Foreign Ministry became less relevant to foreign policy decision-making. This allowed consecutive governments to reenergise their neo-patrimonial hierarchies using sectarianism to continually meet new challenges which threatened their power. This has been evident in the different relationships forged over the years between the PM's office, the government in Kurdistan and Sunni tribal area sheikhs with other governments and non-government actors such as militias.

At the systemic level, the PM's office has found itself having to cooperate with partners to develop networks to pursue specific policy priorities, mainly on the lines of internal security. Regarding this matter, strong links were created as foreign policies were formed: it appears the Shi'a government has been willing to compromise national interests when setting foreign policy. For example, respondents suggested that very few foreign policy decisions had been made which were not in line with either Iranian (thus, in opposition to Saudi Arabia) or US interests.

Rogue actors capable of influencing foreign policy made the process of policymaking increasingly diverse, making foreign policy less clear and beholden to sectarian interests which denied a positivist understanding of what constitutes the national interest. Indeed, this was very much a constructivist approach in action, as few of the research participants could articulate an understanding of the 'national interest' without viewing it through the refracted lens of sectarianism.

Participants' responses reveal the politics of neo-patrimony has played a significant role in foreign policy ambiguity. The Shi'a, Sunni and Kurdish identities are linked to a specific set of ideas which faction-affiliated policymakers have drawn upon and utilised to mobilise a sense of solidarity and cohesion which, in turn, have legitimised the general direction of their individual foreign policy choices. Due to the institutionalisation and incorporation of sectarianism into politics, it can be argued that decision-makers further incorporated this mode of thinking into the cognitive setup, which eventually found its ways into the minds of foreign policymakers, who used it to make sense of their political reality. However, it is also likely decision-makers may not have fully understand their decisions and were influenced by popular sentiment, which was used to feed their identity claims. As noted in previous chapters, these sentiments are related to specific sectarian groups, territory, myths and rituals, which have impacted the way decision-makers have interpreted their current situation.

7.5 WHAT WAS THE PERCEPTION OF INTERNAL NEO-PATRIMONY AND EXTERNAL ACTORS – HAVE THEY INFLUENCED THE SCOPE AND DIRECTION OF IRAQI FOREIGN POLICY?



		Shi'a		Sunni		Kurds	
		Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%
Agree		1	3	0	0	1	5
Disagree		32	-97	44	-100	15	-95

Figure 7.6 What was the perception of internal neo-patrimony and external actors – have they influenced the scope and direction of Iraqi foreign policy by weakening elite positions?

The figure above shows there was a strong negative percentage unity associated with this question from all respondents irrespective of ethnic background and government stance. In the case of Sunnis, this extended to -100%. Respondents who answered this question believed that the strengthening of elite neo-patrimonial hierarchies in the country can (at least in part) be attributed to external powers. A previous mayor of Soran city stated:

> There was a clear influence of regional countries on different elites, especially Iran, and to a lesser extent Saudi Arabia. Although the decisions benefitted Iraq in some ways, the harm usually outweighed the benefits, and the foreign power influenced our internal affairs. [For example,] Iraqi de-Ba`thification has been previously supervised by [Iranian general] Qasim Sulaimani (Erbil 2016).

One ambassador stated:

> The top priority for the country has been security, with all other factors being allocated fewer resources. Foreign policy has been developed along these lines, which meant the powerhouses in the region including Iran and Saudi Arabia have vested interests and are in positions which compel Iraq into making decisions which are not in its national interest. It has also left Iraqi foreign policy without any clout; that is why we have seen countries such as Turkey and Iran unilaterally pressing ahead with their own policies which affect us, such as the creation of dams; they know we have no recourse (Baghdad, 2015).

An ex-immigration minister stated: 'Influence of foreign powers has been negative and was split between the US and regional powers who backed different ethnic groups' (Baghdad 2016). In a similar vein, the Sunni Grand Mufti of Iraq, Sheikh Abdul Malik al-Saad believed the influence of external forces was negative:

> Iran has developed close relations with and strengthened the [Shi'a] government and was often relied upon to solve internal Iraqi problems. Although the US solely influenced Iraqi foreign policy in 2003 and a few years after that, Iranian influence increased incrementally, but after the civil war of 2006, Iranian influence dramatically increased and overtook US dominance, the [Shi'a] government also tried to centralise and increase its hold on power when this happened. (Amman 2017).

In an interview with a Sunni ambassador, the following was stated: 'The Iraqi foreign policy path has been reflected by the Shi'a orientation coming from the government in control, and the fact the Dawa party was an Iranian inception' (Baghdad, 2015). A doctor in sociology and politics, and member of the Kurdish Democratic Party stated: 'Iran has steadily increased its influence over Iraqi foreign policy decisions by backing the [Shi'a] government in power, and [by the end of the research period] has far greater influence than even the US. However, to counter this, and as a Kurd, Turkey is our main concern because currently they are our biggest partner' (Erbil 2015).

A Sunni ex-minister and tribal leader stated:

> The two countries with the greatest influence over Iraqi foreign policy have been Iran and the US. Iran has had a clear influence on foreign policy decision-making by backing Shi'a politicians, in cases such as the conflict in Syria the government here has followed the Iranian position, and the Shi'a political elite has permitted the transfer of Iranian weapons through its airports to support the Syrian government war effort. On the other hand, the US is the main supporter and sponsor of the government because of military and government training; therefore, Iraq is expected to follow the US lead. This has caused the country to have a conflicted foreign policy. (Baghdad 2016)

The Iraqi political elite has been expected to adhere to both US and Iranian desires. Practically, this has complicated the process of foreign policy formulation because instead of making decisions based on Iraqi interests as the primary consideration, the need to preserve neo-patrimonial gains by pleasing

foreign powers became paramount at the expense of Iraqi state interests. Thus, foreign policy decisions have been likened to a tight rope balancing act.

A Shi'a minister stated:

> I don't think external actors have had been successful in weakening the political elites' neo-patrimonial positions, for example, the US tried very hard to influence Al-Jaafari and then on Al-Maliki to crackdown on Shi'a militias in 2005 and 2007 but failed. But when it suited his neo-patrimonial interests in 2008, Al-Maliki went to war against the Sadrist Mahdi army, benefitting considerably. Another example is the Iraqi position on Kuwait: Iran wanted Iraq to have a hard-line against Kuwait but Al-Maliki refused. Increased Iraqi oil supplies have also hurt Iran. I say Al-Maliki is no puppet and uses foreign allies as he wishes. Organisations such as the EU need not be mentioned because they are basically a non-entity. The UN also has minimal influence, usually only on low profile matters. (Baghdad, 2015)

A Sunni working in the Ministry of Defence concurred with the previous Shi'a minister by stating:

> Foreign powers have not been able to weaken the neo-patrimonial positions of the political elite; the US has supported Al-Maliki to different levels but never opposed him, even when he made unconstitutional arrests in the face of human rights abuses and his intimidation of political opponents. Of course, one could argue the US could have cut ties but remained because some influence is better than none. In my opinion, Al-Maliki was concerned more with personal interests. (Baghdad, 2015)

According to one interviewee, the ambassadors of both the US and Iran became extremely powerful personalities in Iraq. This occurred because all political parties and their leaders, be they Sunni, Shi'a, or Kurdish, became dependent upon them and were known for frequenting these two ambassadors. This increased foreign policy competition and external actor influence over foreign policy because domestic political parties were willing to compromise. An ex-secretary general from the Council of Ministers, and chief of PM staff between 2010 and 2014 stated:

> Many Iraqi officials had an unhealthy relationship with foreign missions in Iraq. This meant many government and even non-government appointed individuals from the Shi'a, Sunni and Kurds were visiting foreign ambassadors such as the US, Iran and others. This was under the guise of exchanging views and cooperation on security issues such as terrorism. However, I believe secret negotiations were taking place to undermine the non-friendly elite. (Baghdad 2016)

Although the US was responsible for 'liberating' Iraq, Iraqi politicians have always been acutely aware of their neo-patrimonial long-term interests and permanent neighbour to the east, as opposed to the US, which most interviewees considered an occupying force which would eventually leave. Therefore, it has always made greater sense for politicians to play a double game involving allying Iran whilst officially claiming loyalty to the US.

Whilst in the early years of the occupation, the US-Iraqi relationship can be likened to a patron-client relationship, this relationship significantly shifted. The US-Iraqi relationship stopped moving forward and instead can be categorised as one of reluctant allies, typically based on threat and coercion – along with incentives – by the US and reluctance by the Iraqi political elite. Thus, the relationship can be described as being transactional in nature based on economic and military aid, especially during the Saddam aftermath, at the height of the sectarian civil wars and when 'Islamic State' occupied large swathes of Iraqi land in 2014. Although Al-Maliki had amassed Saddam-like powers, running counter to US political culture and, therefore, not fit to be engaged with, he ended up being an indispensable ally, who spent most of his time consolidating state power.

One Sunni politician lamented the lack of Sunni countries involved in Iraq, especially in the years following 2003, causing Iraq to become a client state of Iran. However, he also blamed the Gulf monarchies, especially Saudi Arabia, for not actively taking a role in Iraq through the development of immediate ties with the post-Saddam government. A Sunni politician stated:

> Although the Arab Shi'a have similar beliefs to Persian Shi'a, they also staunchly identify themselves as Arab – they speak Arabic and, in some cases, belong to the same tribes [as Sunnis]. Countries such as Saudi Arabia completely failed to exploit these differences and chose to ignore Iraq for many years. Iran was able to influence Iraqi foreign policy without any competition. (Baghdad, 2016)

In an interview with an ambassador, the interviewee stated:

> Although Iraq had been strengthening its military with US support and even though it has the world's second-largest oil supplies, Iraq was still vulnerable because of the internal dynamics, mainly insecurity and a poor economy. Whilst historically it was able to compete with countries such as Iran, the post-war situation has forced Iraq to fundamentally change the way foreign policy is implemented due to elite focus on internal neo-patrimonial power, a lack of policies, no regional ambitions and corruption. (Baghdad, 2015)

Respondents were aware that Iranian influence at the unit level in Iraq remained profound due to geographical proximity and religious affinity grounded in Shi'a Islam. Like other countries, Iran has its own 'sphere of influence' and has attempted to develop opportunities and security with its neighbour. Although prevented for an extended period, Iran, according to respondents, has successfully redefined its regional and global position at the expense of the Iraqi national interest and foreign policy. Thus, it can be argued that Shi'a liberation in Iraq also unleashed Iran's regional ambitions. Crucially in this regard, the Shi'a of Iraq did not view Iran as a direct rival. A recent warning indicator for Sunnis who feared the rise of Shi'a fundamentalism was the 2006 Lebanon war, where Iranian proxy Hezbollah asserted victory over Israel. In addition to Hezbollah, Syria, Iran and Hamas (although

Sunni) have come to be viewed as a malevolent Shi'a crescent. The idea of the 'Shi'a Crescent' was first articulated by King Abdullah of Jordan in 2004 (Walker, 2006). Yemen, with its capital San'a now controlled by the Houthi, whose animus towards Saudi Arabia has only intensified amid a bloody civil war, can also be added to this list.

Due to their large size, the Shi'a identity, even amongst themselves, became difficult to define because of the large number of actors, with each attempting to solidify their positions in neo-patrimonial structures. Iran recognised this dynamic and, in addition to attempting to control Iraq directly, has also tried to increase its grip using soft power whilst considering the different collective identities, that is, through allying of multiple actors, improving its image through economic investment, working the popular satellite channel Al-Alam, distributing school textbooks and providing social help.

However, the situation in Iraq at the unit and systemic levels will always remain a threat to Iranian interests. At the unit level, challenges such as factionalism leading to state disintegration; regionally, security arrangements are required; and internationally, Iranian territory has been surrounded by a US presence. Thus, it has been claimed by respondents that discrete relationships have formed on the back of commercial connections with Iraqi and Iranian officials, which were aimed at tying the security of both countries together. Whilst Iraqi politicians have tactically exploited this element to increase their own individual neo-patrimonial positions at the unit level, this has also resulted in Iranian influence across Iraq increasing, especially in the southern regions around Iraq's second busiest city, Basra (Kayhan, 2005).

Whilst it is common for states to construct internal and external enemies according to strategic interests, in the case of Iraq, a sectarianism foreign policy has been key to defining alliances and enmities with key Middle Eastern states. In this context, participant responses indicated Sunni and Shi'a rhetoric at the systemic level is in part due to it being a by-product of its regional strategies with the US, Saudi Arabia and Iran.

One of the common participant criticisms from Sunni, Shi'a and Kurds was the mode of communication foreign countries partook in Iraq. For example, the US and Iran developed relationships with individuals and groups, both state and non-state, as opposed to developing a relationship with Iraq per se. This is true of leaders starting with the IGC and continuing through to Al-Maliki's tenure. These relationships have allowed the elite to strengthen their neo-patrimonial networks but have also had a significant negative impact in Iraq, for example, US aid to Iraq, which has never been realised by the average Iraqi and has been historically lost between the pipelines of US contractors and their Iraqi counterparts. The political elite was able to get away with this because perhaps they felt their strategic

value to the US was too great to ignore even in the face of the huge divergence in policies between them.

Such a poor method of engagement has been critical in the estrangement of the Iraqi populace for both the US and Iran. This estrangement should not be confused as a harmless synonym because it has translated into hostility and violent struggle, resulting in instability, even when US and Iranian policies have been Iraq centric. The support for the militias is a prime example: both Sunni and Shi'a escalated tensions through higher levels of religiosity manifested through speech and action. This allowed for a construction of conflicts which revolved around distinct sectarian narratives. This increased the salience of religious identity. Both groups attempted to use religion as a tool of terror by combating sectarian fuelled attacks with their own. In the end, these strategic manoeuvres did nothing to further the interests of ordinary Iraqis and were the cause of the eventual explosion of sectarian tensions. Despite the death and destruction wrought, there remained a significant element within Iraq which believed the sectarian violence would resolve itself once the US and Iran influence left the country. Whilst these assessments can be described as being mind-boggling, it does provide a critical insight into who the Iraqis perceived as the enemy and friend, the self and other.

A Sunni lawmaker stated:

> After 2005, the neo-patrimonial and sectarian divide considerably increased; at this point, the Shi'a empowerment strategy introduced by the US was rolled back a little and they started looking for Sunnis to engage in politics and state bureaucracies whilst also reducing Shi'a support. In effect, the US was admitting it was indirectly responsible for Sunni radicalisation and facilitated a Shi'a takeover which made Iraq a magnet for worldwide jihadists, I would have to insist the role of the US helped Shi'a neo-patrimonial practices whilst weakening and fragmenting Iraqi foreign policy at the same time (Baghdad, 2015).

The following report extract captures the US shift in perceptions:

> The US occupation of Iraq further deepened sectarian tensions. As the US searched for Iraqi political collaborators to establish a pro-occupation government, it marginalized the secular political forces, seen as too nationalist, in favour of more compliant religious parties and groupings . . . The U.S. promoted (and the mass media accepted) an ethnic/religious conception of Iraqi politics that did not acknowledge the long supremacy of secular nationalism and did not reflect the complex ethnic mix and the diversity of many Iraqi cities and regions, such as Mosul, Basra and especially multi-ethnic Baghdad.

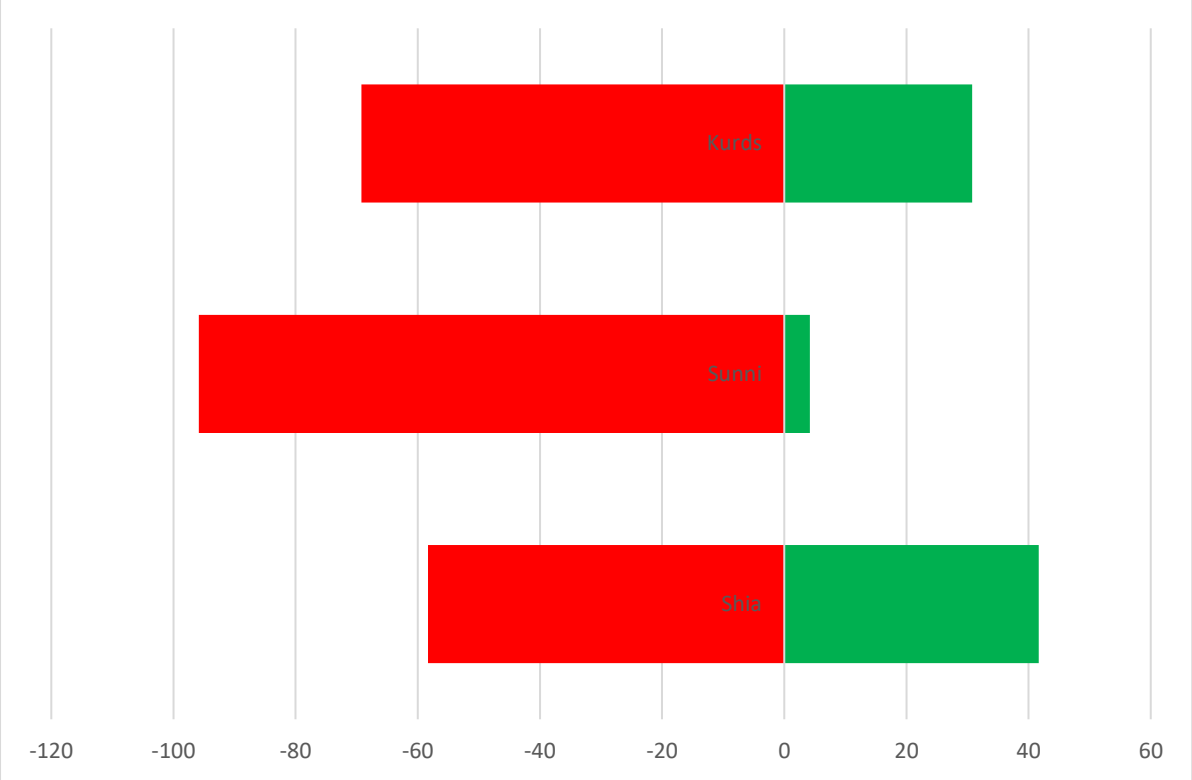
(GPF, 2015)

Differentiating between the friendly and foe Shi'a was especially difficult for the US. For example, in 2007, Bush paradoxically declared war on the Shi'a, who became the new enemy, especially the Badr

and Mahdi militias, but also Iranian and Syrian commando and intelligence units. Up until this point, the US had been solely fighting Sunnis (Khan & Ali, 2007). Whilst the US assumed the Iraqi invasion would inevitably rival Iran, be pro-Western, and perhaps even recognise Israel, nothing of the sort occurred.

The alignment of Iraqi foreign policy with other powers created a new grievance in the national psyche and became one of the central determinants of the government's unpopularity. US and Iranian help have thus been met by significant suspicion and any help in the past has been forgotten or became a case for conspiracy theorists. Thus, bizarrely, an anti-Iranian and anti-US stance amongst the population is perhaps one of the few things which has brought together the Iraqi self-definition.

7.6 Is the allocation of government jobs associated with foreign policy positions linked to candidate skill and experience?



		Shi'a		Sunni		Kurds	
		Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%
Agree		14	42	2	4	5	31
Disagree		19	-58	42	-96	11	-69

Figure 7. Is the allocation of government jobs associated with foreign policy positions linked to candidate skill and experience?

In general, all groups were opposed to the premise of this question. However, relatively large numbers of Kurds and Shi'a were also sympathetic towards the statement. This was not the case with the Sunnis, with only 4% agreeing with the question proposition. Most respondents agreed that the allocation of foreign policy-related jobs was not based on meritocracy. A Kurdish judge from Erbil stated:

> The allocation of jobs related to foreign policy such as ministerial, ambassadorial, management, and consular positions have never been based on technocracy. Rather, they have been allocated through neo-patrimony and nepotism. This is a much wider problem in Iraq where professional vacancies are filled by incompetent employees. (Baghdad, 2015)

A Sunni international legal expert stated:

> Problems linked to neo-patronage within Iraqi bureaucracies is widespread and not just those linked to foreign policy. Employees in the mid-management range and below are usually directly related to their superiors. For example, the PM's office is mainly filled with Shi'a elements who are related to the PM, belonging to the same tribe or are at least Shi'a. (Baghdad, 2015)

Respondents indicated it was widely accepted that foreign policy-related employment opportunities were greater when belonging to the same faction as the employer in charge of the bureaucracy. Respondents explained that this allowed employees to ensure policies could be amended before implementation or be resisted.

A Sunni political analyst stated:

> Although the Accountability Act criminalises all forms of corruption, and technically also includes neo-patronage, nepotism and sect-based employment, the law is not implemented by the government, which means officials can hire and fire people with impunity. The judicial system is plagued with corruption and political interference. (Baghdad, 2015)

Based on 'inclusive fitness' and 'kin selection' theories (Hamilton, 1964, pp. 191–209), ethnic group members prefer and favour their group members above non-members since they are related. Respondents stated that this disposition has permeated throughout Iraq's bureaucracies and, according to the respondents, includes key foreign policy decision-making institutions such as the PM's Office and the Interior Ministry. Although neo-patrimonial employment strategies are contrary to Iraqi law, they were often compartmentalised and viewed as a wider facet of corruption, and just accepted as a norm. A Shi'a aide Ministry of Defence stated: 'Within Iraqi politics sticking together is important because the elite must compete for limited resources'.

This situation has emerged because of three factors. Firstly, it is due to the way exiled opposition groups were formed. With the greatest threats to the Saddam regime coming from Kurdish insurrection and Shi'a mobilisation, the oppression of these groups from the intelligence services resulted in greater communal affinity whilst forcing their leaders into exile. Secondly, the building blocks of the post-Saddam government consisted of the institutionalisation of the opposition groups based on sectarian lines. The final factor contributing to this mindset and a tangled Iraqi foreign policy was the consolidation of the bureaucracies after 2003. Since the coalition was primarily concerned with creating an ethnically diverse government representing major groups, regional powers were able to befriend as well as exploit the differences between these political parties. This legitimised the bilateral relations between different political elites and became an acceptable norm in Iraqi diplomacy (Stansfield, 2010).

At the unit level, the inequality of employment opportunities in state bureaucracies has been neatly played out along sectarian lines of Sunni versus Shi'a versus Kurd. Although the Sunnis have tried, they have not been able to act as a countermeasure to the Shi'a-led central government through the acquisition of meaningful managerial posts. At the systemic level, this has prohibited the Sunni influence on foreign policy.

Al-Maliki gave a speech in 2009, stating:

> We have the right to be proud that we stood against the fire of strife. Through rationality and brotherhood, and through a reaction characterized by an Islamic and patriotic humanitarian spirit, we pulled all components of Iraqi society together. All components [of the country] met on one single principle, that of Iraq, and the fact that this strife does not benefit anyone. (Al-Ali, 2014, p. 246)

Despite the rhetoric, the participant response to this question is also supported by UN research, which indicates Iraqis are aware of the inequality between people of different factions within Iraq. This has led to youth groups criticising sectarian acts perpetrated by the political elite whilst trying to revive a national identity (UNDP, 2014).

After analysing the Sunni accounts in greater detail, a large number of Sunnis felt they were treated as inferior or discriminated against because of sectarianism. They claimed the most common markers of identity included their family names and even their neighbourhoods. This practice was largely restricted to central Iraq, where Sunnis exist in sizable numbers, and was uncommon in the Kurdish and Shi'a regions of the north and south respectively. Due to the aforementioned markers, it is clear that sectarian preferences were being used as crucial markers in the identification of otherness. Thus, having a Sunni name and background were the most commonly quoted markers associated with a

complex inferior-ised identity in this setting, where ethnicity, religion, history and geography interconnect.

Due to the complexity of Iraqi tribes and, in some instances, having members who are both Sunni and Shi'a, such as Jubur, Ubayd, Dulaym and Shammar, there were also instances of mistaken identity, although these were few. Mistaken identity can be considered somewhat of an anomaly, which revealed a typical expectation. When assigning a new or potential employee with a single religious or ethnic marker, this was likely to result in a low degree of certainty relative to when multiple markers were present. Moreover, when the initial identification was incorrect, Sunnis would assume Shi'a discrimination was not occurring. There were three instances of Sunnis being assigned a Shi'a identity, wherein workers continued to mask their ethnic origins. This led to feelings of being fortunate because they would not suffer the consequences of being correctly identified and lose their jobs. Mistaken identity typically occurred when Sunnis had common Shi'a names. At other times, Shi'a and Sunnis living in non-Sunni or non-Shi'a neighbourhoods in Baghdad also led to incorrect faction assignment. One Sunni was able to pass the selection and recruitment requirements for a managerial position in the PM's office; however, the initial offer was withdrawn when his identity was discovered. He stated:

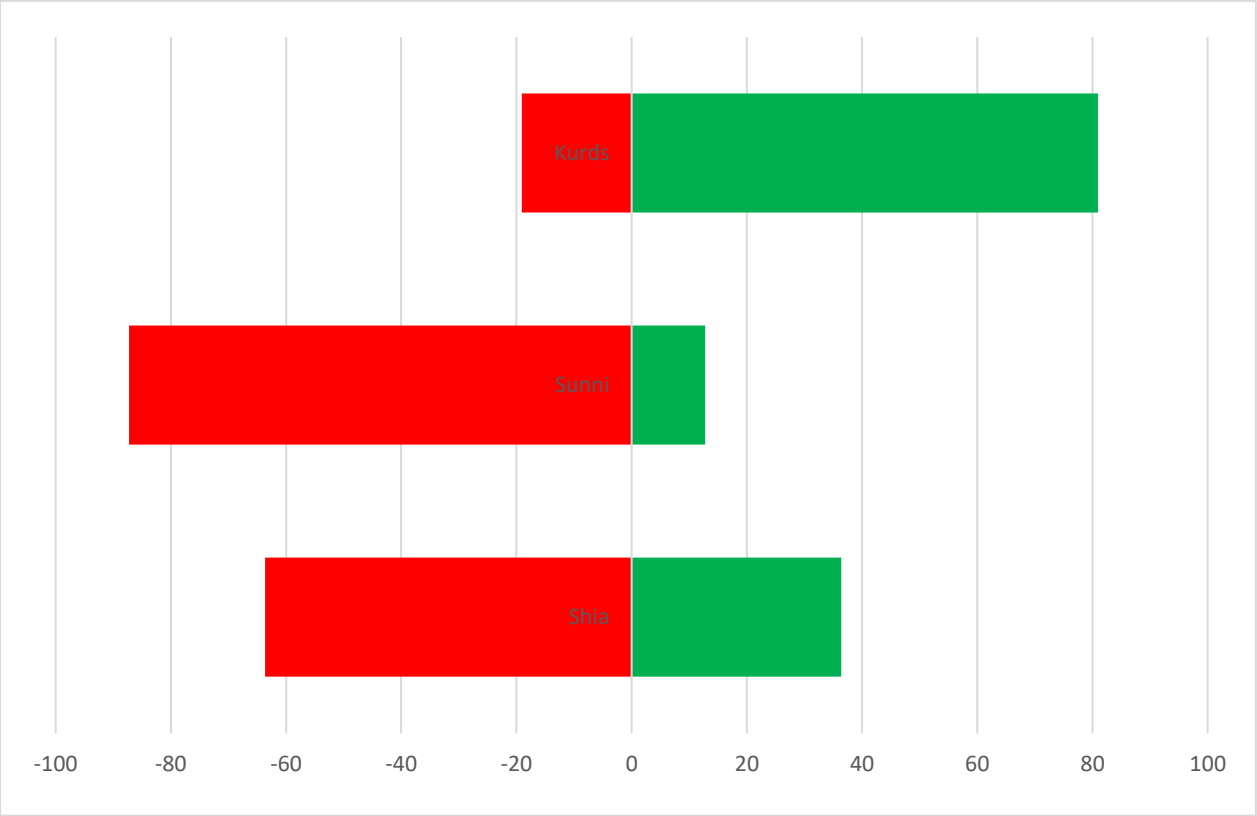
> My name can be classed as non-descript and it doesn't immediately jump out as being Sunni, but if you have a name such as Abu-Bakr or Umar, it automatically lends itself to people thinking about your sectarian allegiances. I was offered a job at the PM's office, I was informed I had been selected, but had to provide some additional information which had to go on file. The person asked me whether I would be fasting on a specific Shi'a festival. When I replied in the negative, more religious and ethnically charged questions followed, I did my best to answer then, but I also tried to answer them honestly. The person took the additional information and then said they would be in touch. A month passed and I didn't hear anything from them. In my circles, the people who I know would not be recruited by Shi'a interviewers, discrimination was always overt. (Baghdad, 2015).

The majority of discrimination was constructed as being anti-Sunni; this was followed by being Shi'a and then Kurdish. This was largely expected because of de-Ba`thification, the Shi'a ascendency in the political sphere and because the Kurds typically sought jobs in northern Iraq. A common method used by Sunnis and Shi'as to determine if discrimination was occurring was to attempt to quantify the number of people of each faction employed in state bureaucracies. For Sunnis, a large number of Sunni names in a specific bureaucracy indicated Sunni advancement whereas, for the Shi'a, this was understood as being counter discrimination by the Sunnis.

The Shi'a tended to distance themselves from Sunni discrimination but admitted support for de-Ba`thification but also stated sectarian considerations in recruitment and selection processes

associated with foreign policy jobs was less from 2010 onwards. Sectarian tendencies, especially against Arab Sunnis within other groups, have been socially constructed based on social boundaries which each group has demarcated against the other. This indicates 'sectarianism' is an adequate way in conceptualising their relations; however, these findings also raise the possibility of a connection between sectarianism and racism, which could also be used to explain the Sunni Shi'a bias of Arabs against the Kurds.

7.7 DID NEO-PATRIMONIAL STRUCTURES IN IRAQ INFLUENCE FOREIGN POLICY IN A SECTARIAN MANNER?



		Shi'a		Sunni		Kurds	
		Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%
Agree		12	36	6	13	13	81
Disagree		21	-64	38	-87	3	-19

Figure 7.7 Did neo-patrimonial structures in Iraq influence foreign policy in a sectarian manner?

The figure above indicates there is a disparity in the perception of sectarianism in foreign policy with both Sunni and Shia respondents strongly disagreeing with this statement. On the other hand, most Kurdish respondents indicated sectarianism did not play a role in foreign policy. A Shi'a ambassador stated:

> There was a direct connection between sectarianism and foreign policy, which can be traced to neo-patrimonial politics and the nature of the environment where these processes take place. It has become an important issue since the effects [of sectarianism] have split communities apart. All groups were struggling to achieve their national interests (Baghdad, 2015).

Respondents offered different 'environmental factors' which fermented sectarianism. Thematically these included previous sanctions placed on Iraq, a fractured education system, attenuation of the middle classes, economic woes, previous affiliations with Saddam and even Ottoman-Persian rivalry. These factors were said to influence foreign policy through the selection and implementation process at the systemic level. A high-level Kurdish official stated:

> Iraq has more loyalty to Iran compared to any other country. This has been problematic. The best solution to address this is to build a state which has equal rights for everyone based on nationalism and working through problems and preventing international interference. Or it is better to divide the country into three? (Erbil 2015)

A Sunni politician stated:

> There was a strong neo-patrimonial influence on foreign policy, the situation can be partly blamed on the government composition based on the sectarian quota system which the US set up. Nobody liked this system except the Kurds. For the Shi'a, it meant bridled power within Iraq, and for the Sunnis, it meant they had been marginalised. The only way the Shi'a and Kurdish coalitions have been able to remain functional was because of the strong moderating force of the US in the face of opposing foreign policies coming from both camps, without US pressure cooperation on this level would have been impossible. (Baghdad, 2015)

An ex-aide to Al-Maliki stated:

> The foreign policy alliance and coalition with Iran was only a reaction to the security threat and had two features, the first was to create an alliance with governments and non-government organisations to support security within Iraq, and secondly, mitigate threats from the active presence of security issues in the region. (Baghdad, 2015)

Another Shi'a official stated:

> It is clear the Sunni hold on to power was strengthened when it mixed sectarianism with foreign policy. This explains why de-Ba`thification had to take place over an extended time. Ba`thists fell into two camps: the first were willing to work with the government and were allowed back, but there were those who were fanatical and loyal to the Ba`th Party ideals. Some of them worked with foreign powers and carried out kidnappings and terrorist operations. This greatly destabilised Iraq and its foreign policy. (Baghdad, 2015)

In this context, the benefit of bilateral and indeed multilateral credibility with Iran and other allies based on a resistance axis has been highly effective, especially when battling terrorist organisations.

For example, in 2014, the Iraqi army's consultation with Iran and the PMF in the fight against IS underpinned the US-led anti-Daesh coalition which targeted terrorists with US airstrikes.

A small number of respondents dismissed the influence of neo-patrimony on foreign policy. An ex-aide to Al-Maliki stated:

> Neo-patrimony never influenced foreign policy and nor did sectarianism. Of course, we took Iranian help and later worked with Syria because of geopolitical dimensions. Strong Iranian ties have permitted Iraq to ease the spread of terrorist organisations. It has nothing to do with strengthening of the elite. It allowed Shi'a holy places of worship in Iraq to be persevered and made the streets much safer. (Baghdad, 2015)

Nonetheless, based on the language used by some of the participants, it became clear sectarianism was a norm through which groups were describing each other and were unable to escape foreign policy decision-making without this input, especially in the Syrian context. For example, it was common for the Shi'a political elite to refer to Syrian Sunni fighters as Wahabi, Nasabi and Takfiri. On the other hand, Sunnis referred to anyone on the side of the Assad regime as Hizb Al-Shaitaan, Safawi, Rafidha and Nusayri. These terms have deep religious and have historical connotations, and are used in a derogative context but, in a nutshell, describe the other as a clear infidel worthy of being killed. These instances highlight how at different levels the Iraqi political elite has profited from the sectarian tensions whilst ensuring their own neo-patrimonial benefits within the state.

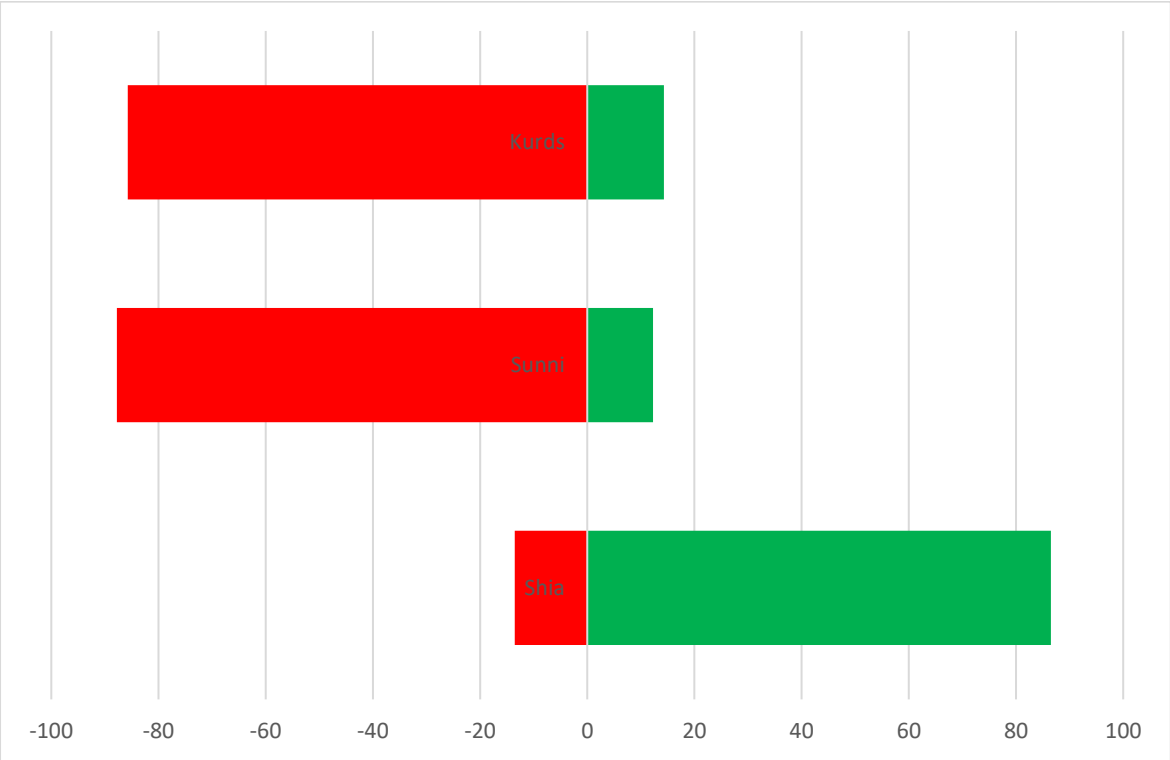
A Shi'a manager from the PM's office stated:

> The Sunni virus has been trying to take hold here in Iraqi and in Syria, the Wahabi government [of Saudi Arabia] needs to stop funding terrorists, first it was the Ba`th armed rebellion, then AQI and then IS. They have to stop this; then we can make decisions without any pressure on us. I have to admit, it [Iraqi terrorism] nothing to do with Saddam, or for that matter, it has also been blamed on the PM [Al-Maliki]. (Baghdad, 2015)

Aligned with the constructivist paradigm, it is obvious Shi'a foreign policy decision-makers such as Al-Maliki set a high priority to sectarian, social and religious norms in the structure of state bureaucracies (relative to material ones) – by acting on the basis of constructed meanings they associated with identity. This also indicates the Iraqi political elite viewed the international system as being dynamic and the values, belief and assumptions concerning Saddam's rule and the US-led invasion in 2003 (but may also have been influenced by the Iranian revolution in 1979 and the Arab spring) exerted a critical influence on decision-making. For Shi'a policymakers, the belief about the link between policy and interest has shown itself to be as important as the nature of the policy itself. Moreover, the Syrian example shows how typical international norms can stimulate states to reconsider their previously

held interests in favour of identity. The relevance of constructivism in this instance becomes even more profound when considering Assad was allowing jihadists to use Syria as a transit to Iraq and viewed Iraqi rebels as being 'legitimate resistance' (Bennet, 2005).

7.8 If neo-patrimony resulted in a sectarian foreign policy, is it possible to eliminate the sectarian effects?



		Shi'a		Sunni		Kurds	
		Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%
Agree		28	86	5	12	2	14
Disagree		5	-14	39	-88	14	-86

Figure 7.8 If neo-patrimony resulted in a sectarianism foreign policy, is it possible to eliminate the sectarian effects?

The above figure indicates Sunnis and Kurds were pessimistic concerning the removal of sectarianism from foreign policy and is a good example of inter-group agreement. However, there appears to be an inverse perception from the Shi'a respondents who widely believed that the removal of sectarianism from foreign policy was possible. Indeed, some respondents would not acknowledge any influence of sectarianism upon foreign policy. An ex-Vice President stated:

> Sectarianism has been an issue for the country and used as a dividing tool by the elite, however, this has not entered foreign policy. Therefore, I do not think this is the right question to ask. It is often perceived by the Sunni and Kurdish populations that foreign policy is under Shi'a control. This is simply not true, just look at the Sunni and Kurdish

> ministers who were and have been heads of the Foreign Ministry. If everyone in the government began implementing policies whilst attempting to preserve their own elite interests, the resulting foreign policies would be conflicting all the time. (Baghdad, 2015)

The Sunni perspective insisted neo-patrimony influenced a sectarian foreign policy. A former Saddam-era general stated: 'Sectarianism, and sectarian affiliations were definitely evident in Iraq's internal policies but filtered through and affected foreign policies. I don't think the sectarianism can be removed because neo-patrimony cannot be maintained in any other way' (Baghdad 2016).

The data showed that most Sunnis made a direct link between the unit level events and government foreign policy. The main conduit was previously exiled Shi'a Iraqis who had spent years in Iran. The same Saddam-era general stated: 'Considering their exile location, their Shi'a background, their previous financial backers and their policies against the Sunni population and Sunni countries, I would insist neo-patrimony has resulted in the presence of a sectarian Iraqi foreign policy from day one' (Baghdad 2016).

Most Sunnis blamed the origin of elite neo-patrimony on the quota system installed by the CPA and elites who lacked the necessary qualifications for making informed choices but still wanted to hold onto their positions. Sunnis stated the CPA quota system allowed Shi'a politicians loyal to Iran to occupy key positions, making decisions on their own and Iran's favour, and in limited cases, in favour of the local Shi'a population. In a similar vein, an active Sunni politician stated: 'Sectarianism is present in foreign policy because of the government arrangement and the way it is structured. The foreign policy had shifted in favour of Iran, and against the Sunni population whilst Iraq had historically always been a Sunni bastion'.

A professor of psychology explained how the narrative has been framed from a perspective of the Shi'a being victims of sectarianism:

> Removing sectarianism from Iraqi foreign policy will be problematic because those capable of influencing it have deeply entrenched positions. Shi'ism is often purposely conflated with having an identity which is non-Arab, which leads to rhetoric describing the non-Arab other; this contradicts Arab unity, which is fundamental for foreign policy legitimacy. (Baghdad, 2015)

A well-known political commentator explained how Sunnis were delegitimising policies developed by the government and inserting their own sectarian taint through foreign relations:

> Although we are Arab, the fact that we are also Shi'a makes it easier to acquire an emotional response in the wider Arab media. At the bureaucratic level, this has created friction between institutions because Sunni politicians have been working with external foes and attempted to de-Arabise the Shi'a, even though we are clearly

> Arab, by linking us with Iran, thus framing the situation as a non-Arab natured threat. This shows that from a Sunni perspective, the traditional foreign policy of defending Iraqi interests is less important than preserving power when conceptualising true threats to our security. (Baghdad, 2015)

A Kurdish parliamentarian also stated:

> I believe there has been an obvious link between neo-patrimony and a sectarian foreign policy because of historical narratives. Those in charge of the country had been using foreign relations to acquire power within Iraq instead of furthering Iraq's national interests in the region. Iraqi foreign policy has been tugged in many different directions by many different agents (Erbil, 2017).

The majority of Shi'a did not believe neo-patrimony resulted in a sectarian foreign policy. However, a small minority of Shi'a believed sectarianism was present but was being instigated by Sunnis trying to claw power back from the Shi'a. In response to the Shi'a influence on foreign policy, respondents indicated it was common for Sunni politicians to seek help from non-Iraqi media outlets in a bid to paint Shi'a Iraqis as the 'other', non-Arab Persian problem.

Whilst this form of othering was common, there was also another form undertaken not only by the Sunnis but by non-exiled Shi'a politicians, which painted the Shi'a exiled political elite as being westernised. A Shi'a lawmaker stated: 'Many of them [exiled Shi'a politicians] did not suffer under Saddam and don't understand what it means to be Shi'a in Iraq, they have been corrupted by West' (Baghdad 2016). This statement and others like it indicate a new dynamic in the othering of the Shi'a political elite.

Thus, the new system not only emboldened pre-existing sectarian identities, but it also added a new division into the mix – a division between resident Shi'a and those which had been previously exiled. Here, a parallel can be made between the British who chose to empower tribes instead of the Ottoman educated classes, and the US who chose to empower Shi'a who had been exiled under Saddam instead of Sunni bureaucrats and risking putting Saddam sympathisers back into power. Thus, a new means of Shi'a on Shi'a ostracisation involved linking the Shi'a with the western occupier. In other words, being a previously exiled Shi'a became paramount to being guilty through association. Whilst it is acknowledged the identities in Iraq are complex, it is critical to note, this thesis argues, that the identity of the average person is not considered as being synonymous with the identities created and maintained by the political elite, be they sectarian, tribal, ethnic, national or supranational. This phenomenon is also useful in explaining the early years of the insurgency, which initially focused on US forces but then also targeted the Shi'a.

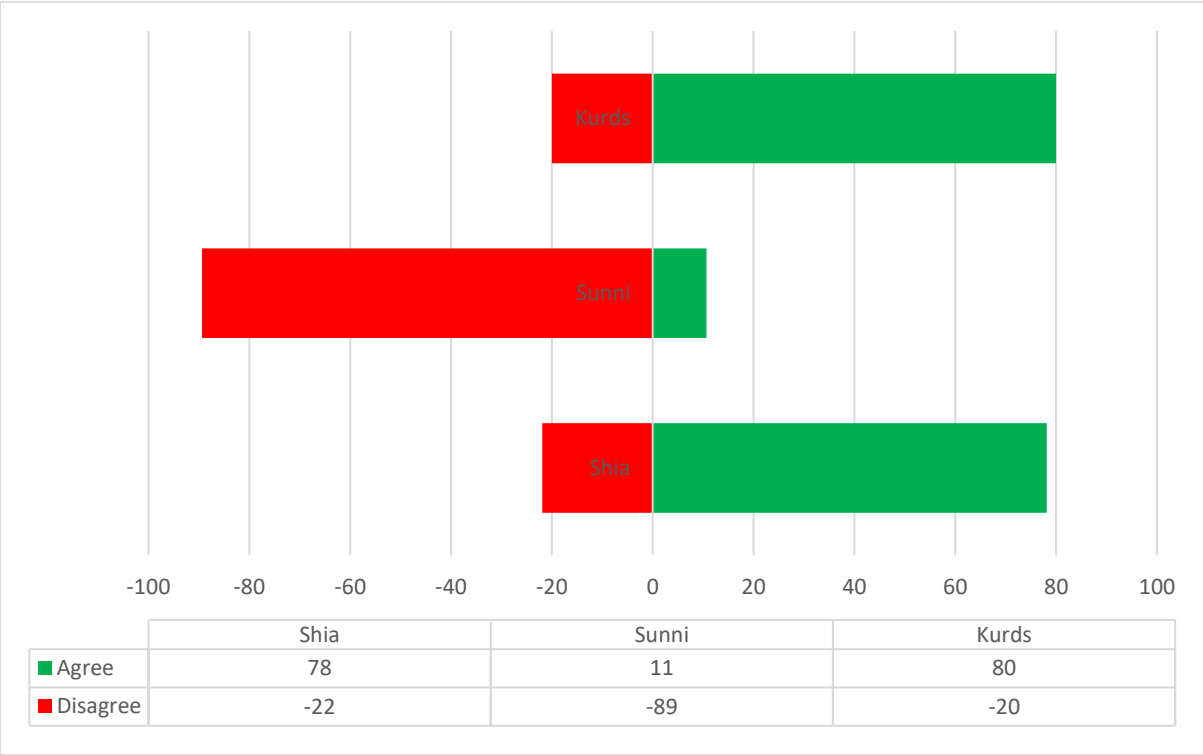
The practice of othering was clearly a consequence of complex unit and systemic level dynamics which had formed over many decades. Whilst the Shi'a were previously marginalised, they now held the

reins of power after being assisted by the US; conversely, the Sunnis, who were previously privileged under Saddam's neo-patrimonial rule, now had their benefits removed and saw their security and role in society disappear. Thus, the Iraqi Shi'a and Persian connection sometimes switched to the Shi'a cooperating westerner who had their own agenda. Othering continued throughout the research period and fuelled the civil war between the Shi'a and Sunnis.

The practice of 'othering' became one of the primary discourses following the 2003 invasion and became part of the Iraqi political language. The othering process has been fuelled because of historic exploitation and manipulation of the Shi'a and Kurds. Without engaging in these practices, the political elite would have lost their meaning and would have been unable to rely on their constituents, a fear which was partially realised during the 2010 election. Events such as these illustrating cross-sectarian alliances show that the Arab population in Iraq does not inherently follow a strict sectarian dichotomy of Sunni versus Shi'a.

As a side note, a Pew research effort on 39 Muslim countries between 2011 and 2012 found most Muslims viewed themselves as 'just a Muslim'; however, in Iraq, only 5% answered 'just a Muslim', and over 90% categorised themselves in one of the affiliated groups (Lipka, 2014). This shows a salient sense of affiliation to a group with a specific identity.

7.9 CAN IRAQ MAINTAIN AND DEVELOP A NON-SECTARIAN BASED FOREIGN POLICY, AND WILL IT BE ABLE TO IMPROVE ITS STANDING IN THE REGION IN THE NEXT 5 TO 10 YEARS?



	Shia	Sunni	Kurds
Agree	78	11	80
Disagree	-22	-89	-20

		Shi'a		Sunni		Kurds	
		Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%
Agree		26	78	5	11	13	80
Disagree		7	-22	39	-89	3	-20

Figure 7.9 Can Iraq maintain and develop non--sectarianism based foreign policy, and will it be able to improve its standing in the region in the next 5 to 10 years?

The figure above shows a high level of agreement across Shi'a and Kurdish respondents, who agreed with the question proposition, at 78% and 80% respectively. This answer is, therefore, a good example of inter-group agreement. On the other hand, there was a high degree of scepticism coming from the Sunni respondents. A Sunni parliamentarian stated:

> It is unlikely that Iraqi foreign policy will amount to anything in the next five years. The reasons include strong neo-patrimonial structures which have led to incorrect foreign policy decisions. It is also because of the government's failure to reach a good security agreement with the US. This caused a great deal of destabilisation and helped terrorist groups to flourish. We are still suffering from the direct effects today, but I think Shi'a politicians took us down this route just so they could stay in power. The Sunni population has always had a negative view concerning the security forces because of their divided loyalties and overt sectarianism. Sunnis took matters into their own hands in a bid to create their own domestic and foreign policy. (Baghdad, 2015)

Most Sunni responses resembled the above and illustrate a negative view of long-term Iraqi foreign policy. However, the reasons sometimes differed and, in addition to the above, included such factors as being disenfranchised and suffering from the widespread use of illegitimate de-Ba`thification powers by the authorities to weaken Sunni political structures. Sunni lawmakers accused Al-Maliki of creating a new political order. One lawmaker stated: 'Just look at the situation. All our foreign policies have been set in line with Al-Maliki's ambition to consolidate his personal control of institutions and systems of power. This has resulted in Iraqi foreign policy losing direction' (Baghdad 2016).

The Sunni Grand Mufti of Iraq stated:

> Foreign policy has been weak because of neo-patrimony, which has caused sectarianism, a breakdown in security and the rise of militias such as those linked to Al-Maliki and [Iranian] General Qassim Sulaimani. The Shi'a government in power has been following the foreign policy of other countries, mainly Iran, and sharing government positions amongst the same sect. I am not optimistic about the foreign policy of Iraq, and it will continue to remain weak even in the long term until Iranian interference is diminished. (Baghdad 2017)

International relations theorists acknowledge that state and non-state actors have the ability to impinge upon the role of another state as well as their political processes. The deprivation of state

power is typically associated with non-governmental and international organisations, multi-national corporations, open-market economies, global crime and improved technology (Bailie, 2011). In the case of Iraq, some of these factors have been compounded because of the civil war.

Shi'a respondents were less pessimistic, offering different reasons for foreign policy weaknesses, according to an Ex-Secretary General who is a Shi'a:

> The effectiveness of Iraqi foreign policy was reduced after 2003. Following independence, the derivation of foreign policy was a shared process between the PM's Office, the cabinet and the Foreign Ministry, where the Foreign Ministry has been responsible for policy implementation. The main factors which drove policy, in accordance with importance were security, economy and diplomacy. Due to the lack of internal security, this factor in foreign policy was disproportionately emphasised, which meant the economy and diplomacy were almost completely ignored. However, following the end of the civil war, foreign policy was adjusted accordingly and has allowed Iraq to make much bolder foreign policy moves. For example, the repeated US calls for Iraq to snub Iran have been almost completely ignored. It is clear from this example, Iraqi foreign policy has shifted away from the US; however, this has been replaced by an Iranian influence and strengthened Al-Maliki. I am optimistic that soon Iraqi foreign policy will also be free of Iran. (Baghdad, 2015)

An ex-aid to the PM stated:

> We have attempted to improve long term foreign policies through a number of measures including the 2011 non-alignment policy. This is important for a country which has suffered a great deal of sectarianism. Although there are currently diverging positions, I am optimistic in the future a consensus can be reached because, whereas in the past, Saddam's foreign policy suffered from isolationism, we are open to regional and international partnerships. (Baghdad 2017)

This statement also infers any direct involvement in any of the regional conflicts could deepen the sectarian divide within Iraq at the unit level. Many respondents stated that any long-term successful strategy is dependent upon different actors agreeing on foreign policy implementation and the necessary policies to forward and consolidate Iraq's position in the wider Middle East. Moreover, there is a stark contrast between the Saddam-era foreign policy and that of the research period, whilst previously it was based on military power, causing multiple wars and devastation to Iraq, the foreign policy now attempts to avoid conflict and prefers economic development instead (Chatham House, 2013b).

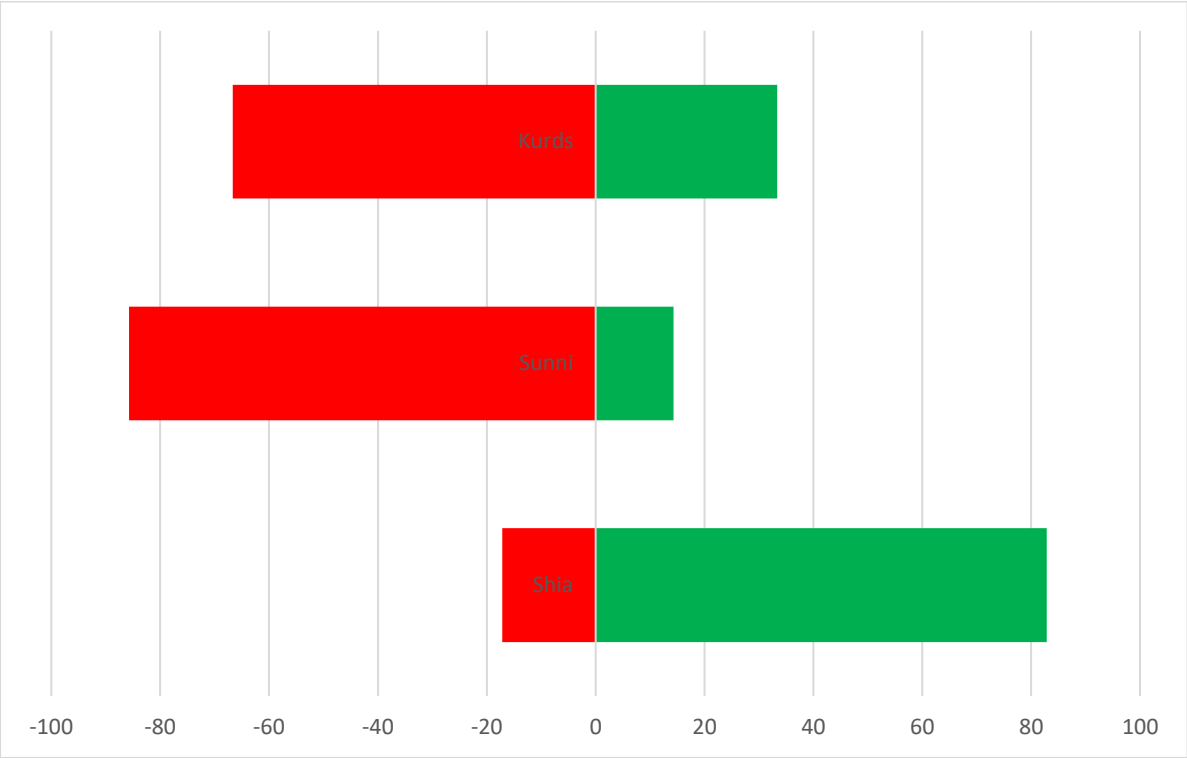
A Shi'a manager in the Interior Ministry stated: 'We are the only country in the Middle East capable of challenging Iran. We have what it takes to challenge Iranian aspirations within the region. However, this will take time because we need them at the moment. We just need the right foreign policy' (Baghdad, 2015).

A member of the Kurdish Parliament stated: 'Iraqi foreign policy will most likely become more formidable over time and perhaps even more unified [between the Kurds and the central government]. In fact, I have seen myself that Iraqi foreign policy is growing in strength, especially now that the internal security situation has improved' (Erbil 2016).

In general, Sunni responses appeared to be dwelling on the past and, due to their relatively limited role in Iraqi governance, expressed negative views concerning Shi'a neo-patrimonial structures and its impact on sectarian influence over Iraqi foreign policy. On the other hand, both the Shi'a and Kurdish respondents were positive about the long-term foreign policy potential. A key theme mentioned by all three groups was internal security, or the lack thereof, and its impact on foreign policy.

The responses to this question demonstrate the key weaknesses of Iraqi foreign policy, mainly fragmented neo-patrimony which utilised sectarianism as its main strategy. The mindset of each group based on the historical and current faction experiences shaped policymaker perceptions. Norms were then acted upon and used to determine what they ought to be, that is, the preservation of elite interests. This can be contrasted with the national interest, which leads to specific goals clearly designed for the benefit of the state (Levi, 1970). Although the empirical literature on the influence of social constructs on foreign policy is sparse, this thesis argues in the context of Iraq, these two notions have been mutually exclusive. Under normal circumstances, it can be argued social constructs would typically play a subordinate role; however, based on the data in this chapter, it is clear that socially constructed norms have played a significant role in deciding the objectives of the state and the plans needed to realise them.

7.10 HAS THE ROLE OF CLERICS ON FOREIGN POLICY FORMULATION BEEN POSITIVE AND SUPPORTIVE, AND IS IT NON-SECTARIAN IN NATURE?



		Shi'a		Sunni		Kurds	
		Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%
Agree		27	83	6	14	5	33
Disagree		6	-17	38	-86	11	-67

Figure 7.10 Has the role of clerics on foreign policy formulation been positive and supportive, and is it non-sectarian in nature?

The graph above shows there are divergent views about the impact of clerics on foreign policy. Sunni and Kurdish respondents agreed that their clerics had a negative impact on foreign policy. However, Shi'a respondents overwhelmingly agreed with the question proposition.

A representative of Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani stated:

> Unlike the Shi'a Islam in Iran, our leaders have not advocated an all-embracing system of clerical rule, so our brand of Shi'a Islam is secular in nature, and we have never advocated for an Islamic state. Although Shi'a clerics hold different views just like all other religious bodies, our leaders such as [the late] Ruhollah Khomeini have consistently called clerics below them to avoid getting involved in domestic or international politics. (Baghdad 2016)

A Shi'a adviser to the Minister of Oil and a follower of Al-Sistani stated:

> Al-Sistani has been useful to the government, [for example] in 2013, he put forward a national plan for reconciliation which welcomed many Iraqi political parties calling for reform, responding to Sunni protestor demands and political and security reforms. He also stated he would support Sunnis until their legitimate objectives were met. (Baghdad, 2015)

The literature also supports Al-Sistani working with international actors. Al-Sistani met with the special representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Martin Kobler, on two occasions. Whilst at the time, Al-Maliki was dividing and ruling politicians, Kobler stressed the need to find a resolution based on 'national unity' and the spirit of the constitution. Both Kobler and Al-Sistani met for several hours in private, where Al-Sistani proposed his five-point 'road map' to end the ongoing and dire political crisis and demonstrations (Hatem, 2013). Moreover, over the years Al-Sistani was able to carve out a special position for himself in domestic politics as international actors also began to frequent Al-Sistani, pointing to a belief that political problems could not be solved without his intervention.

Al-Sistani's ties with Iranian Shi'a also became stronger and his position allowed him to be in receipt of a multi-hundred-million-dollar budget which, amongst other things, enabled scholarships for thousands of Iraqi students in Iran. Moreover, 80% of Iraqi Shi'a accepted Al-Sistani as their leader, which shows his popularity (Khalaji, 2006). Therefore, not only has he enjoyed a direct influence over Iraqi foreign policy towards Iran, but he has also influenced Iran's power base at home. A former aide for Al-Sistani stated: 'Sistani has helped our foreign policy because he is driven with a desire to defend the national interest. Sometimes this has fallen in line with Iran because of religion; however, Sistani has never endorsed the Iranian politics and Iranian influence in Iraq' (Baghdad 2017).

This approach by Al-Sistani is of significance since it poses a significant challenge to the legitimacy of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader. Al-Sistani has preferred that the clerical establishment stay away from political power. This view, commonly termed the 'quietist' approach, is a push back against Tehran's influence. Al-Sistani has also rebuffed requests from previous Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadi Nejad in relation to Iranian crackdowns on protestors taking place at the time. This is arguably the only notable instance where an individual refused to develop person-to-state relations with a powerful external entity.

Another prominent Shi'a cleric, Moqtada Al-Sadr, was highly praised by domestic segments of the Shi'a respondents. This relatively younger cleric came to notoriety after resisting the US occupation and being labelled an 'outlaw' and enemy of the US. In 2006, he was branded 'The Most Dangerous Man in Iraq' for being the leader of a sectarian militia responsible for killing thousands (Alaaldin, 2017). A Shi'a manager working in the Public Prosecution Department stated:

> The early Al-Sadr movement was sectarian in nature, however, he is no longer of this ilk, more recent comments show that he has reformed himself, [by saying] 'Eliminate hatred from hearts, defuse sectarian rancour, and return to God', not only has Al-Sadr been able to bridge the Sunni, Shi'a and Kurdish divide, he has been working with Arab countries in the region to reduce Iranian influence including Saudi Arabia. (Baghdad, 2015)

The literature supports Al-Sadr as an outspoken critic of Al-Maliki and Iran although both had person-to-state relations with that country. In 2013, he issued a warning to the government to 'assume its duty of protecting the people' and 'expel incompetent and disloyal members of the security corps who are only after power and recognition'. Although Al-Sadr has received funding and military training from Iran, he has remained consistent on two key issues: firstly, his endorsement of nationalism and secondly, his anti-Iranian stance. Iran has never fully appreciated these sentiments since it backed Al-Sadr as he provided an insurance policy for Tehran had its other partners failed.

Sadr was able to acquire cross-sectarian popularity even amongst the Sunni population who, for example, backed him during demonstrations against the government in 2013 (Office of Muqtada Al-Sadr, 2013). When Sunni protests occurred, the Al-Maliki government's insecurities were revealed and simultaneously constituted the state's sectarian identity. This suppression was not only brutal, but it resulted in clear sectarian reactions and allowed for the further burgeoning of sectarian sentiments in Iraq. However, this also provided an opportunity for Al-Sadr to benefit from the situation. A Sunni respondent and journalist praised Al-Sadr and stated:

> He has worked against ISCI and other Shi'a groups, which hoped to forge an autonomous zone in eight southern provinces. I think this would have greatly benefitted Iran because they have a considerable amount of influence there to begin with and led to a greater Iran. This has not taken place because Al-Sadr and others like him. (Baghdad 2017)

On the systemic level, respondents also hoped Al-Sadr would be able to take an active role in promoting himself as a foreign policy actor by building greater ties between key regional countries, including Turkey, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States. An Iraqi Sunni professor working in a Jordanian university stated:

> Because of his methodology, he provides a good counterweight to people such as Al-Maliki and now that he is involved in politics [following his return from exile to Iraq in 2011] it will be interesting to see if he can transform his ideas into political strategies. He has a long record of being anti-Iranian, this means Arab countries should accept him more readily. (Baghdad 2016)

Whilst Shi'a and some Sunni respondents indicated Shi'a clerics have had a positive role on foreign policy, the Sunni response was in stark contrast. A Sunni tribal leader from the tribe of Zubaid stated:

> In the early years, Sunnis had very limited influence and had been marginalised by the government, the military and Iranian backed militias. Clerics such as [Harith] Al-Dhari told us it was justified to take matters into our own hands. The clerics used religion to justify radical beliefs, indirectly telling us to reach out to Sunni terrorist such as Al-Qaeda [in Iraq]. We had no recourse, we were stuck between Al-Qaeda and the Shi'a militia because of no state security. (Baghdad, 2015)

Another Sunni respondent from the tribe of Al-Bu Nasir stated:

> When the Ottoman's were in control of Iraq, the Shi'a scholars issued a fatwa stating it was not permissible for the Shi'a to work with the government. This had a disastrous impact on the Shi'a political cause for many decades to come. It now seems ironic, many Sunni imams were unable to learn from this lesson and instead of encouraging us to take part in the political process, they also issued fatawa [plural for fatwa] prohibiting us to work with the government. When Al-Qaeda came to Anbar, many local Sunnis were killed [by them], all they wanted to do was feed their families. (Baghdad, 2015)

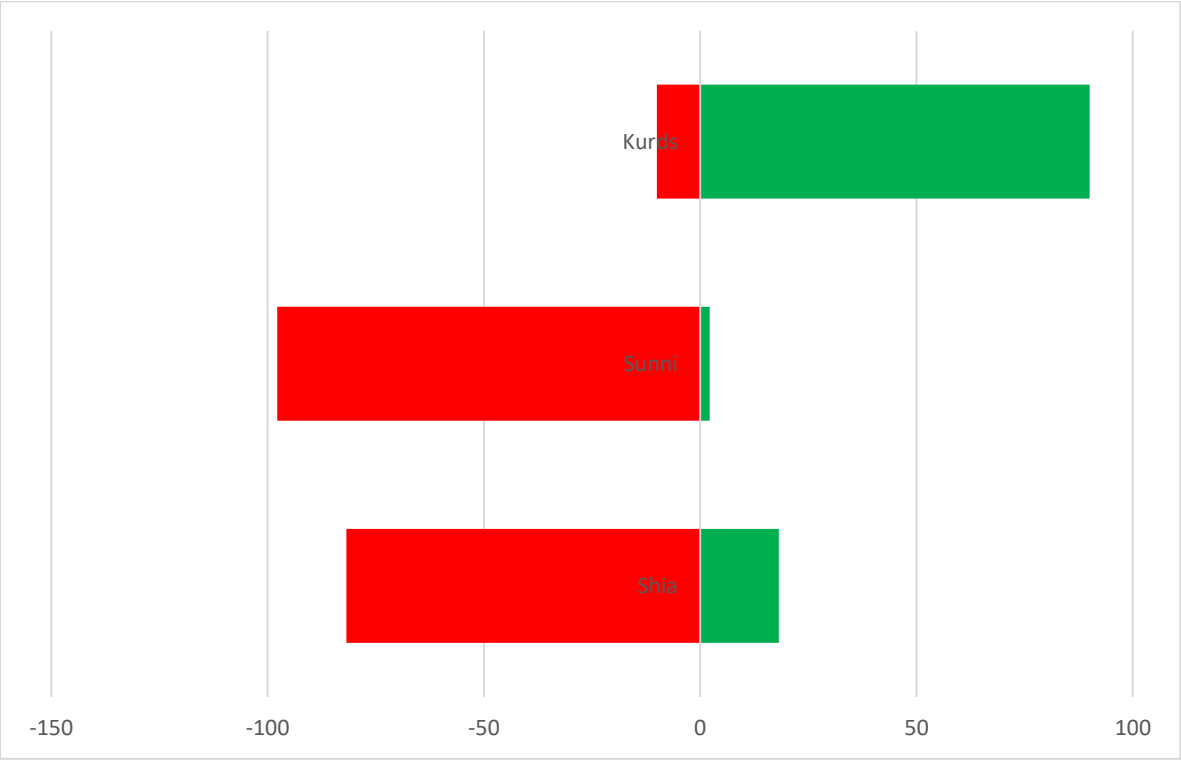
There was an inverse perception concerning the impact of Shi'a and Sunni clerics on foreign policy. Shi'a respondents viewed their clerics as guardians against direct Iranian influence and were thus effective in influencing foreign policies with Iran and curbing Iranian influence in Iraq by standing up to the Iranian regime. On the other hand, many Sunnis believed their clerics harmed foreign policy through the instrumentalisation of sectarianism expressed through faction-based prejudices on clerical injunctions making sectarianism a religious duty. Respondents stated most Sunni clerics tried to diffuse communal differences; however, a significant number, especially from the countryside, made it permissible to fight against the Shi'a *'disbelievers'*. An Iraqi Sunni parliamentarian who fled Iraq and is currently in Jordan stated:

> Clerics did not want the Sunni population to engage with the state and effectively legitimised the use of terror against other groups, they also made tribes such as the Zoba reliant upon foreign aid to survive. In turn, they hosted foreign fighters and cooperated with people outside Iraq. This had a profound impact at the national level, leading to an anti-Sunni campaign and the harshening of the government's position. The impact on the local socio-political setting in Arab provinces cannot be overestimated and it has taken years to get things back to normal. (Baghdad 2017)

This Sunni push towards terrorism was countered by the Shi'a elite strengthening its foreign policy with Iran and giving it greater freedom to control military assets within Iraq. In a functional state, terrorism is addressed through politicians and generals. By contrast, in Iraq, and throughout the research period, foreign actors have controlled much of the civil war effort. At times, the US had control, but it never exercised the same level of influence enjoyed by Iranian generals, such as Qassem Suleimani. This reached its apogee in 2014 following the fall of Mosul to IS. Within hours, Suleimani arrived in Baghdad, where he would preside at the home of a senior member of the Iraqi parliament's

foreign affairs committee whilst being granted the use of legitimate institutions, such as the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Transportation and Ministry of Energy. This granting of power by the Iraqi elite greatly increased Iran's strategic hold over Iraq's security apparatus and also allowed penetration of Iraq's economic sectors (Hudson Institute, 2018).

7.11 Has the Kurdistan region had a positive impact on the formation and implementation of a coherent Iraqi foreign policy?



		Shi'a		Sunni		Kurds	
		Qty	%	Qty	%	Qty	%
Agree		6	18	1	2	14	90
Disagree		27	-82	43	-98	2	-10

Figure 7.11 Has the Kurdistan region had a positive impact on the formation and implementation of a coherent Iraqi foreign policy?

The graph shows an inverse perception concerning Kurdish activities upon the formation and implementation of foreign policy. Both Sunni and Shia respondents believed the Kurdish activities threatened a coherent foreign policy. Kurds used this opportunity to voice their concerns about Al-Maliki and, bizarrely, they believed they had a positive impact on Iraqi foreign policy coherency despite having and implementing their own de facto foreign policy which, on many occasions, ran counter to that of Baghdad.

A member of the PUK stated: 'Kurdish foreign policies have helped Baghdad's foreign policy through healthy competition' (Erbil 2017). A high-ranking official from the Ministry of Justice stated: 'If you

look at their policies, they want nothing short of complete independence … just look at their oil deals[!]' (Baghdad 2017).

There was a unanimous agreement between Sunni and Shi'a respondents, which resulted in a unified Arab view blaming the Kurds as one of the major reasons for the current weakness of Iraqi foreign policy. Although most Sunni and Shi'a respondents, and indeed most of the international community, have been hostile to the emergence of new *de jure* states, Kurds tended to view their position on this issue being positive for Iraq as a whole. A former representative of the KRG also believed the actions of the KRG were not in conflict with the constitution: 'We only implement the policies which Baghdad formulates, so for example, we don't have any offices in foreign countries where Baghdad does not. Also, when a country wants to open a diplomatic mission here, we always refer them to Baghdad for permission' (Erbil 2017). However, a current serving diplomat stated: 'It is much to our regret that the Kurdish attachés do not usually work with their counterparts in Iraqi embassies around the globe, nor does the local Kurdish government engage with the Foreign Ministry.'

A Sunni lawmaker stated:

> According to Article 110, the constitution reads, 'The federal government shall have exclusive authorities in formulating foreign policy and diplomatic representation'. This appears to prevent the local governments engaging in independent foreign policymaking. Emphasis here should be on the word "formulation", in my view, the central government is solely responsible for formulating foreign policy, while at the local level, organisations such as the KRG are permitted to thrash out general policies into specific practices. (Baghdad, 2015)

It is clear that there are major systemic contradictions between the central government and KRG's positions. For example, in 2010, Falah Mustafa, director of the KRG's Department of Foreign Relations' bragged to reporters about Kurdistan's 'open door' diplomacy policy, boasting it would benefit foreign countries because of the great business opportunities, mild climatic temperatures, and international airline connections which, over the years, had been successful in increasing the number of foreign missions, trade centres, investors, diplomatic representation, construction organisations, and Arab and European private and diplomatic relations to the region (Kurdistan Regional Government Representation in the United States, 2014).

A partnership agreement in August 2010 with Al-Maliki involved collaboration on decision-making on all sensitive and strategic issues, these include disputes over the national budget and the development of the Kurdish oil industry. Concerning the former, the KRG wanted the funds to pay for the Peshmerga forces to come from the central government, not from its own regional budget. However, the government viewed this force as being loyal primarily to its Kurdish leadership. This problem was

exasperated in 2013 when the central government finalised the budget in the absence of the Kurds. There are also other regional issues, including the arming of Peshmerga forces, the management of border crossings and airports (Hanish, 2013).

Arguably, of more significance to the KRG was the development of the oil sector and lucrative oil deals with foreign investors, which allows it to maintain its neo-patrimonial position within its domain and fend of Baghdad's threats. It has developed fields within its borders and entered production-sharing deals with foreign oil companies without the central government's approval. This has aggravated relations and given rise to suspicions amongst the Shi'a and Sunni political elite that the KRG is setting down the economic foundations for independence. On the other hand, the Kurdish political elite assumes the Shi'a government's procrastination over a national oil law and its failure to go ahead with a referendum to settle Kurdish claims over Kirkuk and other areas is an indication that the Arab majority intends to resolve the matter in its favour. A new oil law which the Kurds were backing at the time could have, in theory, provided greater provincial governments with greater autonomy over their oil revenues (Hanish, 2013).

Perhaps the best example of Kurdish foreign policy success during the research period was the development of Turkish relations, which consisted of Turkish investment and energy agreements. This opened further opportunities for increased geopolitical cooperation. The relationship has helped overcome decades of tensions and culminated in the 2011 visit to Kurdistan Iraq by the Turkish Prime Minister, Tayyip Erdogan (Kurdistan Regional Government, 2011).

In 2012, the Al-Maliki government attempted to undermine Kurdish foreign policy initiatives through the announcement and formation of the Dijla (Tigris military) Operations Command in the disputed areas of Salahuddin, Diyala and Kirkuk provinces. Whilst this move was rejected by the KRG, Al-Maliki ordered Iraqi troops to move to these areas.

A senior KRG official stated:

> The positioning of military assets such as tanks around major Kurdish urban centres has been a major concern for the KRG. This coupled with Al-Maliki's rhetoric in Russia, when he said Iraq needed weapons to fight terrorists in the desert and in the mountains. Everyone knows Iraqi terrorists are located in Arab areas and everyone one knows who lives in the mountains. From our perspective, a major concern is the politicisation of the military. Even though the Dijla Operations have not been approved by the parliament, the Dilja operations are being managed by Al-Maliki allies directly which enhances the credibility of sectarianism claims. (Erbil 2015)

Based on Al-Maliki's actions, it can be argued that he has been trying to enhance his neo-patrimonial reach by including as many areas of influence as possible for himself. Moreover, Al-Maliki has made direct and offensive statements about the Kurds which have been recorded in the media. For example, on one occasion when meeting with top Iraqi military personnel, one officer said: 'Sir, when you order we can crawl over the Kurds and break them in Salahuddin province'. In response, Al-Maliki stated, "wait for the F-16 aircraft from the US and see what I will do". Barzani then tried to lobby Washington not to sell Baghdad the F-16s as long as Al-Maliki was in power (Iddon, 2017). From a Kurdish perspective, it can be argued, instead of wanting to protect Iraq with F-16s, Al-Maliki was waiting for their arrival to hit the Kurds.

It is understandable if Al-Maliki felt threatened by the leaders of the KRG. The growth and networking capabilities of the Barzani and Talabani had grown considerably and if proof was needed, the KRG status on the international stage and its presence at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2013 provide some indication of its growing stature. A decade prior, Barzani would have struggled to be received other than the KDP party ruler. However, in Davos and around the world, he is now received as the president of the KRG by heads of state, international leaders and the world's largest companies. Whilst US relations remain cautious, the KRG has become a state-like entity, capable of affecting the policies of the wider Middle East (Stansfield, 2013).

Whilst political and economic factors can be used to explain sectarian violence, Iraqi history has also shown that when a faction is able to control the state's rents, this usually leads to marginalisation of the rival factions. Therefore, the Kurdish, Sunni and Shi'a history of conflict cannot be discounted as a factor which has influenced contemporary sectarianism. It can be argued within the implementation of neo-patrimonial strategies, that sectarianism mainly provided a convenient pathway for the conflict to evolve – this amplified the importance of sectarian identity in daily Iraqi life.

7.12 Discussion

The empirical analyses show participant opinions to be structured and reflecting underlying values and beliefs. These values and beliefs have subsequently informed almost every aspect of Iraqi foreign relations. The graphically illustrated responses can be categorised in a tri-manner:

I. The first indicates a high level of unity between all three group responses as in the case of question 5. This an excellent example of cross-factional agreement. However, this type of response was only produced on this occasion.

II. The second type of response typically saw two interchangeable groups, that is, Sunni and Shi'a, against Kurds, or Shi'a and Kurds against Sunni who agreed that neo-patrimony was a

major driver. While the third group agreed, it was to a much lesser degree. This type of response categorisation was the most common.

III. The third type of response summary typically saw sizable percentages from all three groups agreeing neo-patrimony was a major driver but the differences between the figures are considerable. For example, in the case of question 6, Sunni, Shi'a and Kurdish responses constituted 96, 58 and 69% respectively.

The only response which can be described as an agreement between the groups came in question 5. In 2011, this cross-sectarian agreement and anti-foreign sentiment allowed the new Al-Maliki government to prevent the ratification of the 'Status of Forces Agreement' (SOFA) with the US. Although all political parties except for the Sadrist bloc which was in possession of 40 of Iraq's 325 parliamentary seats accepted the presence of US troops in Iraq, on the key issue of US troop immunity from prosecution for war crimes, only Kurdish parties were willing to oblige, with 60 seats. Key parties including those of Al-Maliki and Ayad Allawi with 120 and 80 seats respectively were unwilling to give their support. Based on the US longstanding policy, which dictates troops must have legal immunity, negotiations stalled, and this led to the withdrawal of combat troops in December (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2014).

Although in 2008, the SOFA agreement was considered a major success, the perception amongst Iraqis concerning the US presence over the next few years was subject to a major shift. This was because in 2011, Iraqi appeared relatively stable; however, these positives were also coupled with negative perceptions of the US within Iraqi politics spearheaded by the Sadrist movement known for being vehemently against the US (Crook, 2009). The Sunni politicians also joined ranks with the Sadrists and were more ambivalent towards the US. Surveys indicated that less than a fifth of Iraqis wanted US troops positioned in Iraq (Jeffrey, 2014).

In a similar vein, the popularity of Iran within Iraq also decreased considerably throughout the research period. In 2004, anti-Iranian sentiments amongst Iraqi Shi'a was at 44%, but by 2011, this figure had increased to 77%. In the same year, 88% of Sunnis did not wish to have Iranians as their neighbours (Moaddel, 2014). However, unlike the US, there has been no official or unofficial withdrawal of Iran; rather, there has been an increase in Iranian influence in almost all facets of the Iraqi state.

At first glance, the answers to questions 5 and 7 may seem contradictory. It is possible, nonetheless, to reconcile the results when allowing for causes which were other than neo-patrimonial in nature. Firstly, it should be noted the correlation between neo-patrimonial and sectarian norms are not constant and are easy to generalise. This depends on the intensity with which the norm and other

social constructs are being held and it varied throughout the research period within each faction. Moreover, one should not assume that neo-patrimony (and its consequences) was behind every political, social and military decision made in the country. This perspective can also be used to understand the unified rejection of the US. So, while there was a strong unified answer in question 5 in opposition to foreign powers, this figure dropped considerably in question 7. Nonetheless, there was a clear majority amongst the Sunni and Shi'a respondents, at 64% and 87% respectively, who agreed that sectarian tendencies had played a part in foreign policy with foreign actors such as Iran and Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, only 19% of Kurds believed sectarianism had not influenced foreign policy internally or externally. This question can also be linked to question 6, where numerical supremacy of a given faction within a bureaucracy resulted in their norms being filtered through to the decision-making process instead of factors being based on the national interest.

In the case of question 1, both Sunni and Shi'a did not agree with the question proposition, this was contradicted by those leaving comments, as noted, this has been explained through a social desirability bias. Based on the results, both Sunnis and Kurds believed neo-patrimonial compositions in bureaucracies were preventing a coherent foreign policy from being pursued. On the other hand, the Shi'a respondents believed neo-patrimonial composition did not have an impact even though they have a clear majority in the state institutions. This answer almost mirrored the response of question 4, which also falls into the second question category mentioned above. When questions focused on a specific group, the group in question tended to answer that question defensively.

The final type of response was the third category mentioned above. It consisted of a broad range of answers devoid of consensus, even between two groups. For example, in the case of question 2, Sunni perceptions of neo-patrimony resulting in a fragmented foreign policy were extremely high, at 81%; Shi'a and Kurdish responses were much lower at 41% and 28% respectively. The lack of Sunni influence within the country and the lack of official capacity to set foreign policy are arguably the key reasons for this outcome. In the case of the Shi'a, the main foreign policy setting rivals were the Kurds, who can be described as somewhat of a thorn in the side of official foreign policymakers. Nonetheless, the central government was still able to set foreign policy even though it was competing with that of the Kurds. The Kurds had the lowest perception of neo-patrimony with regards to question 2, most likely because they were the least engaged in Iraqi foreign policy per se, given their own external interests pursued under the auspices of their nascent government bureaucracies. For example, the Kurdish government was very active in developing its oil sector and by 2012, 40 oil contracts had been negotiated between the Kurds and the international oil companies, including a major deal with Exxon Mobil which was also operating in Arab Iraq (Natali, 2012).

This perception of endemic sectarianism within Iraqi foreign policy also complements why the Sunni population have been the greatest advocates for secular politics, more so than the Shi'a and the even the Kurds according to this survey. For example, between 2004 and 2013, the data gathered that showed 60% of Sunnis strongly agreed that Iraq would be a better place if religion and politics were separated; in 2006, this was 80%, 74% in 2008, 82% in 2011, and 81% in 2013. The Kurdish results were also similar but Shi'a support for secular politics was considerably lower, having an inverted U shape, with 44%, 42%, 60%, 63%, and 62% during the same years respectively (Moaddel, 2014).

The final stage of this analysis involved taking the above data and combining the total perceptions of neo-patrimony and resultant sectarianism for the three groups. This task was undertaken to summarise these findings holistically. The pie chart produced from this exercise has been reproduced below:

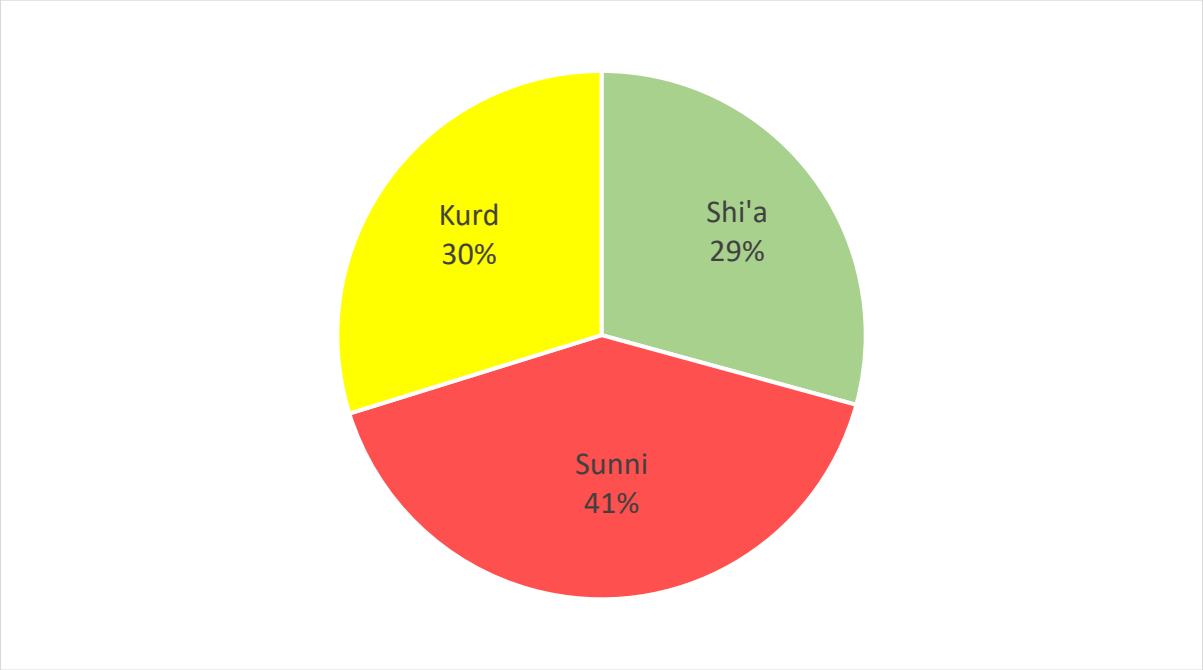


Table 7.1 Perceived neo-patrimony and resultant sectarianism and fragmentation between the factions

Based on this chart, the data revealed that the Sunnis believed greater neo-patrimonial levels manifested through sectarianism had influenced foreign policy. Kurd and Shi'a perceptions were almost identical to each other, at 30% and 29% respectively.

One final bar chart was generated from participant responses. It highlighted different actors and their sectarianism influence over Iraqi foreign policy. The graph shows the three main sponsors of sectarianism within Iraqi foreign policy, the PM's Office, the KRG and the Iranian government.

The following graph illustrates the different sources of perceived sectarianism elicited from the interviewees:

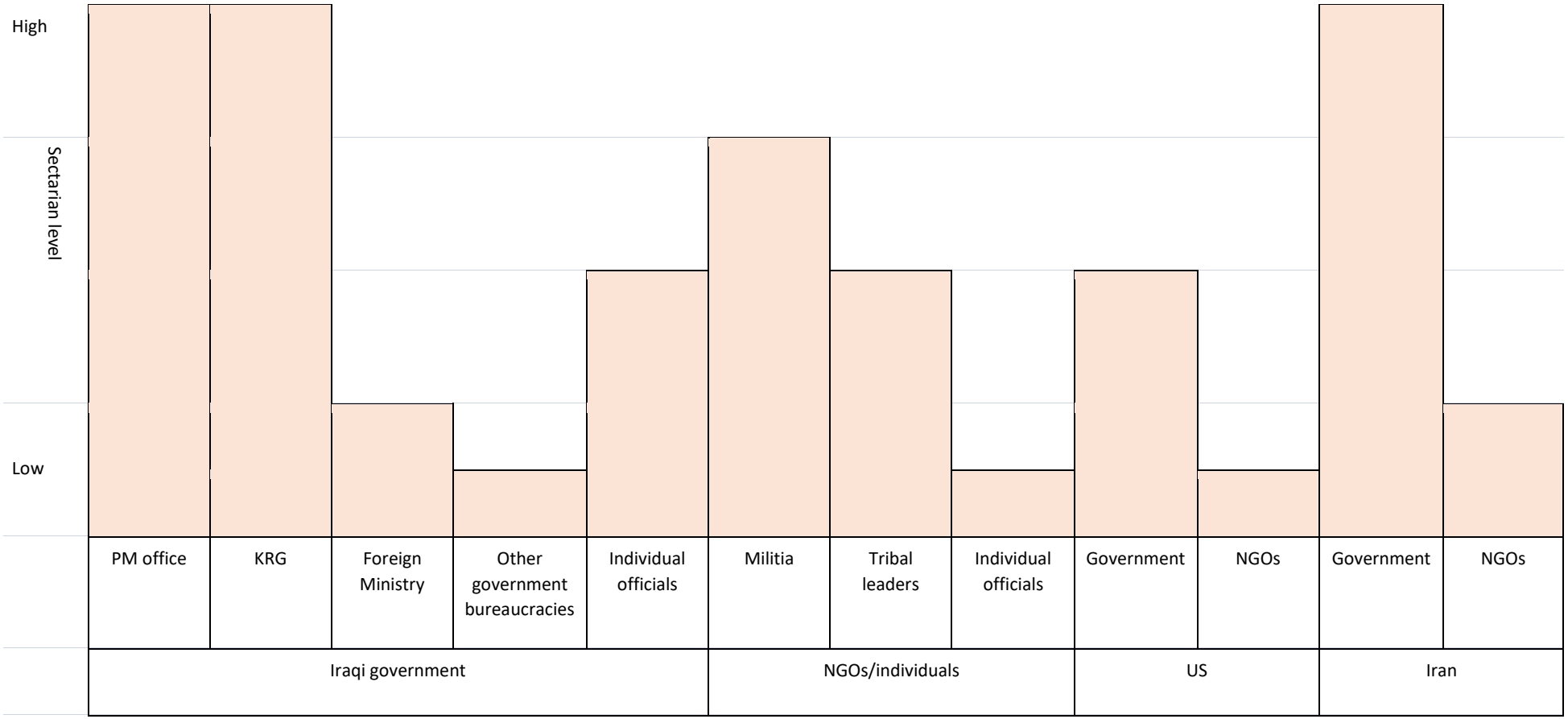


Figure 7.12 Perceived sources of sectarianism elicited from the interviewees

7.13 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

Arguably, this is the first-time research focussing on neo-patrimony in the bureaucracies of a state has taken place in Iraq. This chapter has aimed to investigate first-hand accounts using qualitative and quantitative methods to determine the impact of neo-patrimony on foreign policy using a constructivist framework. This has been done from a holistic perspective and a focus upon the unit (in the previous chapter) and systemic level influences of norms on agents and structural elements. This approach made it possible to examine the impact of neo-patrimony and sectarianism on foreign policy in a unique and novel manner. Although the extent of neo-patrimony and its impact differed between Sunnis, Shi'a and Kurds, the participant responses demonstrated the behavioural patterns of the political elite, who have tried to ensure the preservation of neo-patrimonial benefits through sectarian practices. The components of ethnicity, culture, language and religion have formed the basis of neo-patrimonial claims, which were reinforced among Iraqis through sectarianism.

These points concur with previous constructivist contributions which that state foreign policy setting is the notion that identity fundamentally shapes state preferences and actions (Wendt, 1994). For example, the differences in political and economic policies between actors such as the mainly Shi'a government and the KRG reflect the unique identities and interests of these two groups as opposed to the national interest. Moreover, constructivism embraces historical facts which become decisive in understanding the logic of Sunni and Shi'a tensions in Iraq, and in the region, and why their emergence has been so intense. Constructivism also provides a suitable theoretical explanation for the civil war, which has proven to be more than simply a physical conflict since unit level events involved a contest of classification. The structural factors underlying the resultant violence from this, and the previous chapter have been identified as being a manipulative political elite, corruption and a 'resource curse'.

The influence of these components at unit level decision-making by the political elite impacted systemic level policies, which have used a non-nationalistic criterion for defining themselves and others. Al-Maliki's consolidation of power allowed him to acquire Saddam-like powers by capturing state bureaucracies through the installation of allies and then using recruitment and selection policies which would ensure faction numerical superiority. However, this spawned the mobilisation of other faction-based associations affiliated with regional powers. Thus, between 2003 and 2014, unique and competing ideas have been formed, leading to an incoherent and weak Iraqi foreign policy.

Throughout the research period, the Shi'a remained the dominant identity both culturally and politically in Iraq; this impacted the bilateral relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia based on similarities and differences between Shi'a Islamic components. This was based on historical feelings of victimhood at the hands of Saddam but also engendered by Saudi Arabia after 2003: the Shi'a perception that

Saudi Arabia abandoned them despite them being Arab and then adding insult to injury through their support for terrorist groups against them. This led to a significantly radical form of identity, especially amongst the Shi'a and Sunni population, because of insecurity at the unit level, which was compounded because of the Syrian civil war. A neo-patrimonial approach to decision-making in this context is consistent and is expected behaviour when viewed through a constructivist framework. In contrast, Iraqi foreign policy decisions in this context would also be considered unreasonable based on typical international norms and principles which would have seen Iraq actively balance against Iranian hegemony and favour US policies in the region.

In general, respondents indicated an official foreign policy enacted by the government in Baghdad reflected the Shi'a desire to consolidate power. Shi'a respondents tended to distance themselves from Iran or defend the close relationship, stating it was not linked to strengthening Shi'a neo-patrimonial structures; rather, it was in the national interest to pursue and develop this relationship. Indeed, without Iranian support, the militias and terrorist groups could not have been defeated; however, it could also be argued they would not have existed without Iran's influence in the first place.

The interpretation of 'power' and 'national interest' differed from participant to participant, although all were facing the same situation. This is indicative of constructivism, whereby participant rationality is constrained by views, values and beliefs. Moreover, the Syrian crisis has shown that elite decision-makers have not delineated between ideas and interests but have conflated the two as actors followed a logic of appropriateness, that is, actors have been oriented toward the suitability of an action irrespective of the consequences (Kotzian, 2007). Although the realist premise of self-interested states which are rational actors is not necessarily in opposition to constructivist diktats, a certain degree of ideational framing is still required to fully explain Iraqi foreign policy outcomes, especially with regard to Syria. In other words, the opportunities and threats which have arisen through Syria are not self-evident and objectively meaningful as they would be using a realist framework; rather, they require social structures, that is, shared knowledge, material resources and practices to comprehend them. What is interesting in this regard is a similar situation occurred during the Iran-Iraq war. Iraq and Syria were the only two Ba`thist states in the world, albeit competing with each other but adhering to the same ideology centred on a single priority: Arab unity. Ba`thists advocate socialism and freedom, which together complete the Ba`thist trilogy. However, Syria was the Arab world's only ally of non-Arab Iran during the Iran-Iraq war. Syria was one of the most important states to join the US against Saddam during the first Gulf War (Telhami, 1993). During the Iran-Iraq war, Khomeini also appealed to Iraqi Shi'a using social structures, stating: 'We are related by race, traditions and religion' (Galbraith, 2008, p. 46).

In the minds of the Shi'a political elite, a Sunni takeover would constitute a security dilemma – a social structure composed of intersubjective understandings which made other groups so distrustful that they immediately formed the worst-case assumptions about the others' intentions. In this regard, the collective Shi'a identity has provided significant meaning to the elite foreign policy decision-makers, thus shaping their behaviours as well as informing identity-based interests.

Due to a lack of Kurdish and Sunni foreign policy representation within the central government, these groups pursued alternative systems for dealing with the outside world and for achieving their interests. For the Kurds, it meant promoting Kurdistan as an independent country using typical state-to-state tools and waging a PR campaign aimed at stressing the differences between Kurdish and Arab identities. This compounded the complexity of the foreign policy landscape, especially the institutionalization of the KRG and its implementation of a de facto independent foreign policy that was being used to further its claims to complete autonomy (Chatham House, 2013b). However, for the Sunnis, this was not possible. It led them to seek non-conventional methods, which included rebelling against the government and allying with non-state terrorist groups who claimed a similar identity. At times, this took place with encouragement from parts of the Sunni clerical establishment, which also used religion to spread sectarianism, mainly through their social networks. This had a negative impact, softening Iraqi foreign policy towards Iran and allowing it greater access to Iraqi state bureaucracies, thus creating a vicious circle which fuelled increased sectarian perceptions of direct links between Shi'a neo-patrimonial structures within Iraqi state bureaucracies and Iraqi foreign policy.

Iranian influence exhibited a creeping effect on Iraqi foreign policy, which is best explained through a curve, that is, a line which was initially flat followed by a steep rise. Whilst in the early years of the occupation, Iranian influence was minimal due to the US presence, this changed because of elections, the Sunni and Shi'a insurgencies, and later by the US troop drawdown. These events were also a precursor to increased levels of sectarianism, which existed in four domains: ideologically, sub-nationally, nationally and transnationally.

This was skewed by fringe Sunni elements which justified a direct attack on Shi'a symbolism with the intent of framing Shi'a as the dangerous 'other'. Sunnis and to a lesser extent Kurds othered Iraqi Shi'a through two modes. The first was spiritual, alluding to the subservience of Iraqi Shi'a to religious structures which are inexorably connected to Iran. The second link was historical and political because many of the elites having been trained, educated and supported by Iran during their years of exile and subsequent return. This caused minority groups such as the Sunnis to reject state authority because they found it difficult to reconcile their primary identity with state allegiance due to conflicting

narratives. Surprisingly, a third type of othering existed. But it involved mainly non-exiled Shi'a turning on the exiled Shi'a and discounting them as true Iraqis. Othering led to an active attempt by the elite to minimise the benefits of foreign policy transactions for those belonging to other groups. One of the ways this was achieved was by elites allying with domestic actors, and international state and non-state actors.

The structural design or composite framework which has allowed the elite to construct and maintain neo-patrimonial networks is very similar for the Shi'a and the Kurds and, to a lesser extent, for Sunnis. For example, it can be considered virtually impossible for a senior government post to be allocated to a party 'outsider' since political appointees require the express permission of a top party member. The network can be described as being tightly knit or highly integrated with close supervision or support from external states, but with weak ties with society. The loyalty of nodes in the network was bought using different methods but was cultivated at both the individual and group levels, which ultimately become a norm. For example, a set of high employee appointments can be used to buy the loyalty of certain segments of society such as tribes.

Those individuals who have acquired employment though norms such as Wasta support their patrons but are unable to express support for other parties. Therefore, during election periods, neo-patrimonial networks consisting of government workers were expected to vote in a predictable manner. For example, during the 2009 and 2013 elections, a faction of the PUK expressed support for Goran, which resulted in hundreds being punished by the party. Some were compelled to move to other departments whilst others were dismissed altogether (Aziz, 2019). Moreover, party-affiliated businesses comprising multi-billion-dollar operations also sprung up on a scale which rivalled major public sector institutes. This was more apparent in Kurdish areas and included the PUK-controlled Qaiwan Group, which has been hugely profitable. In particular, business enterprises of this scale tended to be located in sectors such as construction and transport.

It should be noted that although business owners supported a specific political party, they were granted the freedom to generate revenues towards their personal wealth. This has been one of the key incentives for clients within Iraqi neo-patrimonial networks and indicates a new type of transaction between the patriarch and client. This is a key feature which differentiates patrimony and Iraqi neo-patrimony.

Another important aspect of the neo-patrimonial framework is the targeted employment and provision of services which benefit the elite and, in limited cases, garner wider party support. Following the invasion of 2003, there have been multiple demonstrations in both Arab and Kurdish

Iraq against favouritism and nepotism. Whilst the government in Baghdad did not concede to demonstrators' demands, the KRG did formulate an ultimately unsuccessful, appeasement strategy by allocating greater resources to infrastructure projects, such as schools, bridges and roads, housing, educational scholarships and increased salaries for state employees (Aziz, 2019).

Whilst oil has been a major financier of the majority of the neo-patrimonial networks in Iraq, it is worth noting that even when oil prices have dropped and the economy struggled further, these networks exhibited an extraordinary level of continuity in their logic, operation and structure. Therefore, although oil holds up the neo-patrimonial framework through financing, it is reasonable to assume oil-related rents have not uniquely structured the system since all major Shi'a and Kurdish parties have been able to develop and maintain neo-patrimonial networks when their revenue streams were restricted. This phenomenon indicates it is possible for ideational concepts to fill gaps which would otherwise be filled with material sources.

Now the interview material will be used to frame an understanding of Iraqi relations with key regional actors.

8 NEO-PATRIMONY AND SECTARIAN IMPACT ON IRAQ'S REGIONAL RELATIONS

Inevitably, neo-patrimony and how it influenced the allocation of power and resources across Iraq had an impact on Iraq's external relations and viceversa because of the range of actors capable of exercising power. As per Figure 2.1, external support became a norm which typically involved the Sunni and Shi'a world backing elite actors with similar ideational priorities, which further radicalised the internal norms of elite actors and society. The subjective nature of state identity, refracted through a constructivist lens, challenges a purely positivist understanding of Iraq's external relations after the 2003 invasion. Clearly, ideational factors masquerading as the 'national interest' were often to the fore in deciding how ties between Iraq and its neighbours evolved.

Based on the acquisition of the qualitative and quantitative data, neo-patrimony and sectarianism influenced Iraqi foreign relations through two phenomena. Firstly, although the state should have had a monopoly in setting the country's foreign relations, state weakness and a lack of security and cohesion, as well as competition between blocks in the government created a vacuum which allowed multiple actors to engage in their own person-to-state or party-to-state relations. This inevitably resulted in foreign relations becoming aligned with ideational norms as opposed to state interests. The more dependent the elite were on outside support, the more likely they were to commit to the foreign state's policy agenda. Secondly, the extent to which the state was able to mobilise actors which operate autonomously at the unit level conditioned the degree the regime was able to reinforce its neo-patrimony networks. This reality became less pronounced with countries located further afield.

8.1 IRAN

Perhaps of greatest interest and certainly significant in Iraq's external relations has been Iran. Several historical and strategic issues have informed these relations, with each country previously considering the other as a strategic threat. Whilst there have been fundamental differences between the Sunni and Shi'a stretching back over a millennium on differences of opinion over the rightful successor of Prophet Mohammed, cooperation between the two countries reached new heights following the fruition of elite person- and party-to-state relations with Tehran.

The nature of the sectarian political makeup of the Iraqi government, in addition to demands of the factors and principles which underlie this relationship, have inevitably made ties between the two countries more amicable. The majority of the Shi'a and Kurdish elite have a history of good relations with Tehran and see Iran as a strategic long-term partner in a Sunni-dominated neighbourhood.

Although the US is also imperative to Iraqi interests, forcing the government to walk a tightrope whilst being pushed and pulled between opposing forces over several issues, it has been Iran who has been the long-term strategic partner and victor in the region. This relationship started almost immediately after the invasion when Iran sent an official representative to Iraq, thus, in effect becoming the first country in the region to accept the new US backed government. Overall, Iran has been successful in building alliances in three key areas including political, religious and economic which has strengthened its hold over Iraqi elite. These relations have been predicated upon person- or party-to-state relations with key Shi'a figures.

Although Iran consistently opposed the occupying powers in Iraq, it was successful in micromanaging the problem through its person- and party-to state relations with different people and groups in Iraq. The Iraqi government understandably wanted a positive and stable relationship with its Persian neighbours, which, at its core, included shared religious and cultural priorities. Moreover, with the coming of power of the Shi'a government whose important leaders maintained close relations with Iran's clerical establishment (Mumtaz, 2005), relations between Iraq and Iran were inevitably going to improve.

Al-Maliki is the most obvious politician having person-to-state and party-to-state relations. Although he was the Iraqi prime minister for much of the research period, he was unable to represent all Iraqis. Instead, he spoke on behalf of a sectarian group, coalition or a specific political party. As noted earlier, Al-Sadr, the leader of the Sadrist movement, had been undertaking his religious studies in Iran since 2008. This shows how being religiously aligned with Iran's Hawza can successfully open the door to political partnerships which cross international borders. In a similar vein, leaders of the PMF established their credentials on the battlefield, either becoming part of or linked to the political elite, providing them with security and become rich through activities such as smuggling. This allowed them to set up and finance their own neo-patrimonial networks. A Shi'a from the Interior Ministry stated:

> Top commanders of the PMF use their positions as steppingstone to establish themselves, the easiest way was by agreeing to become an armed wing for a political group. Having such a position embedded them in the hierarchy [or neo-patrimonial network] and made them essential components in the overall structure of power.

The Shi'a Hadi Al-Amri is another example. He enjoys close relations with senior Quds Force commanders, the most well-known being the late Qasim Soleimani. The Badr Organisation was most likely the closest linked Shi'a militia to the government in Tehran. After 2003, Al-Amri returned from Iran to Iraq and was able to successfully consolidate his position, both militarily and politically. With Iran's backing he was able to secure the Ministry of Transport in 2010. Al-Amri is credited with

providing Iran access to Iraqi airspace, enabling them to supply the Assad regime despite the government claiming neutrality and facing vehement international criticism (Arosoaie, 2015).

8.1.1 Religious influence

Iranian interests in Iraq have been significantly influenced by the trauma of Iraq's 1980 invasion of Iran, which also witnessed the use of chemical weapons on its soil. Amid this backdrop, it is reasonable to assume Iran wants to curtail Iraqi economic power, which could be misused militarily. However, the rivalry between the two countries is not restricted to the military dimensions since Najaf remains the epicenter of the Shi'a world, both spiritually and in terms of learning. Thus, a resurgent Iraq would undermine Iran's traditional position of leading the Shi'a world (Dodge, 2012, p. 186). From this perspective, Iranian policy has also sought to influence the religious affairs of Iraq.

Tehran has actively attempted to draw the Iraqi religious elite into its orbit of influence away from the influential clerics in Najaf, including Al-Sistani. Shi'a in Iraq tend to choose the highest '*marja' al-taqleed'* or highest source of emulation based on the number of followers high-ranking clerics enjoy. Since 1992, this has been Al-Sistani which, as noted is known for his quietest views stating the marja's edicts are to be understood as being advisory only. This has led to speculation concerning Al-Sistani's successor which typically focuses on those who also adhere to the quietest approach and anti-Khamenei on one side and those inclined towards Velayat-Faqih who are pro-Khamenei on the other (Corboz, 2017).

To compensate in this area, Iran has built mosques, madrassas and clinics in highly populated Shi'a areas (Eisenstadt et al, 2011) which could be interpreted as a move to weaken the neo-patrimonial networks of non-compliant religious elite in Iraq. Although Tehran has not sought to remove Al-Sistani directly, it has supported clerics as part of preparations to fill the vacuum following the aged cleric's death (Wyer, 2012). However, Iran faces several challenges if it wants to replace Al-Sistani directly. Firstly, his position is unofficial, unlike that of the Iranian Supreme Leader. Secondly, Al-Sistani is held in reverence around the Shi'a world, and his status is also recognised by the senior *maraji* (clerical authorities). Nonetheless, Al-Sistani does not have an appointed successor which could provide Tehran with an opportunity to exercise greater religious influence over Najaf using its own religious establishment based in Qom. The probability of this happening increases as anxiety and instability increases in Shi'a towns and cities in Iraq.

Iran had been empowering a potential successor for Al-Sistani in the person of Iraqi-born Ayatollah Hashemi Shahroudi, an Iranian who was being groomed to take over Najaf's most senior clerical position. Shahroudi opened up an office in Najaf in October 2011 (Hendawi & Abdul-Zahra, 2012) and

attempted to poach Al-Sistani's students by providing them with better benefits and higher stipends (Al-Kifaee, 2012).

This was the first time a senior Iranian clerical figure moved from Qom to Najaf. Shahroudi was also a former Iranian judiciary chief and a senior leader of SCIRI; he was also close to Iran's Khameini and could have potentially transformed the Najaf-based religious establishment into a politically active body under the direct influence of Qom had he not died in 2018. In addition to the above, Tehran has also backed relatively low-ranking clerics in the Shi'a religious mix. A good example is Seyyed Mohammed Tabatabai, who is known for his pro-Iranian stance (Mamouri, 2014). If Iran can influence who becomes the next top Shi'ite cleric in Iraq, it could tighten its grip on political power in the country for years (Dehghanpisheh, 2017).

Iran has also been trying to use soft power in the form of religious tourism. Since the opening of its borders following the fall of Saddam, Iraq has acknowledged Shi'a pilgrims wanting to visit cities such as Najaf and Karbala and has permitted millions of pilgrims into the country every year. A manager from the Interior Ministry stated: 'The open borders between the countries have allowed Iran to influence our religious affairs. Unlike other countries religious tourism is supported by the Iranian government'. For example, the Central Company of Pilgrimage Service Providers provides tours approved by Iran's Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. This ministry is responsible for applications for guide and tourist permits and demonstrates the Iranian investment in these religious visits (Rabkin, 2014). Moreover, pilgrimages to Karbala during '*Arba'een*', in addition to other events, have not only been encouraged by the Iranian government but also organised and subsidised financially. Thus, the Iraqi government has been able to solidify support from its Shi'a base but has also allowed Iranian influence over the workings of shrines and local economies in key Shi'a areas.

It should also be noted that a significant number of Iraqi Shi'a also visit holy sites in Iran. For example, in the summer of 2006, approximately 3,000 visas were being issued daily by the Iranian consulate in Baghdad, Najaf and Basra for Iraqi pilgrims wanting to visit Qom and Mashhad, in addition to other holy sites in Iran. Both the Iraqi and Iranian governments have come under pressure to secure routes for Shi'a pilgrims across their respective borders (Kayhan, 2008). However, more Iranians visit the Shi'a holy sites in Iraq relative to Iraqis visiting Iran.

Although Iraqi Shi'a elites have been dealing with and have allowed Iranian firms to enrich themselves, this has proven to be antagonistic to Iraq's Shi'a businesses. The resentment of Iraqis operating in the hospitality sector is a real concern, with many Iraqi hoteliers specialising in religious tourism complaining about the Iranian Shams company's control of most religious tourism activity in Iraq. Indeed, hotel owners commonly refer to themselves as 'servants of Shams' due to the extended

privileges it enjoys, which significantly reduce much of the potential profits Iraqis could be benefiting from despite up to fifty million Iranians visiting Iraq each year. One hotel owner in Karbala stated: 'We are Arabs, we will not accept to be colonized by anyone . . . We do not take orders from the Iranians' (Dagher, 2009). Shams' monopoly over religious tourism has also been blamed for diverting significant revenues away from the Iraqi economy (FNoor, 2019).

Iraqi businesses have tended to point the finger at the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities for its weakness, its reliance on Shams and for not working with other countries and organisations in a similar way to Shams. According to Mahmoud Al-Zubaidi, 'The Iranian company has about five hundred branches accredited in the Iranian Hajj and Visit Organization, and we do not have the right to interfere in its affairs'. Al-Zubaidi also stated: 'When the company entered Iraq, it contracted with Iraqi companies that manage hotels and transportation affairs' and held Iraqi companies responsible for their lack of profits for signing contracts with the Iranian company without referring to the Ministry of Tourism (FNoor, 2019).

Not only has Iran been leveraging *pilgrim power* but according to Dhiaa al-Asadi, a former lawmaker close to Najaf-born Shi'ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, 'Iran had its eye on shrines since the fall of the (Iraqi) regime in 2003' (Davison, 2020). Iran's Headquarters for the Restoration of Holy Shrines and Support for Iraq (HRHS) is a key Iranian organisation which has been involved in over two hundred restoration projects in Karbala, Samarra, Najaf, Kadhemiya, Musayeb and Balad. The workforce needed to complete these projects are also typically Iranian. Notably, the HRHS is headed by an ex-Quds Force officer, Hassan Pelarak, who worked closely with Khatam Al-Anbiya. In 2006, Khatam Al-Anbiya secured deals worth at least $7 billion in the oil, gas, and transportation sectors in addition to several other IRGC owned or controlled companies. The Quds Force construction firm was then classified as a terrorist organisation in 2007 by the US (US Department of the Treasury, 2007).

Projects associated with shrines are overseen by shrine organisations, not by the state which is a further inhibitor to transparency and a potential source of neo-patrimony since they operate behind closed doors. Moreover, the Iraqi government provides religious projects with a special status, which means any Iranian steel, cement and other materials entering the country are exempt of import duties. However, whilst these materials are officially imported into Iraq for shrine development, they are also being sold and used in other applications via middlemen on the Iraqi market, where prices are higher than in Iran. A senior Iraqi official with direct knowledge said firms involved in shrine projects 'often order several times the required amount' of building materials (Davison, 2020).

By 2009, Iranian influence in cities of religious significance was becoming more evident, which led to Iraq's interior minister banning the use of Farsi signs in Karbala (Nader, 2015). In the same year,

protests also broke out because the Iraqi government awarded an Iranian construction company a $100 million contract to renovate Najaf (Dagher, 2009).

Hussain Al-Sharifi, a reporter with the Tourism and Antiquities Committee in the Iraqi Parliament, accused Shams of violating Iraqi sovereignty because of its control on religious tourism. Bangen Rekani, a Kurd, who was the former Iraqi housing minister with knowledge of Shams' projects stated: 'Iran has long penetrated the Iraqi deep state . . . the Iranians use their soft power and religious ties, which can be more important than political ties' (Davison, 2020).

Although control of shrine development deepens trade and economic benefits for Iranians, it is also a potential source of neo-patrimony in Iraq since religious tourism is the second largest revenue earner after oil (Davison, 2020). Whilst religious tourism should be a significant source of revenue for Iraq, similar to other rent sources linked to elite enrichment, these have not trickled down to the local population.

In recent decades, academics have written extensively on the 'resource curse' – the tendency of states with oil resources to grow at a slow rate and be prone to civil war, authoritarianism and instability. This phenomenon is typically explained through rents reducing incentives for creating quality institutions, resulting in poor performance and corruption. However, this section has demonstrated that another academic lacuna exists in the form of rents underpinning neo-patrimony through religion. Since this thesis focusses on the impact of neo-patrimony and sectarianism on the bureaucracies of the state, it has not fully explored the deep links and impact of rents acquired through religious tourism. However, there is anecdotal evidence of corruption since Iran has been granted free access to Iraqi markets and because the Iraqi government has not intervened with oversight or measures to protect its own interests, especially those of the religious hospitality and construction industry.

Towards the end of the research period, a new and interesting phenomenon arose, which involved Iran pursuing person-to-state relations with the Sunni elite. Although there is little evidence of this practice being widespread, the case of Madhi Al-Sumaida'i is a good example of it. He was former head of the Iraqi Dar Al-Ifta and head of a Sunni armed militia group called 'Islamic Resistance Movement/Ahrar Iraq'. Al-Sumaida'i developed closed ties with Soleimani and subsequently became known as the 'Mufti of Iran'. There were also reports that Soleimani was drawing up plans to see Al-Sumaida'i as the new head of the Sunni Endowment Bureau. Al-Maliki also befriended Al-Sumaida'i and made him the 'Mufti of the Republic'. This was a fictitious role, but he rewarded him more practically by giving him the Umm Al-Tabool Mosque. This mosque has religious symbolism for Sunnis

in Iraq and allowed Shi'a forces in the government and in Tehran to target Sunnis in Anbar directly through his fatwas (Al-Arabiya, 2018).

8.1.2 Militias

In addition to the above, bilateral relations between Iraq and Iran have been affected by armed groups and militias. After the invasion and dismantling of Iraq's security apparatus, a vacuum was created which non-state armed group arose to fill with the support of external state actors (International Crisis Group, 2018). Iran primarily focused on established party-to-state relations and its traditional allies in ISCI's Badr Corps; however, it quickly expanded its help, including to JAM and even some Sunni militant groups. When the head of these groups entered politics, such as Al-Sadr, Iran splintered off radical elements and created clandestine special groups (in a similar manner it created Hezbollah in Lebanon in the early 1980s). By 2010, support became more specific and included helping three Shi'a militant groups: the Day Brigade (and JAM successor), the League of the Righteous and Battalions of Hezbollah. Perhaps most problematic for Tehran was JAM, since its competition for power and radical agenda brought it into direct conflict with the government and ISCI, which undermined Shi'a unification (Salem, 2013).

Nonetheless, Iran benefitted by maintaining its person-to-state and party-to-state relations and funding JAM and other Shi'a militias. Iran then conveniently entered the arena to diplomatically resolve disputes, thus becoming a peacemaker. For example, in 2010 Iran successfully defused tensions between Al-Maliki and Al-Sadr when they both met in Qom. Tehran persuaded Al-Sadr to back Al-Maliki's government, which was a considerable achievement given Al-Sadr's disdain for Al-Maliki following the latter's 'Charge of Knights' campaign in 2008. Al-Sadr dropped his resistance to Al-Maliki grudgingly, under Iranian pressure and after extracting concessions including additional ministerial positions for the Sadrist Trend and control of the Maysan provincial government (Kagan et al., 2012).

Armed groups also provided Tehran with an alternative source of influence should its political allied prove unreliable, and an effective means of retaliating against US forces in the event of any US attack on Iran (Eisenstadt et al., 2011; Nader, 2015). Iran also had the opportunity to press the Iraqi government following US withdrawal using the militias, however, this did not transpire, and it has not chosen to use the militias in the way it used Hezbollah in Lebanon. Nonetheless, by controlling the number of armed groups Iran supports in Iraq, it has managed to reduce fragmentation of the Shi'a political elite and thus maintain its strategy of political unification of its allies in Iraq.

Iran's person-to-state and party-to-state relations became even more apparent when the militias were called upon to fight against IS in 2014. It was not the Iraqi prime minister who issued the orders

but Soleimani. The strength of Iranian person-to-state and party-to-state relations come from the militias' ability to recruit tens of thousands of Shi'a fighters (Al-Qassab, 2019). Tehran saw itself as a key stakeholder in the crisis and chose to play a role in mobilising and training as many strands as possible within the PMF (Farhi, 2017).

8.1.3 Economically

Following the occupation, Iraq provided Iran access to its domestic market and saw a large influx of a range of Iranian exports. Moreover, because of its battered infrastructure, the Iraqi energy sectors have acted as a catalyst, bringing the two countries closer together with the signing of several development agreements. Indeed, following the invasion authorised Iranian companies were permitted to work with the US firms in rebuilding Iraq (Mumtaz, 2005).

In 2011, Iraq signed a $365 million agreement with Iran to build a network of pipes to supply Baghdad and Al-Mansuriya power stations with gas coming from Iran's own network. As per the agreement, Iraq would initially import four million cubic meters (mcm) of gas daily, then 25 mcm in the following stages. This is sufficient gas for the production of 2,500 megawatts of electricity. During the warmer months, it was expected that this figure would increase to 40 mcm daily as the use of air conditioning units increases.

Iraq also finalised a second pipeline agreement with Iran for natural gas to power plants in southern Iraq. This project involved laying pipelines through the Shatt Al-Arab. According to the agreements, Iran would supply the power plants of Al-Najibiyah, Shatt Al-Basra and Rumaila with 5 mcm of gas per day, which will increase to 50 mcm over six years (Financial Tribune, 2016).

In a similar development, Iraq also negotiated a $2.5 billion deal with Iran for the construction of a natural gas combined cycle power plant in Rumaila. This deal was signed by the Iraqi-Jordanian Shamara Group and an Iranian conglomerate called MAPNA, which specialises in energy production machinery and construction. MAPNA was due to build a power plant capable of adding a further 3,000 MW of electric power to the Iraqi power grid. This deal involved the Iraqi government buying electricity from the plant for a period of 15 to 17 years (Technical Review Middle East, 2015). Subsequently, electricity and is one of keyways Iran has kept Iraq dependent.

In addition to electricity and gas, Iran exported huge quantities of goods to Iraq, creating a huge trade deficit in its favour. According to Mohammed Rezazadeh, Iran's trade attaché in Iraq, 'Iran's exports to Iraq have doubled 17 times [between 2003 to 2014]' (Nada, 2018). An Iranian official in charge of a border crossing stated: 'Except for oil, Iraq relies on Iran for everything' (Nada, 2018).

In 2014 alone, trade between Iraq and Iran was $12 billion and has been described as being amongst the most stable trade relations in the region (Al-Hassoun, 2014). Whilst Iraq and Iran have worked closely on energy projects and strengthened economic and trade ties, Iran has been the major benefactor in this regard and has been successful in acquiring leverage over its neighbour with the majority of trade deals being skewed in its favour. Although Iran has supplied Iraq with vast quantities of consumer goods in the short term, the impact of these policies has stifled Iraqi attempts to make produce locally and increased its reliance on its neighbour. For example, Iran supplied Iraq with government subsidised food products which successfully undercut the Iraqi manufacturing and agricultural bases (Jongerden et al., 2019). Although the prices were affordable for end consumers, local manufactures and farmers were unable to compete with this state competition even within their own borders. Iraqi agriculture and the revival of Iraqi marshlands have also suffered by the diversion and damming of rivers in Iran (UN Environment Program, 2017).

Nonetheless, although bilateral relations are extensive, Iraq and Iran have faced challenges to their collaborative initiatives despite their Shi'a identities. These problems emanate from each country's competitiveness around petroleum sales and production, Arab Iraqi suspicions concerning Iranian hegemony, and energy agreements with Iran (which have added further tensions with Sunni countries). The Fakka incident is a good example of how tensions can quickly escalate between a client state and its backer. This incident occurred on the 19th December 2009, when Iranian forces occupied an Iraqi oil well, fired on its troops and raised the Iranian flag over the complex. This event provided a key insight into the evolving nature of Iraqi ties towards Iran and its subordinate nature. Whilst there was an instant response from a government spokesman, Ali Dabbagh, it took Al-Maliki ten days to make a statement (Mojtahed-Zadeh, 2009). Speculation concerning this type of response can be attributed to the impending elections of 2010, and Maliki's neo-patrimonial interests and direct relationship with Iran.

The one-sided nature of Iraq-Iranian bilateral relations was mentioned by Iraqi politician Mahmood Al-Mashhadani, who stated: 'In fact, the Iranian influence is clear and present. As parliamentarians, we cannot do anything but open dialogue with the Iranians and urge them not to interfere and insist on our demands that they should not interfere' (RFERI, 2007).

A Shi'a employee of the Foreign Ministry who has been part of numerous delegations to Tehran stated:

> They [Iranians] really don't have any respect for us when we go over there, they think they own us, and they feel as if they don't have to give straight answers. In one particular meeting, our delegation brought up a number of issues including the fighter planes which Saddam sent to Iran for safekeeping. In this instance, and others like it, they stall or simply say, 'We don't have answers for this', or 'our answer will be off record'.

This Iranian attitude towards Iraq has arguably fuelled anti-Iranian sentiments, which increased by the end of the research period. So, whilst Iran strategically supported the Shi'a elite in Iraq, there still a considerable number of these elites (and ordinary Iraqis) who viewed Iranian policy in Iraq as serving Iranian hardliners' narrow national and security interests (Gulmohammed, 2021, p. 127).

In an interview carried out by Gulmohammed with Kamran Karadaghi, the former chief of staff to Iraqi President Jalal Talabani between 2005 and 2007, Karadaghi stated: 'Iran knows how to deal with the Iraqi elite professionally; this is coupled with their knowledge of Iraq's culture more than Americans. This provided Iran with exceptional status and weight in Iraq'.

8.2 SYRIA

During the era of Saddam Hussein, the Ba`th ideological differences resulted in strained Iraqi-Syrian relations, made worse by Damascus providing refuge to opposition leaders, including Al-Maliki and Talabani. Despite this, Syria was against the war in Iraq, fearing it too could be next on the American hit list. Subsequently, Syria provided refuge to many Ba`th leaders and allowed jihadists to cross its borders to join the insurgency and discourage any US planned aggression in Syria. Although Syria welcomed a friendlier government, it did not rely solely on bilateral relations but also developed state to non-state relations, including Sunni tribes, Iraqi Kurds and insurgent elements, in a bid to keep Baghdad hemmed in. Moreover, due to its relationship with Hezbollah, Damascus also had good relations with some Shi'a groups which opposed Al-Maliki in Iraq (Hinnebusch, 2014).

In 2006, Iraq and Syria restored diplomatic ties and began developing mutual economic interests (Weitz, 2012). The most salient of these were the Iraq-Syria oil pipeline and the development of a new pipeline to carry gas. Other infrastructure projects included cooperation on rail networks, as well as trade, roads and border security. In 2009, the Iraqi and Syrian leaders exchanged visits and signed political and economic agreements. The rapprochement was interrupted in 2010 following a spate of bombings in Baghdad, which Al-Maliki blamed on the Syrian-based Iraqi Ba`th Party. The Iraqi ambassador was recalled whilst demands for a hundred Iraqi Ba`thists living in Syria to be expelled went unheeded.

Nonetheless, the Arab Spring movements in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Bahrain fundamentally changed the relationship between both countries. In March 2011, protesters gathered in a southern Syrian town called Deraa demanding their grievances be met; however, these quickly spread across the country, resulting in a brutal crackdown by the regime. Although initially peaceful, the armed opposition groups attacked the security forces, which changed the nature of the conflict (Landis, 2011).

The Shi'a and Sunnis of Iraq viewed the Syrian conflict through different lenses, with the former viewing it as a potential threat to the political order which enabled their ethnic group supremacy and the latter viewing it a potential opportunity to overthrow the Iraqi government. Mohamed Al-Bajara, a former Iraqi intelligence officer, was confident of a Sunni rebel victory, stating: 'When Iran loses [in] 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' (Al-Khoei, 2016).

Part of a Shi'a political elite speculated about the potential Sunni victory in Syria and the morale boost it would give Iraqi Sunni militants. Bayan Jabr, the minister of transport and Shia Islamist member of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, warned his fellow Shi'a: 'this war will soon reach the gates of Baghdad' (Al-Khoei, 2016). The Shi'a political elite began viewing Syria and their own internal conflict through the same sectarian lens and attempted to merge the conflicts with Shi'a on one side and Sunni on the other. Al-Khoei (2016) quotes Sheikh Jalal al-Din al-Sagheer, a senior Iraqi Shia politician and commander of Saraya Ansar al-Aqeeda, a paramilitary unit, who stated: '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 Shi'a, 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 doorstep, it is in our interest to fight them away from our home in Syria too'.

Sensitivities between the Iraqi Sunni and Shi'a were also heightened following the US troop withdrawal in December 2011. Although this event was most likely welcomed in Damascus, it further split the Sunni and Shi'a communities. Moreover, the US withdrawal in the presence of a weak national army, coupled with Al-Maliki's authoritarian tendencies, caused further sectarian cleavages.

Whilst initially the Iraqi position on the Syrian conflict was one of neutrality, urging political resolution and negotiation, Al-Maliki began siding with the Syrian regime after identifying a clear danger from the Sunni jihadist threat. This sectarian move by Al-Maliki was pivotal to Iraqi-Syrian bilateral relations at the time and was a shift in the Shi'a political elite's security calculations based on the emerging armed opposition. After supporting decades of Iraqi opposition groups, Damascus started coordinating and cooperating with Baghdad. This phenomenon reflected the common ideational factors between both regimes despite their political and ideological differences. This significantly damaged the rebuilding of good relations with Saudi Arabia and other GCC states (Salem, 2013).

The Shi'a government in Baghdad allowed its land and airspace to be used to transfer Iranian military hardware support for Syria. These planes were exempt from being searched, which allowed the Shi'a militias in Iraq and Syrian government to be well supplied. This changed in 2015 when Al-Abadi replaced Al-Maliki and ordered Iranian planes to be subject to Iraqi laws. Moreover, the cooperation

between Baghdad and Damascus completed a land corridor which provided Iran with access to the Mediterranean. This corridor allowed Tehran to send supplies to Iraq militias, Syrian forces and its Hezbollah proxies in Lebanon. Iraq has also provided Syria with vital economic aid both directly and indirectly even though it was struggling itself. Al-Maliki arranged for Iraqi oil to be sold to Assad at below half the market price in an agreement which the foreign ministry was unaware of. Moreover, Iraqi traders bought hard currency at preferential rates of up to $400 million from the Iraqi Central Bank auctions, with much of the money ending up in Syria and Iran for resale (Kami, 2012).

The Syrian war had significant negative repercussions for Al-Maliki's domestic situation. For example, Iraqi Kurds were emboldened by the empowerment of the Syrian Kurds and the potential for greater autonomy. Developing ties with their Syrian brethren, Erbil was able to expand its reach and brought Iraqi Kurdistan a little closer to accessing the outside world via the Mediterranean, a key lifeline for landlocked states (Knights, 2012). Moreover, having been antagonised by Al-Maliki, the Iraqi Kurds felt inclined to support the Sunni insurgency in Syria. Due to wider Sunni discontent with Al-Maliki, many Sunni Arabs openly supported the insurgency in Syria, thinking an increase in Sunni power in Syria could help Sunni empowerment in Iraq. Al-Maliki may have feared this could become a reality and challenge his neo-patrimonial networks which had become the mainstay of much of his regime. The timing was also potentially deadly since these events coincided with Al-Maliki's crackdown on Sunni politicians and the use of the army to quell Sunni protesters in the north-western provinces. This enraged the Sunni population and could have reignited the sectarian war (Hinnebusch, 2014).

Iraq was understandably worried about the war in Syria and its contribution to homegrown terrorism. The war in Syria saw thousands of foreign jihadists moving backwards and forwards through the porous border between the two countries. In 2012, this contributed to the resurgence of AQI, which was rebranded as 'Al-Qaeda in Iraq and the Levant' and, later, IS. Subsequently, fighting IS became a major concern for Al-Maliki and was a key driver for discussions with countries such as Syria.

Hoshyar Zebari stated that a region-wide sectarian schism caused by Syria's civil war was opening between Sunni and Shia populations throughout the Middle East and especially in Iraq. 'No matter what the final outcome of the Syrian crisis, there would be a heightening of sectarian tension throughout the region' and the 'Shia-Sunni polarisation would be a fact of life, not only for Iraq — Iraq would be the battleground — but for the Gulf, the Shia-Sunni world. These two will come "heads on" in the absence of wise leaders' (Loyd, 2013).

8.3 GCC STATES

In 1981, the GCC was formed. It comprises the six monarchies of the Arabian Peninsula and is intended to present a united front against not only Iranian but Iraqi encroachment (POMEPS, 2017). The diplomatic representation of these states in Iraq reflects their concerns and attitudes, that is, the relationship between Iraq and Iran viewed through an ideational prism which regards the Shi'a of Iraq as being manipulated by Iran. However, there is a wider narrative or norm in the Middle East, which also accuses Arab Shi'a in general to be culturally, ideologically and politically linked to Iran.

This acceptable sectarian narrative can be found within all levels of society, including media, clerical and political levels. As noted previously, there is a reference to the 'Shi'a crescent' by the late King Abdullah of Jordan, who described how the Shi'a expansion throughout the Middle East would endanger the cultural makeup and stability of the Muslim and Arab world. Such a narrative renders Arab Shi'a as the 'other' and a danger to their own countries (Kadhim, 2013). This narrative was reinforced by others, including former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who stated that Arab Shi'a are 'loyal to Iran, and not to the countries they are living in' (Al-Jazeera, 2006). No doubt, the abuse of ideational notions benefits dictators since it draws attention away from failed policies and rallies the domestic population in support of the patriarch against an even bigger enemy. Although, Iraqi Shi'a have proven their loyalty to their national identity and differentiated themselves from Iranian Shi'a, for example, in the 1920s uprisings against Britain, when the monarchy collapsed in 1958, in the Iraq-Iran war of the 1980s, and even during the 1991 Shi'a uprising against the Ba`th regime, which focussed on Iraq as a single unit, it has proven very easy to discredit Shi'a Arab-ness.

Thus, the fear of the Shi'a can be ascribed to the potential for 'Shi'a communities [to] revolt against their governments and increase Iranian influence in the region'. Following this train of thought, the establishment of the Shi'a government in Iraq re-awoke the fears of the 1979 Iranian revolution in GGC countries; however, this time it was more personal since Iraq is also Arab.

Subsequently, Iranian encroachment has been at the epicentre of the GCC's security concerns, which has meant full diplomatic ties between the GCC, and Iraq were impossible. Kuwait, Bahrain, and the UAE nominated ambassadors in 2008. However, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Oman hesitated to make the decision (Gulf Research Centre Cambridge, 2014).

8.3.1 Saudi Arabia

In terms of Saudi-Iraqi relations, the downgrading of Iraq's Sunni demographic and political weakness following the occupation became an important issue for Saudi Arabia. This sectarian lens constituted a powerful filter through which ruling elites viewed developments in Iraq (Chatham House, 2013a). Although Saudi Arabia gave tacit approval of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, it was reluctant to engage

with the new political order after Saddam's fall which allowed Iranian influence to grow. From the late King Abdullah's perspective Iraq had been handed to Iran, 'as if on a golden platter' (Dunne, 2017).

Following the invasion, Saudi Arabia watched the emergence of a Shi`a-dominated political structure made up of those previously exiled in Iran with deep apprehension and kept it at an arm's length. Riyadh found it hard to accept Iraq would be led by the Shi'a. As such, during most of the period from 2003 to 2014, Saudi policies tended to treat all Shi'a Iraqis as being, by default, aligned with Iran and therefore guilty by association. When Al-Maliki became prime minister in 2006, relations deteriorated further as Saudi Arabia viewed Iraq as an impossible partner which was inclined towards Iran (ICG, 2018).

Although the US insisted Saudi Arabia soften its stance towards Iraq, it was largely unsuccessful. From Riyadh's perspective, the human demographics of Iraq made it a less attractive investment. Ideational factors linked to Shi'a government in Iraq made an effective Iraqi-Saudi relationship very problematic. This issue was perhaps compounded further because Saudi Arabia has always viewed itself as the leader of the Sunni and Arab world, maybe a protector of Sunnis in the region and a defender against Iranian plans. However, these Arab and Sunni appeals have resulted in significant polarisation within Iraq.

Greater demands for Sunni representation at the political level in the government and parliament before the 2005 and 2010 elections remained a top foreign policy priority for Saudi Arabia. Improvements in relations between the two countries were made contingent on Al-Maliki's commitment to cross-sectarian coalition building. Notwithstanding Al-Maliki's tendency to silence critics and disenfranchise Sunnis, the Saudis certainly viewed the Iraqi government as a puppet state controlled by Tehran.

King Abdullah perceived Al-Maliki as an Iranian stooge and made the White House aware of his concerns via a meeting with US representatives in 2009. Moreover, he had previously refused to meet Al-Maliki even when requested to do so by President George W. Bush. The king stated: 'I don't trust him… he is an Iranian agent', and 'How can I meet with someone I don't trust?. . . [he] opened to the door Iranian influence in Iraq' (Goldman, 2011, p. 239; Clack, 2018, p. 179). For his part, Al-Maliki also sought US intervention when he asked President Bush to intervene with the Saudis in a bid to prevent them from rallying and funding the Sunni insurgency and inflaming Sunni-based sectarianism (Kaussler & Hastedt, 2017, p. 75). Subsequently, in 2010, Riyadh tried to enhance its person-to-state and party-to-state relations by pouring money into the elections and backing every Iraqi Sunni group, in addition to secular Iraqiya, which was headed by Shi'a Allawi. Allawi had long been considered acceptable to

Sunnis within and outside of Iraq, and much of his electoral support came from Sunni tribes – Iraqi groups closest to Saudi Arabia (Barkey et al., 2011).

Following the election results, Saudi Arabia, reflecting the concerns of Ayad Allawi, and voiced open dismay when Al-Maliki was able to form a new government without Iraqiyya. For Saudi Arabia, the second Al-Maliki administration was considered even worse than the first. The differences in foreign policies were made clearer by divergent reactions in Baghdad and Riyadh to the Arab Spring and the uprisings in Bahrain and Syria. Concerning events in Manama, Al-Maliki backed the majority Shi'a protesters whilst Saudi Arabia backed the Sunni Al-Khalifa dynasty and created a GCC military mission to quash the demonstrations. Moreover, the uprising in Syria also harmed relations when protests calling for democracy in 2011 led to the civil war, and then the emergence of IS.

Relations between the countries thawed briefly during the run-up to the Arab League summit held in Baghdad in 2012, although only a low-level delegation was sent by the Saudis. However, this meeting was characterised by tension, divisions and a resultant weak stance on key issues such as Syria. Al-Maliki pleaded for external actors not to intervene. Doha made clear its distaste for the reluctance of countries such as Iraq and Lebanon to act decisively and began to take a progressively harder line on Syria, publicly imploring the international community to support and arm the opposition (Ulrichsen, 2014). Regional relations were strained by further polarization over the Syrian war as the Iraqi government claimed regional neutrality but ended up supporting the Assad regime (Salem, 2013).

Although Al-Maliki and senior members of his government made attempts re-establish diplomatic ties, with Saudi Arabia, King Abdullah continued his isolation policy against Iraq. In 2013 Al-Maliki said: '[Saudi Arabia had] chosen not to be a friend of Iraq' but was still willing to resolve the differences by visiting the kingdom. However, Al-Maliki became increasingly critical of Saudi Arabia towards the end of his tenure and in March 2014, he reiterated accusations of Saudi Arabia (and other Gulf states) support of insurgents in Anbar province, stating: 'I accuse them of openly hosting leaders of Al-Qaeda and "*Takifiris"'*. Saudi Arabia responded to the statements, calling them 'false allegations' and a 'malicious falsehood' (Black, 2014).

Whilst it is established that Iraq became a magnet for every 'Jihadi wannabe', it is difficult to find concrete evidence or a paper trail in the literature linking the Saudis to IS. Moreover, unlike other countries sponsored elite actors within Iraq and then protected them after they fled, it is difficult to establish which specific individuals or tribes Saudi Arabia was providing material support to. Nonetheless, some Shi'a and Sunni participants made accusations concerning the names of people who were benefiting directly from Saudi Arabia. Some pieces of information in this puzzle were provided by interviewees. For example, a Sunni political activist stated:

> Unlike their usual haphazard way of doing things by simply throwing money at a problem, the Saudis have been able to cover their tracks when it comes to their connections with the Iraqi tribes. However, it is common knowledge they were supporting Dulaim and its sub-tribes including Al-Halabsa, Albu Khamees and others. Tribes would usually receive money from the Saudis, but they also give other gifts, I known [for example], Sheikh Jasim Al-Fahdawiof of the Albo Fahad Dulaimi received a Rolex with the inscription 'From King Abdullah'.

Another Sunni interviewee stated:

> Sunni tribes were given assurances from the Saudis that if the going got tough, they were going to have their backs. This was reassuring in the first instance, however, when things started to get rough at the start of the civil war for the [Sunni] tribes, they were unwilling to provide what mattered most, weapons training and hardware. This explains why the tribes turned to AQI and then IS.

Saudi Arabia's weak role in Iraq has been officially restricted to a political dialogue where others were setting the rules. Elsewhere in Yemen and Syria it has utilised extensive military assets where diplomacy was largely redundant. However, Riyadh has shown it has been inept at playing a more subtle diplomatic game with Baghdad. Thus, gaining influence was more difficult since the Iraqi government was not an internationally discredited one, as in the case of Syria, nor a friendly client, as in the case of Yemen. Moreover, after the occupation, Iraq was subject to heavy outside involvement, first by the US and then Iran, which left it with limited options (unlike Syria, where Iran was present from the start of the revolution).

After Al-Maliki left office relations improved with Iraq, but rapprochement was still predicated upon a wider assessment of bilateral relations vis-à-vis Iran. Relative to the Iranians, Saudi Arabian diplomatic initiatives were viewed to be less pragmatic. A former Sunni diplomat explained:

> The Saudis usually want something done yesterday, subsequently, they lack vision, they don't know how to build towards and realise their goals in subtle ways. On the other hand, Iranians are more strategic, more cunning. Their long-term aims never change, this means they see everything through an existential threat and will do anything to protect themselves.

After Al-Abadi's was appointed prime minister in November 2014, he took firm steps against IS and carved out an image as a nationalist, convincing Riyadh he was 'not Iran's man' (ICG, 2018). Moreover, US officials also sought to persuade Riyadh that Al-Abadi was not an Iranian proxy. This period can be considered the beginning of a proactive one where Riyadh was ready to challenge Iranian influence in Iraq which was previously unachievable through its support for other Iraqi actors.

King Abdullah was impressed with Al-Abadi's resolve to fight IS, especially when compared to Al-Maliki, whose army was defeated by seventy IS pickup trucks. Riyadh initiated talks on installing a resident Saudi ambassador in Baghdad. This culminated in the opening of the Baghdad embassy in 2016. The King also pledged $500 million in humanitarian aid to all Iraqis irrespective of their sectarian, religious or ethnic background (Middle East Eye, 2014).

Other GCC states were also pleased with Al-Abadi's first steps towards a rapprochement with Arab Sunnis and intentions to open a new chapter in relations. A 2014 GCC summit statement reads: 'The high council welcomes the new directions of the Iraqi government' and called for reforms to 'build bridges of cooperation in the Arab Gulf region'(Balboni, 2017).

However, one of the main challenges the two countries faced was rewriting Saudi Arabia's engagement with Iraq based on its interpretation of Islam, that is, Wahabism. A manager from the Foreign Ministry stated: 'It is difficult for average Iraqi to trust the Saudis because they are Wahabis who have similar beliefs to Baghdadi and don't accept the Shi'a as being Muslims'. This has created an image of Saudi Arabia as being synonymous with IS in Iraq and fuelled Shi'a othering of 'us' and 'them'. Whilst there are clear parallels in terms of the beliefs and actions of Mohammed Abdul Wahab and his immediate followers and that of IS, the modern Wahabis or Saudi Arabia have been compelled to tone down this pure form of Wahabi-ism because of constraints imposed by the modern state and its connection to the international system.

Nonetheless, the image of Saudi Arabia as being synonymous or similar to IS has been compounded because of the treatment of Shi'a in Saudi Arabia itself and the wider Sunni-Shi'a wars raging in the Middle East. Nonetheless, Saudi Arabia did start trying to improve its image in Iraq using personal and tribal outreach, which involved direct patronage of Iraqi tribes, individuals and communities (ICG, 2018).

Whilst a new relationship between the countries could have been mutually beneficial, it was also viewed with some scepticism by interviewees. A Shi'a working in the Ministry of Defence stated:

> The difference between our motivations for better bilateral relations are the difference between night and day. They want to engage to counter Iran, this shows, their intentions are not yet pure since they view the Iraqi arena as a zero-sum game.

Another Shi'a from the Interior Ministry stated: 'It will take them time to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people, although investments in infrastructure and housing would go a long way. 'Nonetheless, the foundation of person-to-state ties with nationalist Sunni and later Shi'a leaders in Iraq resulted in the establishment of useful relations. Riyadh fostered these types of relations over institutional engagement, especially with Al-Abadi and then, later, with Al-Sadr, Ammar Al-Hakim and the interior minister, Qasem Al-Araji in 2017 (ICG, 2018). One of the main strategies Riyadh tried to use was by emphasising the Arab component of the Iraqi Shi'a identity which is historically linked to its own culture. Prioritising relations with individuals make sense for Saudi Arabia and the move was complimented by a manager in the Interior Ministry, who stated: 'Bilateral relationships with individuals in ministries get things done a lot faster'.

In addition to the political elite, the Shi'a religious elite were also targeted, as Riyadh realised the importance of cities such as Najaf. Whilst important clerics such as Al-Sistani have been wary of Saudi Arabia, there are reports of person-to-state back-channel diplomacy taking place with Al-Sistani's office and Saudi officials (Solomon, 2018). It should be noted that the quietest approach of Iraqi Arab Shi'a is not necessarily a political threat to neo-patrimony in Saudi Arabia unlike Iranian Shi'a, who adhere to Velayat-Faqih, and because Al-Sistani has been a voice for sectarian restraint in Iraq (Council of Foreign Relations, 2011). Moreover, Saudi Shi'a also follow Al-Sistani, which means they do not espouse the revolutionary approach advocated by Khamenei (Mamouri, 2016). This also explains why Riyadh should have no problem in promoting Najaf over and vis-à-vis Qom in Iran to its advantage.

It became clear by the end of the research period that Saudi Arabia no longer regarded Iraq as a lost cause. Interviewees also reiterated this sentiment. One manager in the PM's office stated:

> After Al-Abadi became prime minister, Riyadh had begun laying the groundwork for engagement, it is becoming more successful because of the anti-Iranian feelings and as more politicians realised, they can also get what they want from elsewhere, however, they [that is the elite] realise there is a need for Iraqi and Middle East relations to be balanced.

Until 2014, Riyadh's attitude towards Iraq was significantly more negative relative to other Arab states such as Jordan, Egypt, and the UAE, which began to engage in a meaningful manner by the late 2000s (Riedel & Harvey, 2020).

8.3.2 Qatar and the UAE

Similar to Saudi Arabia, amongst the key variables in the interaction of Qatar and UAE with Iraq was Iran. However, unlike other GCC countries, Sunnis in Qatar account for 90% of the population, with other groups such as Shi'a forming the majority of the remaining 10%. Due to the large Sunni demographic, Doha does not view Tehran's perceived attempts to incite sectarian discord in the region as a major concern relative to other GCC allies. Moreover, whilst the GCC powerhouse, Saudi Arabia, does not have nor has sought direct economic interests in Iran, other GCC states are directly linked to Tehran, which explains why Qatar has played an active role in Iraq.

Tehran is essential for Qatar's security and economic interests since both states share ownership of the world's largest gas field, that is, the North Dome/South Pars site. Cordial relations are therefore a necessity. This explains why Qatar invited Iranian president Ahmadinejad to the 28th GCC summit in Doha in 2007. Moreover, in 2010, both countries signed a symbolic security agreement to promote security cooperation and combat terrorism (Cafiero, 2017).This has required Doha to conduct its relations in a careful and calculated manner since it is still part of the GCC family.

Qatar's relationship with Al-Maliki was mainly antagonistic because of Qatar's high-level ties developed with the Sunni religious and political opposition (Kirkpatrick, 2014). The Shi'a government also accused Doha of financing terror groups and using Al-Jazeera to host and pedal the Sunni sectarian narrative (Balboni, 2017). Al-Maliki is reported to have stated:

> They are attacking Iraq, through Syria and in a direct way, and they announced war on Iraq, as they announced it in Syria, and unfortunately it is on a sectarian and political basis . . . These two countries [Saudi Arabia and Qatar] are primarily responsible for the sectarian and terrorist and security crisis of Iraq . . . They are attacking Iraq, through Syria and in a direct way, and they announced war on Iraq, as they announced it in Syria, and unfortunately it is on a sectarian and political basis. (Al-Jazeera, 2014a)

This criticism could also be aimed at Doha's ambition of becoming a regional actor since it has been successful in the myriad of friendships it has created with a host of political and Islamist actors across the region such as the Muslim Brotherhood (which has also been problematic for other GCC members).

Doha developed person-to-state relations with Tariq Al-Hashemi, the former vice president and Al-Maliki's first political target among senior Sunni politicians. In December 2011, the Al-Maliki controlled counter-terrorism forces arrested Al-Hashemi's bodyguards on terrorism charges (AFP, 2011). If Al-Maliki's intent was to intimidate Al-Hashemi, it worked, as he subsequently fled Baghdad. He was then tried in absentia and sentenced to death. Following a visit to Qatar in 2012, Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Hussein al-Shahristani demanded Al-Hashemi be arrested and sent back to Iraq. The Qataris refused, arguing it would go against diplomatic norms and bizarrely stated he was only there to discuss 'relations between the two brotherly countries and the latest developments in the region' (BBC, 2012).

After 2003, Doha and many other Arab states also established ties with the Kurds and maintained person-to-state relationships with members of the KRG. After 2007, GCC states became more prone to sidestepping Baghdad, establishing official and more open relations. For example, in 2009, Doha signed a memorandum of understanding with the KRG, covering areas such as aviation, tourism, agriculture, and infrastructure. GCC states such as Qatar, the UAE and Saudi Arabia extended direct de facto recognition of the KRG similar to a state entity with independent bilateral relations. This was first set in motion in 2007, when Barzani visited Saudi Arabia on the bequest of King Abdullah. More recently, a grand reception was put in place for Barzani in 2015. A year later, a Saudi consulate was opened in Erbil (Sadoon, 2017).

As noted, towards the end of the research period, Shi'a elite actors and Sunni states became more inclined to work together and with a broader range of international actors. Subsequently, Doha courted Shi'a elite members, including Ammar Al-Hakim, who met Emir Hamad Al-Thani on several

occasions. This included a short trip in 2013, when the two discussed bilateral relations and Iraq's government formation crisis (Sadoon, 2017).

Whilst sectarian norms have not prevented Qatar from seeking out business opportunities such as banking and oil infrastructure (Gause, 2012), the relationship during 2003 to 2014 can be best described as being tentative, mainly because Baghdad considered these types of person-to-state relationships as internal interference. Similar to Saudi Arabia, relations improved (but only slightly) when Al-Abadi was appointed prime minister and Doha pledged to work with Iraq on matters linked to terror financing and security. However, relations were strained again in 2015 when Qatar hosted an Iraqi opposition conference (Saadoun, 2017).

The UAE approached Iraq much more pragmatically, especially with the Kurdish north relative to Saudi Arabia and Qatar even though it had concerns over Iranian influence. The UAE has been one of the largest investors in post-war Iraq with trade reaching $2.5 billion in 2014 with 130 Emirati enterprises registered in the Kurdish north. Other investments in the south of Iraq included several mega projects such as those linked to increasing Iraqi import export potential which was essential for Baghdad (Balboni, 2017). To maintain a competitive edge over its rivals, the UAE was the first GCC country to appoint an ambassador in 2008 and open a consulate in Erbil. However, relations have at times been strained because of diplomatic tensions linked to Iraqi sectarianism and Iranian influence. The UAE was also pleased with Al-Abadi's appointment and invited him for a state visit in 2014 (PMO, 2014).

8.3.3 Kuwait

The Kuwaiti relationship with Iraq stands in stark contrast to the above where more traditional state-to-state relations developed. This is exactly the element differentiating Kuwait from other GCC countries: it had no interest in maintaining the status quo and viewed the establishment of a new, democratic, and stable Iraq as more of an opportunity than a threat. These considerations deeply influenced the Kuwaiti stance towards Iraqi resulting in a nuanced strategy based on engagement and competition whilst avoiding sectarianism.

Kuwait engaged with the new Iraqi government with many Iraqi-Kuwaiti breakthroughs taking place under Al-Maliki. An ambassador to Iraq was appointed in 2008 and then in 2011 bilateral relations improved further as Al-Maliki professed any claims to Kuwait, 'have gone forever, and will never return again' (Katzman, 2016). Nonetheless, domestic sensitivities exist on both sides because of the troubled history and current events. For example, policies deemed to pro-Iraqi would be difficult to stomach for Kuwaiti domestic politics whilst in Iraq, Shi'a militia made threats to attack the Kuwaiti port of Mubarak Al-Kabir situated in proximity to Iraq's Grand Faw Port. Despite the detractors insisting these

sensitivities would overwhelm Iraqi-Kuwaiti efforts, the political will arising in the belief in a strategic relationship was successful (Gulf Research Centre Cambridge, 2014).

It can be argued Kuwait adopted this approach because it believed a successful Iraq which was integrated into the region would be less threatening compared to a failed state under the control of a dictator backed by Iran. Moreover, Kuwait viewed Iraqi instability as an existential variable (Katzman, 2016). Despite existing frictions related to internal sectarianism, in 2012 Baghdad hosted the first Arab league summit since Kuwait was invaded. Kuwait was the only country to send a head of state (Kuwaiti New Agency, 2012).

In 2013, Kuwait also supported the lifting of UN sanctions on Iraq which allowed both countries to resolve outstanding issues bilaterally, for example, the issue of missing Kuwaiti nationals and property; border demarcation, and reparations owed by Iraq. Arguably Kuwait has been the only GCC country successful in balancing relations with Shi'a, Sunni and Kurdish actors. Kuwait has also been an active donor in Iraq and stands out for supporting both Shi'a and Sunni communities, for example, since 2003 the regime pledged significant humanitarian, financial, and technical assistance to the Coalition and the nascent Iraqi institutions (Gulf Research Centre Cambridge, 2014), in 2014 alone it donated $10 million to UN agencies operating in Iraq (WHO, 2015).

8.4 UNITED STATES

From the outset, it should be stated the relationship with the US has not been built on a sectarian premise as in the case of Iran, Syria and Saudi Arabia. Indeed, as the geographic distance between Iraq and other states increased, relations mirrored those of traditional states eager to carry out trade and diplomacy as opposed to person-to-state relations which formed the basis of neo-patrimonial networks exemplified above. For example, Iraq and Sunni Arab Egypt normalised their relations with one another very quickly and even after Mohammed Morsi came to power in 2012, their respective economies were their primary concerns and not the sectarian violence taking place in the region (Gordon & Arango, 2013).

Whilst the US had the upper hand in the relationship between the two countries, after four short years Iraq became a matter of local as opposed to international politics for the US. This phenomenon is typically referred to as the 'Iraq syndrome' whereby public support in the US rapidly eroded.

Perhaps sensing this, and gauging his own capabilities, Al-Maliki went about systematically denying the US any long-term strategic foothold in Iraq. For example, even at the height of the US troop surge, which took place at the end of 2007 and 2008, General Petraeus found it difficult to control Al-Maliki.

Subsequently, the US commander's office in Iraq was unable to dictate policy. Instead, US policy had to be painstakingly negotiated with Al-Maliki (Dodge, 2012, p. 183).

The two main agreements which governed the US and Iraqi relationship included the SOFA and a strategic framework agreement defining technology, economic relations, culture, science, health and trade. In 2008, the first SOFA draft was presented to the Iraqis, which, in a nutshell, included the use of 58 bases and Iraqi airspace and immunity from prosecution for its armed personnel and private contractors. This is an insight into the sheer scale of US ambitions in Iraq at the time; however, the deal was rejected outright by the Iraqis and demonstrated how out of touch the US was with the power dynamics in Iraq. Al-Maliki's negotiating hand was significantly strengthened by events which took place in the previous year, which included wrestling back Shi'a control of Basra, Iraq's second city. This provided Al-Maliki with public support and encouraged an even stronger negotiating position.

Although President Bush tried to conclude a deal prior to departing the White House, negotiations stalled. This also proved beneficial to Al-Maliki since he was able to demonstrate his national credentials and independence amongst the electorate. The growing confidence of Al-Maliki and the US election schedule provided Baghdad with significant leverage, allowing it to extract demands and deny those of the US.

Following the US failure in extending the SOFA agreement, US influence over the Iraqi political elite declined. Although initially propped up by the US, Al-Maliki pursued his own policies, which have often contradicted those of the US and although Iraq has been dependent on the US, the Shi'a government managed to preserve its own agenda. Subsequently, the interests of the political Shi'a elite have been preserved through their systemic level strategic choices. This became clear when the US was unable to prevent Iranian military hardware from traversing Iraqi land and airspace, or even getting the Al-Maliki government to call for regime change in Syria (Gordon & Arango, 2013).

In terms of influence over Iraqi affairs, the US had little to show for its 'investments'. Nonetheless, the US still envisaged it would maintain a diplomatic presence of up to 16,000 personnel housed in the largest US embassy in the world. However, the PM's office took direct responsibility for issuing new visas to diplomatic personnel, which was done very slowly. Financial constraints in the US also meant the construction of consulates in Mosul and Kirkuk was postponed. The CIA also announced it would cut its staff in Baghdad by 40%. Subsequently, the number of staff in the sprawling US embassy dropped rapidly: in 2012, there were around 16,000 employees; by the beginning of 2014, this figure had dropped to approximately 5,500, of which less than a thousand constituted a diplomatic presence, with the majority being linked to security and contractors (Huffpost, 2017). Moreover, despite their

best efforts, the US failed to ensure that politics in Iraq and the dispensation of power did not remain beholden to sectarian interests.

With the Obama administration talking of an Asia pivot and the large reduction in troops on the ground, it can be argued Iraq was no longer a high priority for the US and vice versa. Moreover, Obama's efforts at extricating the US from what he considered was an ill-conceived and disastrous adventure was done so mainly to keep Iraq out of the headlines and reduce Iraq's support for Syria. By the end of 2014, it was clear the US administration was demonstrating little strategic ambition or influence in Iraq and was largely relegated to withholding military support or financial threats. Despite this, the US remained Iraq's main supplier of military hardware and shared a reinvigorated concern about AQI (and Syria) (Faber, 2017).

8.5 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

Whilst the primary aim of regime change was to restrain Iraq's ability to destabilise the Gulf region, this aim was realised so completely that it also destabilised Iraq itself. The consequence of this reality and the civil war left Baghdad vulnerable to significant overt and covert interference from its neighbours (Dodge, 2012, p. 208). This resulted in a previously unknown norm in Iraq, involving the elite constructing neo-patrimonial networks by subordinating themselves to external patrons.

These relations can be categorized as being person-to-state and party-to-state relations, typically based on ideational similarities with Iraq's neighbouring countries. These initiatives included cooperation with both the Sunni and Shi'a elites, which allowed traditional state-to-state relations to be replaced, ignored or completely bypassed. Relationships of this nature were established with those countries in direct proximity to Iraq, including Iran, the GCC states and Turkey.

Iran was amongst the first countries to recognise and establish state-to-state relations with Iraq; nonetheless, it also developed person-to-state and party-to-state relations as a means of maximising its influence and acquiring rapid results on the ground. These relations were established with the Shi'a elite, including politicians and religious figures such as Al-Maliki and Al-Sadr, and they took precedence over state-to-state relations which are typically governed through established protocols and standard operating procedures. This process proved to be very easy for Tehran since many of the previous Iraqi elite chosen to build the new government were former Shi'a exiles who had also lived in Iran. Whilst Tehran also pressured Iraqi elite through methods such as using proxies to obtain their goals, they also used more subtle methods, such as reviving memories of shared struggles (Gulmohammed, 2021, p. 127).

In the early stages of the occupation, the GCC states did not engage with the Shi'a government, apart from Kuwait, which meant traditional state-to-state relations were not established. This compelled these states to seek alternative ways of influencing Iraq's internal affairs and counter Iranian influence. However, because the nexus of power emanated from ministries in the hands of the Shi'a elite, the overall influence the Sunni states enjoyed in Iraq was very poor. It can be argued that during this period, the only successful relations the Sunni states had were those with the Kurds. Whilst person-to-state and party-to-state relations were established with the Kurds by GCC states and were economically rewarding, they also provided external patrons with a way of antagonising and undermining the Shi'a government in Baghdad. Overall, Iranian and GCC relations with the KRG resembled the historical ties the Kurds have intermittently enjoyed with external powers.

As noted in chapters 6 and 7, with the passage of time, there was a move away from unit level sectarianism, which also altered the systemic level dynamics between Iraq and its neighbours. This

phenomenon allowed foreign states to develop traditional state-to-state relations in addition to their existing person-to-state and party-to-state relations. This indicates the domestic scene can be considered both a driver and an obstacle for Iraqi bilateral relations.

Whilst GCC countries established state-to-state relations with Iraq, this process was relatively slow and tentative, especially in the case of Saudi Arabia. Nonetheless, the norm of developing person-to-state and party-to-state relations continued during this latter period. But this trend was accompanied by a willingness by the Iraqi elite to work with a much broader range of external actors. That is, Shi'a elite forged ties with Sunni states and the Sunni elite also forged ties with Iran. This can be explained through the elite entrenching themselves within their neo-patrimonial networks and becoming almost self-sufficient. This provided them with the necessary confidence to provide their '*services'* to alternative patrons and operate more independently.

9 THESIS CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 contextualised this thesis and set out the main research question: What was the role and impact of neo-patrimony and sectarianism on the conduct of Iraqi external relations between 2003 and 2014? This question has not been answered in the wider literature on Iraq. As such, this thesis offers an original interpretation of how neo-patrimony and sectarianism, long restricted to examinations of the internal politics of many Middle Eastern states, has had a profound impact on the bureaucracies of state and in shaping foreign policy agendas.

This chapter also outlined the thesis methodology and data acquisition tools. Data were acquired from both primary and secondary sources. The former mainly involved face-to-face semi-structured interviews involving a list of open-ended questions which allowed participants to leave comments on issues they thought were important. The questionnaire data was both non-numerical and numerical, which allowed them to be qualitatively and quantitively analysed respectively. Non-numerical data allowed the narrative to focus on neo-patrimony and sectarianism in the bureaucracies of the state at the unit level. On the other hand, the numerical data were used to investigate insights into the key norms and their influence on foreign policy at the systemic level.

Chapter 2 discussed the paradigms the thesis could have adopted, mainly realism, bureaucratic politics and constructivism. Due to the nature of neo-patrimony and sectarianism, constructivism was selected. Through the use of constructivism, it has been possible to investigate the impact of social constructs such as identity and culture on Iraqi foreign relations while considering structures and agents which realism and bureaucratic politics are incapable of explaining. These notions are key to understanding actor behaviour and are, in part, a rejection of the materialistic assumptions of realism (and neo-realism), which are typically associated with the rational actor model. A constructivist approach was used to emphasise how differences in social constructs based on ideational factors can result in prejudice and fear, and how these notions can become dominant domestic factors, which go on to affect foreign relations.

This chapter outlined three distinct variants of constructivism – the systemic and unit levels and the holistic. Unit-level constructivism focuses on the internal political situation and the impact of social norms and identities. This form of constructivism is typically associated with proponents such as Katzenstein. Conversely, systemic constructivism focuses on interactions between unitary state actors whilst ignoring what happens within them. Wendt is a major proponent of this form of constructivism, which is likened to the realist 'third-image' level of analysis.

On the other hand, holistic constructivism merges both of the aforementioned by bridging the divide between the domestic and international in how interests and identities are constituted. This constructivism aims to integrate the domestically formed identities of states with that of the international through a unified analytical perspective. This form of constructivism is typically associated with proponents such as Kratochwil and Ruggie. Since norms are central to constructivism, it was possible to examine neo-patrimony and sectarianism in a new and novel manner. Norms can be understood as being a standard of suitable behaviour for actors with a given identity. This results in expected behaviour when a salient majority of an elite adopts these norms and internalises them within their practices.

Due to the need to examine both the domestic and international, this thesis adopted a norm-based holistic form of constructivism because whilst neo-patrimony and sectarianism were practised at the unit level, the political status quo could not have been maintained by the Iraqi elite except by highlighting the polarised identities and receiving input from the wider Middle East. It is argued that this was one of the factors which affected the decision-making of the Iraqi elite by shaping their perceptions, interactions and actions, which went on to inform the basis of their international relations.

As per the constructivist framework outlined in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 discussed the neo-patrimonial norm, first as a concept and then its evolution within Iraq. This chapter highlights the structure and benefits of neo-patrimony to the patriarch and his followers and shows how this norm has been strengthened in Iraq through practices such as rentierism and '*wasta'*. Concerning the former, rentier states such as Iraq stand distinctly apart from states which have to rely on their populations and honour a social contract based on transactional requirements. This affected Iraqi state formation and created rulers which were independent of their societies, resulting in inherent state weaknesses and no political accountability or transparency. This can be contrasted with the formation of modern European states.

On the other hand, '*wasta',* which is loosely translated as connections to members of the same family, tribe or group, is an implicit social contract and salient feature of Iraqi identity. It determines how economic activities are structured and how and to who these resources are allocated. In practice, it is considered a source of nepotism, corruption and cronyism, especially by those who do not possess it and provides its practitioners with an unfair advantage or a means of acquiring decisions based on contacts instead of merit. Whilst forms of 'wasta' have existed in most societies in one form or the other throughout the ages, in developed countries these types of practices are typically looked down

upon. However, in the case of Iraq, it has become a key mechanism which has allowed neo-patrimonial patriarchs to remain in power through the dispensation of favours.

Chapter 4 explores the neo-patrimonial state of Iraq before 2003 and between 2003 and 2014. Saddam was able to assume his neo-patrimonial position as a patriarch by taking over the political and military wings of the government through a combination of ruthless coercion, financial co-option and a web of spying agencies. The neo-patrimonial control of state bureaucracies and the subordination of the society resulted in the elimination of any potential rivals and their viability. Saddam's patriarchy consisted of visions of greatness and fears of treachery, which compelled him to rely on his family and extended Tikriti tribe. This ensured state stability when subject to internal and external pressure, especially during the 1990s and early 2000s. In the wake of 35 years of dictatorship and 13 years of sanctions, the reliance upon neo-patrimonial tools such as rentierism and 'wasta' significantly increased.

This chapter also discusses how the neo-patrimonial bureaucracies of the state were inherited by the new Iraqi government and how this created new centres of power consisting of a previously unknown political and religious elite. Whereas before neo-patrimony was implemented in a top-down manner encompassing the entire state, after 2003, many actors sought to consolidate as much power as possible, often resorting to authoritarian and violent strategies – a common feature of Iraqi neo-patronage and a legacy of the Saddam era. Nonetheless, the key difference between this type of neo-patrimony and that of Saddam's was the sheer number of actors vying with one another over state assets. This resulted in a form of neo-patrimony which is best described as being multiple, many or fragmented neo-patrimony, and thus differs from the neo-patrimony of other Arab states. Fragmented neo-patrimony is, therefore, a key concept and feature of this thesis, which sets it apart from other research efforts.

Amongst the key neo-patrimonial actors included the Shi'a political elite, first and foremost, Al-Maliki, and the Kurdish political elite, including Talabani and Barzani. Due to factors such as de-Ba`thification, the Sunni population was poorly represented throughout the research period. Interestingly, the religious elite also participated in developing and maintaining their own neo-patrimonial networks, including Al-Sistani and Al-Sadr. These and others like them became hybrid actors, who enjoyed the role of being part of both the political and religious elite. Although Al-Sistani adheres to the quietest school of thought, he has been involved in key political decisions and is a keen ambassador for Shi'a politics. Al-Sadr benefitted from his father's networks, which were established before his own rise to prominence during the Saddam era. Al-Sadr was also able to develop these further using traditional religious activities such as preaching, but also through more radical acts, using militias helped by

foreign powers. By 2014, Al-Sadr had morphed from religious leader to terrorist and then to respected politician.

The role of the Sunni political and religious elite in developing and maintaining strong neo-patrimonial networks have been significantly less effective relative to their Shi'a and Kurdish counterparts. Unlike the Shi'a religious elite who operated and were funded independently from the government prior to 2003, the Sunni religious elite relied on the state and found themselves isolated because of conflicting narratives concerning the new Iraqi identity and allegiances. The newly constructed Shi'a identity was viewed with scepticism by the Sunni religious establishment, who avoided cooperation where possible.

Both religious and political Sunni failures can be attributed to extensive intra-fragmentation and a disconnect with their communities when deciding the best way to respond to the new Iraqi Shi'a identity. This aided the Al-Maliki neo-patrimonial strategy, which aimed to keep the opposition divided and prevented them from coalescing around a broad anti-Al-Maliki bloc. This was largely successful. However, one of the key differences between the Sunni and Shi'a intra-fragmentation was that elite Sunni differences did not result in intra-faction conflict and violence amongst the political and religious elites. Although groups such as AQI and IS also fought and killed Sunnis, the leaders of these groups never represented Sunnis in general. Moreover, the intra-faction rivalry, especially among the Shi'a, should also be noted here for its ferocity. This phenomenon underlines why the standard prism of sectarianism through which Iraq is typically viewed provides only a partial understanding of the rationale and motives behind the elite decision-making process.

Chapter 5 discusses the pre and post 2003 use of sectarianism in Iraq. Although Saddam did appoint a limited number of Shi'a and even Kurds into the government, he had a strong centralised state under the edifice of the Ba`ath party, which meant all key positions were staffed through neo-patrimonial preferences. Whilst a centralised foreign policy was enacted which allowed the country to benefit during the 1970s under rentierism, the nature of the regime became more belligerent and aggressive, ushering in a new phase of Iraqi foreign policy. This culminated with the Iran-Iraq war and ended with the 1990 Kuwaiti invasion. The ejection from Kuwait and crippling sanctions which followed led to the state being hollowed out. It was during this period that sectarian cleavages began to emerge, which compelled ordinary Iraqis to turn to their tribe and faction for protection.

It is argued the legacy of Saddam's rule in pre-2003 Iraq and the sectarian nature imposed on the state by the US significantly shaped the course of events. This allowed the exiled and previously persecuted Shi'a elites to construct an identity based on a victimhood narrative, which was used to elevate the importance of sectarian identities. This created a situation wherein the Iraqi perception of faction

ambition became the other faction's fear, that is, Shi'a rule resulting in Sunni marginalisation. By chronologically analysing the development of political structures and then juxtaposing them against those developed between 2003 to 2014, the neo-patrimonial consistencies of Iraqi foreign policy decision-making become far clearer.

Soon after the 2003 invasion, the bureaucracies of the state which had served Saddam became divided along sectarian lines. Whilst previously they were held to task by a single patriarch, these institutions infused with a neo-patrimonial logic were now seeking the favour of multiple patriarchs. When Al-Maliki became prime minister in 2006, he initially tried to build a national identity and tackle issues linked to sectarian identity, for example, by attacking fellow Shi'a in the south. However, this opportunity was squandered, as he also sought to strengthen his control over state bureaucracies and pushed Sunni politicians out of key positions as part of the wider process of de-Ba`thification initially condoned by the US. Al-Maliki's early control of the state institutions provided him with a powerful network of neo-patronage and other resources to use. It should be noted the influence of sectarianism on the system was the result of human ideas and immaterial forces. That it rose to prominence was never the result of a material need but was entirely a choice, indeed a social construct, born from particular ideational positions.

As such, it was natural for state and non-state actors from across the political and sectarian divide to seek external help in a bid to protect both their interests and attempt to reduce the influence of others. For example, it is argued that since the previous Iraqi Shi'a political exiles shared ideational factors similar to the Iranian elite, Iran became a key foreign policy partner for multiple Shi'a actors, including the leaders of ISCI and the Sadrists, even though these groups were in opposition. Whilst actors were domestically strengthened through bi-lateral relations, it also required them to sacrifice the Iraqi national interest by allowing foreign countries to exercise power in Iraq. The domestic politics of Iraq interacted with foreign relations not only in terms of how foreign policy is ultimately designed and implemented and how relations with other states are conducted, but also in terms of the opportunities given to other states to exploit political spaces between Iraqis of different identities for their own national interests (Stansfield, 2010).

The Sunni realisation of 'losing' Iraq also meant they were compelled to find foreign backers. This came in the form of AQI, which sought to terrorise the Shi'a government and US forces and return the ascendency of Sunni dispensation and ultimately establish an Islamic state. On the other hand, whilst the 2005 Iraqi constitution allowed for a certain degree of autonomy, Kurdish foreign policy efforts went beyond this mandate with the establishment of foreign embassies in Iraqi Kurdistan and the

cultivating of energy and business ties with states such as Turkey and multinational corporations such as Mobil Exxon.

Following the 2010 elections, the closest incarnation of a body free from sectarian interests was realised in the new national unity government headed by Al-Maliki. Despite the political consensus, the Al-Maliki government did not build national unity or forward a universal Iraqi identity and so another opportunity was squandered. Al-Maliki acquired more power by usurping civilian institutions, such as the judiciary, and independent bodies, such as the elections commission, central bank and the anti-corruption watchdog. In particular, the judiciary became an accomplice to the neo-patrimonial strategies of Al-Maliki through controversial rulings which empowered the executive and restrained or removed his rivals. The most significant rulings first came in 2010 when the constitution was reinterpreted to allow Al-Maliki to form a new government despite not winning the parliamentary elections; the second in 2011, gave the prime minister control over previously independent bodies; and thirdly, the ruling came which allowed the PM, and not parliament to initiate legislation, which meant the legislature was unable to perform its duties (Mccain & Graham, 2013). Al-Maliki also used his influence over state institutions to check his political rivals and shield his political underlings.

Al-Maliki created an informal chain of command in both civilian and military institutions. The neo-patrimonial web spun by Al-Maliki reduced the government's capacity to implement unit-level policies because of corruption. After embedding themselves in the neo-patrimonial hierarchy, elites used identity to shape their social world, whereby they implemented foreign policies which typically reflected their domestic orientations. The promise of neo-patronage offered by the Al-Maliki government was a strong motivator for politicians and proved irresistible. Moreover, the individuals who benefited from these appointments became, in turn, invested in Al-Maliki's success and the continuation of this patriarchy. Sectarian identity was used to deal with opposing constructs, which further reinforced the identity of groups and was used to significantly inform their interests. Thus, Kurds, Shi'a and Sunnis created a set of structures to centralise power and then used a set of norms and a body of thought to organise their worlds according to their unique perceptions of reality.

This tri-polarity was exacerbated in 2011 as Al-Maliki continued to target what he perceived as threats emanating from rival Sunni and Kurdish political figures. This became so prolific that even prominent Sunni politicians working within his party such as Rafi Al-Issawi were targeted and accused of financial improprieties or terrorism. One of the few benefits Iraq experienced from Al-Maliki's consolidation of power was his ability to defuse the federalism challenge from several Iraqi provinces. He was, thus, able to ensure his neo-patrimonial control over most of the country. This is perhaps one of the few reasons why the US remained quiet on the issue of Al-Maliki's power consolidation. However, this

silence gave Al-Maliki the green light even though the US harboured reservations about his neo-patrimonial behaviour.

Although Al-Maliki had amassed Saddam-like powers, Iraq remained weak and Iraqi foreign policy decisions were highly questionable. Al-Maliki refused to extend the 'Status of the Forces Agreement' with the US even though the US and key Iraqis insisted that a US military presence beyond 2011 was advisable – this decision would have deadly consequences for Iraq in the following years, culminating in the fall of Mosul to 'Islamic State' in 2014.

Nonetheless, at the time Iraq enjoyed greater levels of social cohesion amongst its people, and it allowed Al-Maliki to negotiate with foreign powers from a much stronger position. However, as per the theory of neo-patrimony, it is clear that in a fractured state like Iraq, the political elite was primarily concerned with creating alliances and developing foreign policies geared towards persevering and increasing their own status. This meant decisions were not taken with the national interest at heart; rather, foreign policy was viewed primarily through a neo-patrimonial prism.

In 2013, Zebari claimed Iraq had a neutral stance regarding Syria. But while this remained the official policy espoused by the Foreign Ministry, Al-Maliki was cooperating with Iran and sending Iranian military hardware through Iraq to Syria to aid the Assad regime. This is telling since the Syrian government had previously backed terrorist groups in Iraq and had refused to hand over Iraqi Ba`th members accused of bombings in Baghdad. This event in particular highlights Iraqi foreign policy solidarity with Assad. At the very least, it can be argued Al-Maliki was beholden to Iran, which wanted more support for Assad. Al-Maliki's willingness to support Assad and his unwillingness to abide by US sanctions on Iran highlights how Iraqi foreign policy was much closer to Iran's than that of the US and cannot be considered neutral. Events such as these made it clear that the government began to view an ever-increasing number of issues through a fragmented neo-patrimonial prism since any Sunni acquisition of power in Syria could have been given an impetus to the Sunni struggle in Iraq and threaten its Shi'a elite. There was also a fear that Sunni discontent and the instability in Syria might translate into a resurgence of AQI. Shi'a decision-makers feared that any security crackdown on Sunni protests would be viewed as a sectarian attack, which could increase the drivers of instability and fuel a regeneration of AQI. Once again, regime survival became paramount, and sectarianism was used by the government to colour social and political perceptions.

That Iraq did not have a unified foreign policy helped the Kurdish agenda, which gained significantly from the dissonance, allowing the Kurds to seize oil-rich areas of Iraq and pursue their own foreign policies at the expense of Baghdad's. Moreover, Zebari had always backed the Kurdish cause and is also Masoud Barzani's uncle. For the KDP's critics, these relations highlight the neo-patrimonial based

style of the party. Therefore, the neo-patrimonial prism can also be used to explain Zebari's position on key issues. However, unlike the Shi'a and Sunni political elite which attempted to reinforce neo-patrimonial claims by ensuring numerical superiority within a ministry, it can be argued this was not possible for Zebari because the Foreign Ministry is located in Arab Iraq, or it may be argued this was never his goal because his position allowed him to benefit the Kurds in other ways, for example, by allowing KRG missions abroad which was against the constitution - an Arab foreign minister may have taken issue with such moves.

Although the Iraqi foreign policy remained fragmented from 2003 to 2014, the Kurds carved out an autonomous area, enjoying a foreign policy independent of Baghdad. Whilst differences existed between Kurdish factions, these were not enough for them to break away, take up arms against each other and pursue their own interests. So, whilst the KRG government structure was indeed fragmented and neo-patrimonial in nature, it was not as fragmented as the Sunni and Shi'a factions. The KPG structure was formed mainly out of self-interest as the two main Kurdish factions and their supporters benefited from the neo-patronage derived from the control of Kurdish areas and their resources. However, this author predicts that as per the failed patrimonial states of early modern Europe, Kurdish successes will also unravel.

Chapter 6 presents the first section of the field data. It made use of the framework by exploring the neo-patrimonial and sectarian norms at the unit level within state bureaucracies. This chapter documented the feelings, thoughts and concerns of research participants and documented how identity played a key role in the dispensation of power within the state bureaucracies. This chapter reaffirms the attempt by sectarian groups to acquire as much power as possible by infiltrating and taking over state bureaucracies, typically acquired through numerical supremacy. Whilst the elite goal involved ensuring neo-patrimonial benefits for themselves, the use of sectarianism provided a convenient tool for categorising people as the 'other'. According to respondents, sectarianism comprised three variables, namely competing identities, previous grievances found in the faction and the intensity of regional polarisation. These variables complement the norm-based constructivist framework. On a practical level, this meant employees from minority groups were subject to low levels of sectarian discrimination in the form of religious attire, anthems, pictures and graffiti, and high levels in the form of failed job applications. Whilst between 2003 and 2010, the bureaucracies were considered fluid and greater levels of othering occurred, after 2010, the control of bureaucracies became solidified, whereby participants indicated they were less likely to be subjected to othering practices.

In addition to formulating their own unique identities, those in charge of bureaucracies engaged in the construction of other groups using sectarian descriptors, which resulted in the homogenisation of state institutions. Moreover, because of othering, it can be argued the three main identities mutually facilitated the construction of each other by representing other identities as threatening to self's identity. This indicates identities and differences are a combination of both the self and other. By framing bureaucracies as us and them, distrust was created, and it led to competing foreign policies. It also underlines why employees tended to pursue aims and objectives which were clearly not in the national interest. Despite their many differences, those in charge of the bureaucracies shared one common denominator: each patriarch was highly committed to persevering their own neo-patrimonial networks and benefits.

Chapter 7 builds upon the key themes and norms analysed in Chapter 6 and explores them further using quantitative data acquired from interviewee statements. As per the outlined framework, a greater emphasis was placed upon the systemic level influences of norms on agents and structural elements and their impact on foreign policy. These norms radically altered the formation of the modern state of Iraq and the way power was dispensed amongst its people. This permitted components such as ethnicity and religion to form the neo-patrimonial claims of the political and religious elite. In this manner, the acquired data also demonstrated the salience of identity and its ability to fundamentally influence state preferences and actions, which are key to constructivism.

According to the interviewees, the Shi'a government's identity was especially reflected in the bilateral ties with its neighbours, especially with Saudi Arabia and Iran. Shi'a feelings of victimhood under Saddam were compounded as Saudi Arabia, an Arab neighbour, withdrew from Iraq and unofficially helped the Sunni insurgencies with material and human resources. Moreover, responses and analysis concerning the Syrian civil war and resultant Iraqi foreign policy clearly demonstrated how elite decision-makers were unable to differentiate between ideas and interests. Indeed, it is only through a certain degree of ideational framing that it is possible to explain Iraqi foreign policy because the opportunities and threats which arose from Syria are not self-evident and objectively meaningful as they would be using a realist framework. As per constructivism, this thesis argues that it is only possible to fully appreciate both the Iraqi-Iranian and the Iraqi-Syrian relationship through the social structures which shaped their behaviours and interests. In his willingness to support the Assad regime in Syria and unwillingness to abide by U.S. sanctions on Iran, Al-Maliki pursued a regional policy which was much closer to Iran's than that of the US.

Due to a lack of Kurdish and Sunni foreign policy representation in the central government, these groups developed their own systemic level relations with Iraq's neighbours. For the Kurds, this meant

creating a unique Kurdish identity distinct from an Arab one and developing state-to-state relations with the outside world. However, this was not possible for the Sunni population, which meant it developed relations with non-state terrorist groups who claimed a similar identity. This was often encouraged by the Sunni religious establishment and was a significant catalyst in the sectarian civil war. It permitted the Shi'a government to soften its foreign policy towards Iran by allowing it greater access to Iraq and control of its state assets. In turn, this created a vicious circle, fuelling increased sectarian perceptions of direct links between Shi'a neo-patrimonial structures and foreign policy.

The data showed that one of the key sectarian outcomes was the practice of identity-based othering. The Sunnis, and the Kurds to a lesser extent, othered Shi'a in a dual manner, firstly spiritually alluding to Shi'a Islam and, secondly, through the exiled Shi'a elite's historic connections to Iran and the West. Surprisingly, this latter mode of othering was also practised by the domestic Shi'a elite, who rejected the 'Iraqiness' of the Shi'a exiles. Whilst these strategies took place at the unit level, it can be argued that their primary aim was to reduce the systemic capabilities and scope of the 'other' foreign policies. This was done by the neo-patrimonial patriarchs allying themselves with international actors who would aid the Iraqi elite in denying the opposition valuable neo-patronage which could be acquired through ministerial positions.

Chapter 8 explored the synergy of the weak state, which made Iraq the centre of regional attention following the occupation and then political and military withdrawal of the US. This provided a broad range of actors with the ability to pursue their own unit level agendas, which was only possible with the support of external patrons. Since all of the regional powers had an interest in influencing the new Iraq – its government, its shape and its direction – each state backed different groups based on ideational factors aimed at maximising their own and containing the international agenda of states backing other elites.

This external interference was multi-faceted. It included support for the mainstream political, religious and the tribal elites. Iran's close ties to Al-Maliki epitomised person-to-state relations, but it was also successful in sponsoring religious elites such as Al-Sadr and militant groups such as JAM and their leaders. On the other hand, Sunni states, such as those of the GCC and Turkey, were relatively unsuccessful in curbing Iranian influence in Arab Iraq. However, they were relatively successful when partnering with the KRG. Whilst this provided economic benefits, it also provided sponsor states with leverage over local politics. Despite the intense competition between rival Sunni and Shi'a states in the region, it was Iran which was successful in dictating Iraqi unit and systemic level policies.

This thesis provides an alternative interpretation of events compared to traditional positivist theories by offering explanations for events within Iraq which were not solely linked to wealth, geography and

material power. The thesis also offers a far more nuanced explanation when compared to the faction-centric view. Whilst a literature which views Iraq through a faction-centric prism is common, this thesis instead stresses the importance of the structuring of Iraqi politics involving the takeover of public sector positions and resources being key sources of neo-patrimony. As expected, neo-patrimonial control over the bureaucracies benefited a select few. By contrast, sectarian-based politics has the potential to, or at least claims to, benefit particular groups more widely, even if this is done at a cost to wider national and state cohesion. The impact of neo-patrimony was cronyism. Sectarian identities have defined influence in the bureaucracies of state charged with executing Iraqi foreign policy. Neo-patrimony and notions of power also provide a potential explanation for the Shi'a internal conflict, something which the faction-centric view cannot account for.

The thesis concludes that when fragmented neo-patrimony occurs, control over foreign policy is greatly diminished. This phenomenon can be contrasted not only with the neo-patrimonial arrangements under Saddam's regime, when foreign policy was stronger, but also with other regional states where government bureaucracies function based on familial or clan ties. When foreign policy was centralised under Saddam, strong policies were enacted irrespective of bureaucracies being imbued with neo-patrimonial logic. So, whilst neo-patrimony and fragmented neo-patrimony compel ruling elites to pursue policies which ensure their survival, fragmented neo-patrimony has proven itself to be functionally incapable of delivering long-term unit and system-level benefits to the state. Moreover, foreign policy became so divisive in Iraq, it remained largely ineffective because of the state's inability to monopolise power and because its bureaucratic institutions were required to compete with one another alongside non-state actors. This severe weakening of the state was based on ethnic, religious and ideological cleavages, which intensified political instability and the competition for patronage.

As a final note, it would be difficult to generalise the findings of this thesis to other states in the regions because of the nature of the drivers which influenced Iraq at the unit and systemic levels. This reality underlines the importance of this study because it adds to the current academic lacunae concerning Iraq in the context of a neo-patrimonial and sectarian state.

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11 APPENDIX ALITERATURE REVIEW SUMMAR

Publication	Date	Publication type				Main policy focus				
		Book	Journal	Pdf	PhD thesis	Neo-patrimony	Identity/ Sectarianism/ Internal cleavages	Bureaucratic fragmentation	Impact of the CPA/ Elections	International and/or regional players
Sectarianism in Iraq Antagonistic Visions of Unity' by Fanar Haddad	2011	☒	☐	☐	☒	☐	☒	☐	☒	☒
Iraq, Its Neighbours and the United States: Competition, Crisis and the Reordering of Power edited by Barkey et al.	2011	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Identity and Foreign Policy in the Middle East edited by Telhami & Barnett	2002	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
The foreign policies of Middle East states edited by Hinnbusch & Ehteshami.	2008	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐
The Making of Foreign Policy in Iraq: Political Factions and the Ruling Elite by Gulmohamad.	2021	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☒
The political Geography of Kurdistan by Dahlman.	2002	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
Unrecognized States in the International System by Caspersen & Stansfield.	2011	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒
Over-Stating the Unrecognised State? Reconstructing De Facto Independent Entities in the International System by Harvey	2010	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒
Contested sovereignty as an opportunity: understanding democratic transitions in unrecognized states by Voller.	2010	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒
How conditions of state weakness have Influenced Iraqi foreign policy production 2003-2013 by Younis.	2014	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☒	☐	☒	☒
Iraq's 2014 National Elections by Ali.	2014	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐
The Politics of Sectarianism	2013	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☒
Iraq From War to A New Authoritarianism by Dodge	2012	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒	☐