"Us" and "Them" Dichotomy Within: Iraqi Identity Building During the Saddam Era

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Abstract

Saddam Hussein's attempts at nation-building promoted a dichotomy of "us" and "them" not only on the outside, but also within Iraq's borders. Within this context, the paper reveals how the Ba'ath regime gradually transformed itself into an oligarchy during Saddam Hussein's rule and transformed the Sunnis from a minority to a majority while alienating other ethnic and religious elements in Iraq. The paper also explores how the system collapsed with the Iraqi War in 2003 as well as the contribution of Saddam's failure in developing an Iraqi national identity to that process. Throughout the paper it is argued that the alienation of certain ethnic and religious groups contributed to the downfall of the Saddam regime by forcing the alienated groups into collaboration with the US. Today, little remains of the Iraqi nationality and the Iraqi identity. The Iraqi national identity, which various Iraqi regimes tried to develop, dissolved as soon as the state apparatus disappeared.

Key Words

Iraq, nation-building, identity, Saddam Hussein

Introduction

After the US invasion, the Iraqi nationality and the Iraqi identity all but disappeared. The sectarianism along ethno-religious lines escalated into a civil war, and some suggested that the country be divided into three parts as a solution: a Kurdish state in the north, a Sunni Arab state in the middle and a Shi'i Arab state in the south. Today, it remains unclear whether Iraq will remain as a unified state, or whether it will break up into three separate identities. The Iraqi national identity that various Iraqi regimes tried to develop, dissolved as soon as the state apparatus disappeared. It is generally argued that the alienation of certain ethnic and religious groups by the Saddam regime's policies of assimilation and repression contributed to the collapse of the regime by facilitating cooperation between the alienated groups in Iraq and the United States.

This paper examines the identity formation process in Iraq during the Saddam by looking at i) the strategies of the Saddam regime in formulating a common national identity; ii) the policies of the regime towards different ethnic and sectarian groups, mainly Sunni Arabs, Shi'i Arabs and the Kurds; iii) and the existence of competing national, sub-national and transnational identities in Iraq during that period. The main argument of the paper is that the Saddam regime's assimilative and repressive nationalist ideology has proven to be divisive, promoting an "us" and "them" dichotomy within Iraq as well as outside. It is argued that sub-national ethnic, sectarian, tribal, and transnational identities took precedence over the Iraqi national identity.

Iraq's fragile national identity can be traced back to the origins of the Iraqi state. Iraq was created in 1921 according to British interests in the Middle East. The Iraqi state was put together from three provinces of the collapsed Ottoman Empire: Baghdad, Basra and Mosul. The creation of Iraq and demarcation of its borders was an artificial process. The boundaries of modern Iraq were drawn according to narrow European political and economic interests rather than demographic realities. The south of the country was overwhelmingly Arab Shi'i, the central part Arab Sunni, and the north contained substantial non-Arab populations, primarily Kurdish and Turcoman. There are two basic cleavages within the Iraqi population: religious and ethnic. The religious division lies between the Shi'i Muslim majority, approximately 60 per cent of the population, and the Sunni Muslim minority, constituting less than 30 per cent of the population, who nevertheless dominated the government until the collapse of the regime in 2003. Although the Sunnis and the Shiites largely adhere to the same belief system, they have fought with each other in Iraq for over 1400 years (Sciolino 1991, 39). In addition to this diversity, there are smaller groups of Christians and Jews who are mainly city dwellers. The exception is the Christian Assyrians who live in villages north of Mosul (Dawisha 2002, 119). There is also an ethnic division that separates Arabs and non-Arabs.

King Faisal (1921-1933) under the British mandate became successful in maintaining a politics of moderating conflicting elements and introducing a measure of social integration. According to Sluglett and Sluglett (2003, 112), although Faisal was brought to power by the British, he did not totally submit to British demands. He tried to keep a balance between the expectations of the British and the Iraqi national aspirations. It seems that Faisal was more successful in nation-building than his successors. Succeeding Iraqi governments

have also tried to construct a common identity, a sense of Iraqi nationhood. As part of the nation-building process, state education emphasized nationalism and secularism; an army was built and introduced as the essential national institution. Authoritarian, repressive and centralizing regimes that have ruled Iraq since the demise of the monarchy in July 1958 relied on mobilization efforts and made appeals to identity. However, the most frequent definitions and redefinitions of Iraqi identity have occurred in the era of Saddam Hussein.

Ryan (1995, 2) asserts that "[i]n the third world, states that inherited artificial borders that did not reflect pre-existing cultural divisions have frequently experienced serious ethnic violence as they struggled to adjust to a post-colonial generation". In the Iraqi context, there is not a clear convergence between state frontiers and cultural boundaries. This situation challenges Gellner's definition of nationalism, which is "primarily a principle that holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent" (Gellner 1983, 1). Ethnic and sectarian composition of the country, which is heterogeneous and fragmented, has become an obstacle to the formation of a common identity since the inception of the Iraqi state and has led to conflict. However, ethnic and cultural diversity by itself does not necessarily lead to conflict between ethnic groups as Stavenhagen suggests (1996, 9); when a state is essentially controlled by a majority or dominant *ethnie*, which is able to exercise hegemony over the rest of the nation, ethnic conflict will occur. Inter-ethnic or sectarian competition or rivalry is hardly a cause of conflict itself. Rather, poor leadership, motivated by particular interests and with a record of discrimination, violation of human rights and economic and social neglect, is the main cause of internal conflicts (Wolff 2006, 63).

The Rule of Dominant Minority
Saddam's Consolidation of Power

On 17 July 1968, the Ba'thists made their successful coup and toppled the Arif regime. In the second Iraqi Ba'thist government, General Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr became the president and commander-in-chief, he remained secretary-general of the Party and chairman of its Revolutionary Command Council. Saddam became the deputy chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council, the second most important post in the ruling hierarchy, and he became responsible for all internal security matters. At the beginning of his career, Saddam started to remove dissident elements and anyone who might threaten Ba'thist power or his own position, as Simons (1996, 280) argues. In that era, non-Ba'thists were expelled from state institutions and Saddam gradually increased his power. He had dominated the army, placed his own security men into all the state organs, removed all the civilian rivals, and increasingly came to dominate the Iraqi president. Although al-Bakr was the official president, by 1973, he was completely isolated, and became a symbolic president at the end (Simons 1996, 280-293).

On 17 July 1979, Saddam Hussein declared himself as the president of Iraq. According to Karsh and Rautsi (1991, 24), Saddam began creating for himself a cult of personality which had never been seen before in Iraq or the Arab world (Rezun 1992, 124). As Saddam's cult of personality grew after his seizure of presidency in 1979, the party's role correspondingly diminished. Thus, it could be said that, after 1979, Iraqi politics became linked to the person of Saddam Hussein. Saddam believes that he always speaks for the Iraqi people so their wishes are his. He was equated himself with the state similar to

King Louis XIV who said that "*L'état c'est moi*" (I am the state) (Simons 1996, 287). As a part of launching a strong personality cult strategy, Saddam's pictures appeared everywhere like on postage stamps, wrist watches, T-shirts, street hoardings, in schools, offices, and throughout government buildings. The airport at Baghdad became the Saddam International Airport and Saddam's Birthday became a National Day.

Failure of nation-building attempts in Iraq could be explained by two factors as Bengio suggests. One is the systemic factors related with the very makeup of the Iraqi state itself. It could be said that Iraq lacks the cornerstones for the formation of a nation, such as common territory, religion, language and race. However, this systemic factor could not explain the failure of nation-building process in Iraq by its own. It is known that some countries with more heterogeneous and fragmented populations than Iraq like Iran were successful in nation building. The problem with the Iraqi case could be explained by another factor which is the occasional, related to the Ba'thi ideology and its policies (Bengio 1999, 150). Although, the Sunni-led Ba'thi regime in power was more dedicated than any of its predecessors to the ideal of Iraqi nation building and state building, its policies produced opposite results. It is even argued that the failure of the nation-building process in Iraq is related with the propagation of nationalism as a state ideology by the Ba'thi regime (Bengio 1998, 103).

In addition to the heterogeneous and fragmented structure of Iraq which seems as an obstacle to the state and nation building, Arab Sunni minority rule in the country made the nation-building process difficult. The tension between the politically dominated Sunni minority and the other Iraqi communities continued during the Ba'th regime. Chalabi (2007) explains the transition in the Iraqi Ba'th party which was formed in Iraq in the early 1950s by Shi'i and Sunni Arabs. He states that within the four years of the November 1963 coup by nationalist army officers Shi'is removed from the leadership. In the 1968 coup, which brought the Ba'th Party to power for the second time, Sunni policy makers were the overwhelming majority. After Saddam succeeded in eliminating all of his opponents within the "Iraqi Command", the party turned into a sectarian organization. On the other hand, Musallam (1996, 22-73) explains the sectarianism in Ba'th party through making a comparison with the Communist party of the Soviet Union where the ethnic Russians were overwhelmingly composed the majority. He states that "in Iraq Sunni Muslims accounted for 84.9 per cent of the top command of the party, while Shi'i members represented only 5.7 per cent".

During Saddam Hussein's term as the leader of the vigorously Arabist Ba'th Party, whose slogan was "one Arab nation with an external mission," Arabism was systematically propagated by the Ba'th party. Given the existence of the non-Arab populations in Iraq, Arabist Ba'th ideology was in contradiction with the ethnic and religious composition of Iraq. Ba'thists continuously invoked Arabism by ignoring the existence of the non-Arab Kurdish community which constituted some 20 percent of the Iraqi population (Dawisha 2003). Ba'th party's commitment to the uncompromising Arab nationalist ideology and to achieving pan-Arab unity not just alienated the non-Arab population-mainly Kurds-but also Arab Shi'is. The country's Shi'i majority never overcame its suspicion of Arab

nationalism as being a Sunni project as Dawisha (2003) argues. Shi'i suspicions related with the Sunni project were related primarily to politics, with the Sunni dominance over Iraq's political system. It is even said by Bengio (1998, 103) that all-Arab nationalism adopted by the regime was the most extreme case of sectarianism. Pan-Arabism in Ba'th regime's ideology was seen by the other ethnic and sectarian groups as a tool in order to consolidate the Sunni Arab rule. According to some authors like al-Khalil (1990, 215), much of the violence during the Ba'thi regime is attributable to the incompatibility between the political goal of Arabism and the confessional distribution of the Iraqi society.

As a result of the Kurdish rebellion which led to the 1970 settlement and the bloody fight between Jordan and Palestinian guerillas which was in contradiction with the pan-Arabist policy that Iraq followed, Saddam revaluated Iraq's single-minded pan-Arab orientation (Dawisha 2002, 128) According to Dawisha (2003), the enthusiasm for Arab nationalism decreased due to the recognition of the country's own needs. It does not mean that the Ba'th regime no longer cared about Arab nationalism, rather primacy was started to given to the internal problems of the country like achieving political harmony, building infrastructure, reviving economy and solving the problem of ethnic and sectarian divisions (Dawisha 2002, 129). This tendency was also related to the regional developments, particularly with the defeat of the Arab armies in 1967 and Nasser's diminishing prestige. Musallam explains this situation with the death of President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt which marked the beginning of a new era in contemporary Arab politics. He states that while the first generation Arab leaders who founded Arab nationalism were idealistic, second generation of Arab leaders such as Hafez al-Assad in Syria and Saddam Hussein in Iraq followed realistic policies due to the failure of pan-Arabist ambition (Musallam 1996, 33-34).

As a result of these developments, Iraq was quickly loosing its image as a base for Arab nationalist revolution by the mid 1970s. To prove this tendency, in instructing an educational committee, Saddam Hussein said:

> When we talk of the [Arab] nation, we should not forget to talk about the Iraqi people… When we talk about the Arab homeland, we should not neglect to educate the Iraqi to take pride in the piece of land in which he lives… [Iraqis] consist of Arabs and non Arabs, [so] when we talk about the great [Arab] homeland, we must not push the non-Arabs to look for a country outside Iraq (Baram 1983, 196).

Therefore, Ba'th elites have been confronted by a problem of identity between two ideologies: Iraqi nationalism versus Arab nationalism, or *wataniyya* versus *qawmiyya Arabiyya. Qawmiyya Arabiyya* derived from the word qawm (meaning "tribe, ethnic nationality") while *wataniyya* derived from the word watan (meaning "homeland, native country"). The word qawmiyya has been used to refer to pan-Arab nationalism, while wataniyya has been used to refer to patriotism at a more local level and based on territory (in our case; Iraqi nationalism). This is not unique to the Iraqi case; there are different identities and nationalisms in the Arab Middle East due to the make-up of the region. The concept of the *state* is a European one and come to the Middle East as an

'imported commodity' partly under colonial pressure and under the influence of imitation (Ayubi 1995, 21). The states of the Arab Middle East established after the World War I lacking prior territorial statehood attached to the Islamic and Arab identities rather than the territorial nation state. Hinnebusch (2003) states that there is an incongruity between the state (sovereignty) and the nation (identity) in the Middle Eastern context. This is why, some of the countries of the region are irredentist and identification with sub-state or supra-state levels are stronger than territorial identification. While, nationalism means loyalty to the "state", ethnicity, primordialism, tribalism, sub-nationalism means loyalty to the "nation". In the Middle East, there is a strong tendency to organize political life according to cultural boundaries rather than the territorial boundaries (Ryan 1995, 9).

There is also an argument that political configuration in the Middle East is a consequence of Islamic culture, rather than a Third World phenomenon. According to that perspective, the reasons for the lack of identification with the territorial nation-state in the Middle East is related with the Islam itself. In the Arab world, due to the concept of *umma* (universal Islamic community) in Islam, Arabs are not sympathetic to territory based on politics and in Islam there is no territorial conception of the state. However, religious factors are not sufficient to explain the weakness of national territorial state in the Arab world by its own. Ayubi (1995, 136) asserts that, the transition to a nation-state corresponds with the emergence of an industrial revolution and the organization of a working class movement in Europe, which has not taken place in the Middle East.

On the other hand, *qawmiyya Arabiyya* rests on the Pan-Arabist ideology developed in the twentieth-century in conjunction with the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire and the entrance of the colonial powers in the region. Its roots back to the idea of Sati' Al-Husri (1882-1968) who was the most influential theoretician of Arab nationalism. Al-Husri was inspired by German nationalism and German philosophers Herder and Fichte. As opposed to the French idea of the nation which is equated with the state, al-Husri borrowed German nationalism in which there is a distinction between the state and the nation. Depending on cultural nationalism which has linguistic and historical dimensions, al Husri rejected the view that "state creates the nation". Pan-Arabism was emerged as a political movement to throw out the rule of the Ottoman Empire during the World War I. Arabism was perceived basically in contrast to 'Turkism' in the Ottoman state. Pan-Arabism perceived as a challenge to the Turkification policies of the Ottoman Empire. After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, pan-Arabism became a challenge for the domination of the colonial rulers in the Middle East and then the externally imposed "the state of Israel". The independence movements motivated by Arabism paved the way for the formation of the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party. Arabism both had a political and cultural character. Culturally, it was based on the idea of a common culture, language and shared history and politically, it was a common struggle against colonialism and for liberation and progress. Pan-Arabism reached its peak in the 1950s and 1960s due to the rise of independent movements and the rise of Nasser in Egypt as the pan-Arab leader. Pan-Arabism was perceived as a solution to "one nation-many states" dilemma. Given the popular credibility of Arabism, rulers in

the Arab states identified themselves with Arabism in order to overcome their legitimacy crisis (Hinnebusch 2003).

While *Wataniyya* is expressed as to rely on the Iraqi state and make emphasis on the "unity within", *qawmiyya Arabiyya* means Arab nationalism, its focus is on "unity without" (Bengio 1987, 512) *Qawmiyya* and *wataniyya* both coexisted and competed with each other in the Iraqi context. Ever since its formation, the question of whether Iraq is a nation-state or an Arab state has been contested (Tripp 2002, 168). This situation is valid for all the Arab states in general in these years but it is clearly valid for Iraq, and most especially for Ba'thi Iraq. This is related with the ideological commitment of the Ba'th party to all-Arab nationalism on the one hand and the existence of non-Arab populations on the other hand.

After Iraqi nationalism gained primacy to Arab nationalism, the Ba'th regime started to promote a new version of Iraqi nationalism through selecting elements from ancient Mesopotamian history and imagery and incorporating them into the new Iraqi national identity. Throughout the 1970s, the regime adopted a political and cultural program designed to create a link between modern Iraq and ancient civilizations (Dawisha 2002, 128). As a part of this strategy, Saddam resurrected the important archeological sites of ancient Iraq including the reconstruction of Babylon (Sciliono 2001, 50). Plays revealing the achievements of Sumeria, Akkadia, Babylonia and Assyria were performed, archeological work was done to resurrect and/or reconstruct such identities as Hatra, Assur, Nineveh and Babylon, new museums of Iraqi history were built and artists and intellectuals were encouraged to incorporate Iraq's pre-Arab heritage in their work. This strategy shows that instead of portraying a politician model inspired by the modern ideas of liberalism or democracy, Saddam inclined to seek political models in the Mesopotamian past when absolutist regimes were imposed on entire populations. The aim was to maintain a homogenized Iraq. In an interview to Time magazine, he stated that "Any leader would prefer his people to think from one point of view, to be of one religion, one sect, in one city" (Sciolino 1991, 92). In order to achieve this goal, he used the Party, army, history and repression.

Saddam regime tried to make an emphasis on Iraqi) nationalism due to failure of pan-Arabist policies both in the Arab world and in Iraq. In the Arab world, after the humiliating defeat of 1967 war which had motivated by pan-Arab ambitions, pan-Arabist retreat began. After the demise of pan-Arabism, the vacuum was filled by Islam or loyalty to the state (territorial nationalism). In addition to the demise of pan-Arabism regionally, the Kurdish opposition movement played a role in Saddam's strategy to develop Iraqi nationalism. However, as it stated before, the distinction between Arabism and Iraqi nationalism is not clear in the Iraqi context. The Iraqi Baathist regime did not abandon its commitment to Arabism. The Baathist regime in Iraq invoked different "nationalisms" on different occasions. As it will be analyzed in the previous pages, although the regime initiated a series of nation-building instruments depended on territorial nationalism throughout the 1970s, pan-Arabism continued to be an important tool for the Saddam regime. It was a key element in self-legitimation. Saddam tried to the fill the vacuum of Egypt which

had perceived as the leader of the pan-Arab world after Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979 and lost its prestige in the Arab world. As an example for the coexistence of Iraqi nationalism and Arabism together, the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) would be given. Although the war against Iraq was inspired by Iraqi nationalism depending on a territorial claim (to take Shatt al-Arab), Saddam both made appeal to pan-Arab solidarity in order to provide economic and political support and to a nationalist mythology concerning the rightful frontiers of the territorial state of Iraq (Tripp 2002, 180).

It is puzzling that although both the Arabism and the nationalism are secular ideologies, in Iraq there was the dominance of the Sunnis in each cases. The essence of pan-Arabism was secular and the Arab nationalists from Husri to Michel Aflaq who is the founder and the philosopher of the Ba'th Party rejected Islam's political and constitutional implications and insisted that it was not religious but linguistic and historical ties that would unite the Arab nation. However, Ba'thist pan-Arabism was a Sunni phenomenon in Iraq. On the other hand, religion and nationalism are seen as two competing concepts. Kedourie gives a clear definition of nationalism as a secular doctrine of self determination (Kedourie 1993). In the Iraqi case, the dominance of the Sunni Arabs was not just purely motivated by religious considerations. Saddam and the Baathist regime had a secular character. Saddam had hardly ever been used Islamic symbols. The rule of Saddam based on tribalism, even a small group of people from Saddam's hometown Tikrit rather than religion. Saddam was not able to trust anyone and he just positioned closest relatives and tribal members whom he would not regard as a direct threat to important posts (Rezun 1992, 17). An important reason for the exclusion of the Shi'is Arabs is related with the Saddam regime's notion that Shiites are foreigners, who have a Persian origin.

Instruments of Nation Building

The Ba'th regime used some instruments in imposing Iraqi nationalism on the population. Main method in accelerating nation-building process was the Ba'thisation. For instance, the right to the title of patriot was taken away from the people who opposed the Ba'th and all organizations and parties were closed. Loyalty to Iraq was measured to the party. Every citizen was thought to be a servant of the Ba'th party as Saddam commented in February 1979 during a visit to Basra; "all citizens are Ba'this irrespective of their ethnic origins" (Simons 2006, 285). Abu Japer (1966, 87) asserts that although the actual members were less than 1 percent of the population, 10 percent of the population was on the member list of the Ba'th Party.

The use of force and violent measures were other methods used by the regime. Saddam recognized the necessity of autocratic measures as a part of nation-building process (Musallam 1996, 72). The Iraqi state rests on some elements such as indoctrination, Party membership, nepotism, terror, rewards for service to the state during Saddam's leadership as Simons (1996, 289) states. The organs of state security which are *Mukhabarat* (Party Intelligence), The *Amn al-Amm* (State Internal Security), the *Amn al-Khass* (Presidential Affairs Department) and The *Amn al-Hizb* (Party Security) were responsible for protecting the Party. In these security organizations, totalitarian conditions were sustained where there is little regard for human rights. Such bodies as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have frequently provided evidence of torture and other forms of repression

done by the Government of Iraq. Torture was institutionalized and systematically applied during the Saddam era (Makiya 1998, 66).

Another method in the nation-building process was the building of a strong army. This was the continuation of the monarchical era, when the country was kept together by force of arms. Makiya asserts that "Iraqi army acted as an agent for internal repression" (Makiya 1998, 21). Army was perceived as a melting pot which would help in overcoming the religious and ethnic divisions. The strong army in Saddam's era, which was the strongest in the country's history, was established with the aim of compensating the weak social, political, and national bonds between the different segments of the society and providing glue for keeping them all together (Bengio 1999, 151). In a similar way, the wars that Iraq initiated, first against Iran and then Kuwait was seen as a way to stimulate nationalist feelings. This strategy seemed to work especially during the Iran-Iraq war given the identification of Shi'is in Iraq with Iraq rather than Iran in spite of Iranian calls. Iraq emerged as a major militarized state during the Iran war. Before the Gulf War, Iraq was listed as one of the top military states in the world by some experts (Musallam 1996, 84).

Standardized education is an important element in nation- building processes. Gellner suggests that a modern industrial state can only function with a mobile, literate, culturally standardized population and this requires standardized education which forms a solid basis for a nation (Gellner 1983, 19-38). The Ba'th regime perceived schools as primary instruments in establishing patriotic sentiments. Saddam had always believed that the education of the young is vital in the process of nation-building (Karsh and Rautsi 1991, 176). The most important duty of teachers was seen to create nationalist sentiments. A national education committee was established where ways and means of strengthening patriotic feelings among the young were discussed. Youth centers all over the Iraq opened in order to develop feelings of patriotism.

Ba'thi efforts at nation building which were exclusive, contradictory, extremist and violent created a "republic of fear" in al-Khalil's terms where fear became an integral part of daily life (Al-Khalil 1990). The Ba'thi "divide and rule policy" which excluded the Shi'is, Kurds and other ethnic and religious from the mainstream of national identity prevented the creation of a united Iraqi nation and forced the regime to re-invoke certain identities like Arabism, Islamism and tribalism that will be examined in the following sections.

The Kurdish Question under the Ba'th Regime

The Kurds, today, exist in the parts of Iraq, Iran, Syria, Turkey and Lebanon and the former Soviet Union. They are pastoral, nomadic people who have never been an internationally recognized nation. The Kurdish people are probably the largest ethnic group that has never achieved statehood. Iraqi rulers perceive Kurds' very existence as a challenge to both Iraqi and Arab nationalism, and every single regime in Iraqi politics has had to deal with them in one way or another. After examining the policies of the different Iraqi regimes, it is seen that the policies have ranged from assimilation to recognition of their national rights. The Ba'th over the years of its existence applied policies towards the Kurds lying between these poles. In order to understand this complicated relationship, it is necessary to examine the relations between the Kurds and the Ba'th regime briefly.

When the Ba'th party seized power in 1968, the political question of the Kurds gained importance. The Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP)'s political influence as a pressure group had been growing steadily then. Since the KDP was a non-Arab political party opposing to the Ba'th party's tenets of Arab nationalism and Arab unity, a clash was inevitable (Musallam 1996, 69). As it was stated before, the policy of Arab-nationalism followed by the Ba'th regime was in contradiction with the general structure of Iraq where non-Arab population-mainly the Kurds-lived.

The idea of autonomy for the Kurds of Iraq is as old as the Iraqi state itself, however Iraqi governments including the Ba'th regime opposed this idea when it came to power. However, in 1970, Ba'th regime decided to sign an agreement with the Kurds which recognized the Kurdish right to autonomous rule. Bengio explains the reasons for the attitude change in Ba'th towards the Kurds by domestic factors such as the power struggle between the civilian and military wing of the regime, increasing pressures from the Kurds and the desire of the Ba'th regime to settle the Kurdish problem through giving autonomy (Bengio 1998, 111). Although the Kurdish autonomy seems in contradiction with the Ba'th Party's policies, it was thought by the Ba'th officials that recognizing a Kurdish identity would not harm the uniform Iraqi identity; on the contrary, it would reinforce it. In the same manner, Kurdish autonomy that was proclaimed on 11 March 1970 contained two important clauses relating to Kurdish uniqueness on the one hand and the Kurds' place in the Iraqi state on the other.

Since the Ba'th had reached an agreement with the Kurds because of its weakness, it changed its attitude towards the Kurds immediately with the change in the balance of power in favor of itself in the years following the autonomy agreement. Iraq's nationalization of oil industry and the dramatic increase in the oil prices enhanced the regime's stability. As Bengio argues that with the change in the balance of power and in the absence of any urgent need to appease the Kurds, relations began to deteriorate between the Kurds and the Iraqi government (Bengio 1998, 112-113). A Kurdish resistance movement began to gather strength. In order to weaken the resistance movement, some measures were followed. In that period, large numbers of families were removed from their homes by force to change the ethnic balance of particular areas, especially around Kirkuk, which the Kurdish leadership had insisted should form part of the Kurdish area and which the government wanted to retain for itself. Again, in September 1971, some 40,000 Faili (Shi'i) Kurds were expelled to Iran from the border area near Khaniqin on the grounds that they were not really Iraqis (CARDRI 1989, 196).

The tension between the regime and the Kurds continued until 1974. A dialogue existed between the regime and the Kurds in that period although the prospects of a settlement did not seem close due to the disagreement over the Iraqi unity (Sluglett and Sluglett 2003, 159). While the Kurds stressed on their uniqueness, Ba'th regime made emphasis on the unity of Iraq. In other words, two nationalisms; territorial nationalism of the Ba'th government and the ethno-nationalism of the Kurds were in conflict with each other. The Kurds urged the Ba'th to give the autonomous region a well-defined territorial character, but the Ba'th consistently ignored this question. Finally, the autonomy agreement broke

down because of Ba'th's rejection of the Kurdish attempts in including Kirkuk in their region and the objection in principle to the Kurdish feeling of separateness (Bengio 1998, 118).

The Algiers Treaty that was signed between Iran and Iraq in 1975 to end the frontier disputes gave an important opportunity to Ba'th to defeat the Kurdish resistance movement. According to the agreement between Iran and Iraq, Iran closed the Iran-Iraq frontier in the north. This prevented the aid that was reaching the Kurds from Iran, and preventing the Kurds themselves from regrouping and rearming in and from Iran (CARDRI 1989, 197). To sum up, the Algiers Treaty damaged the Kurdish movement seriously and as Sluglett and Sluglett (2003, 187) argue that the cultural identity and even the physical existence of the Iraqi Kurds came under threat with this development. Algiers Treaty also weakened the Kurdish movement. After the defeat of March 1975, the Kurdish movement split into principal rival factions, the KDP led by Massoud Barzani and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), founded in Damascus in June 1975 by Jalal Talabani, the Barzanis' long-standing political rival (CARDRI 1989, 198).

After the border with Iran remained closed with the Algiers Treaty, the Iraqi regime got the upper hand in its fight against the Kurds. However, after the Iranian Revolution, the Algiers Treaty suddenly collapsed and the Kurdish problem reappeared for the Ba'th that it had managed to contain since 1975. In addition, some Iraqi Kurds set up new bases in Iran using the chaotic atmosphere to their advantage. Iranian support strengthened the Kurdish movement and led to the formation of a more powerful Iraq Kurdistan Front (IKF) jointly led by Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani. Although the Kurdish movement had its internal problems stemming from the disagreements over the leadership, it posed a serious threat to the Ba'th regime (Musallam 1996, 70). The war with Iran (1980-1988) was largely confined to the central and southern parts of Iraq. This put the North and its Kurdish population at ease and some of the border areas in the north came under *de facto* Iranian occupation by July 1983 (Sluglett and Sluglett 2003, 269).

Iranian occupation of the north and the collaboration of the Kurds with Iran added a new dimension to the war. The Ba'th also started a war campaign against the Kurds and after taking the south under control, Saddam had turned its attention to northern Iraq and under a decree dated 29 March 1987, he appointed his cousin Ali Hasan al-Majid. This appointment marked the beginning of a campaign of genocide against the Kurdish population. This led to a more systemic campaign against the Kurds known as al-Anfal (as the Kurdish genocide was called) which began about a year later (Sluglett and Sluglett 2003, 268). In the spring of 1988, Iran launched an offensive in Northern Iraq with the assistance of PUK and the KDP, capturing the city of Halabja. The next day the Iraqi air force responded it through bombing Halabja with poison gas, causing some 5000 deaths and the flight of over a hundred thousand civilians to Iran and Turkey. However, the Iraqi government claimed that it was not responsible for the bombing in Halabja because the poisonous gas used there was cyanide which Iran only had at that time (Ali 1993, 153).

Gulf War of 1991 is another important event for the Kurds which brought the Kurdish autonomy for the second time. Thus, the Gulf crisis, which seemed to be an external affair, had very serious causes for the future of Iraqi Kurds and the Iraqi state itself (Bengio 1999, 153). The creation of 'safe haven' over most of the Kurdish area in 1991 led to the gradual withdrawal of the Iraqi civil and military authorities from the area, and to the creation of a *de facto* autonomous region, which followed a line from the Turkish border to the Iranian border. The second experiment in Kurdish autonomy came some twenty years after the first one and quite interestingly at a time when they were at one of the weakest points in their history. Different from the first autonomy experience, this time autonomy was imposed on Baghdad by international powers (Bengio 1999, 153). Although the Kurdish *de facto* region remained autonomous during the Saddam era, hot confrontations took place between the Kurds and the regime and also among the different Kurdish factions, mainly between PUK and the KDP until the Iraqi invasion in 2003.

The Shi'i Opposition under The Ba'th Regime

Because of the Sunni-Shi'i cleavage, religion has not served to promote a common national identity and feelings in Iraq, in fact it has played the opposite role (Bengio 1999, 150). The principal tension between the Sunni and Shi'is in Iraq is related with the minority Sunni regime's rule over a predominantly Shi'i population. The problem between the Sunni and the Shi'i population did not arouse from the religion or sectarian affiliation *per se*. Sunni rulers of Iraq did not seem to promote Sunni sectarianism, or they were not regarded as representing Sunni Islam. On this issue, Sluglett and Sluglett suggest that the fundamental division between the Shi'is and the Sunnis is not religious, it is socio-economic, between the economically prosperous Sunnis and the poor Shi'is, or in another words between "haves" and "have-nots" (Sluglett and Sluglett 2003, 190).

The majority of the Shi'i population lived in the rural south and most of them were rural dwellers which constituted the majority of the rural poor. In addition, they also constituted the majority of the urban poor in Baghdad and other cities after the Second World War. The traditional urban Shi'is were engaged primarily in trade and handicrafts in bazaars rather than government employment. Shi'is tended to distrust the central government and distanced themselves from it historically. In contrast to the Kurds, the Shi'is have been quite passive politically until the 2003 Iraqi invasion of Iraq. Until that time, they did not have any representative political organization, or even a newspaper that openly expresses their views. Clandestine organizations did exist and they had their own publications abroad.

Ba'thism, although not directly identified with Sunni Islam, did not create enthusiasm among the Shi'i Arabs. Al Khalil states that to an Iraqi Shi'i, pan-Arabism and Sunnism go hand in hand, just as for the Arabic speaking Christian, pan-Arabism and Islam and inseparable (Al Khalil 1990, 214). When the control of the Ba'th passed into the hands of the Takritis after 1968, there were no Shi'is at all in the higher echelons of the party. On the other hand, the Ba'th considered the Shi'i question so sensitive and even avoided the very word "Shi'i". Unlike the Kurdish problem, that was publicly referred, the Shi'i was almost a taboo. If the word, "Shi'i" was used at all, it was with reference to the Shi'is of Lebanon or Iran (Bengio 1998, 99).

In July 1958, the Shi'is in Iran founded their first political organization named Jama'at al-'ulama' fi'l-Najaf al-Ashraf (the association of Najaf '*ulama*') whose members formed the nucleus of what became al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya (the Islamic call, or Mission) in 1968. Since the Association was a secret society, there is not any accurate information about its origins and membership, but it is known that Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr played an important role in its activities.(Sluglett and Sluglett 2003, 195). In the early 1970s, al-Da'wa and other Shi'i movements worried the Ba'th and a separate branch of security services was created to deal specifically with the potential Shi'i opposition groups. Although Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr was the symbol of Shi'i opposition, he avoided any open confrontation with the regime at this stage.

An uneasy *modus vivendi* continued between the Shi'i and the regime until the Iranian Islamic Revolution of 1979. The Iranian Revolution encouraged al-Da'wa and its leaders to raise their voices and to make open declarations supporting the Iranian Revolution. Saddam responded this situation by putting Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr under house arrest in Najaf and the Shi'i riots were put down with great brutality. After Saddam took over presidency from Bakr and consolidated his position, he completed the fearful purge of the party and in April 1980, al-Sadr and his sister were hanged. At that time, between 15,000 and 20,000 Shi'is were expelled from Iraq, and hundreds more were arrested, tortured and executed (Simons 1996, 309). In March 1980, the Iraqi regime executed ninety-seven civilians and military men, half of them were members of Da'wa, a banned organization. The regime's ruthless policies against the Shi'i were efficient and it prevented the Shi'i oppositions.

The Ba'th regime successfully repressed the Shi'i opposition movement that was started at the end of the 1970s until the 1991 Gulf War. After the war ended, a Shi'i uprising (Shi'i intifada) started in the south of Iraq, it began in Nasiriyeh, and spread rapidly to the other Shi'i majority towns and cities. Shi'i intifada of 1991 was the second serious attempt by the Shi'is aimed at changing the political structure in their favor after the "Great Revolution" of 1920 (Bengio 1999, 159). The Shi'i intifada of 1991 reflected that there was a lack of unity in goals and the methods on the Shi'i side in comparison with the Kurdish movement. While the Shi'i intifada was directed against the regime, that of the Kurds was against the state. Although the Kurds proclaimed themselves as Kurds and demanded Kurdish rights, the Shi'is could not play the same game. Although, the Kurds gained autonomy after the Gulf War, the Ba'th took a terrible revenge after the Shi'i intifada in the south. As a result of Iraqi air and ground attacks on the South and the virtual genocide being waged against the Marsh Arabs, the Western allies imposed a no-fly zone south of 32° N at the end of August 1992 (Sluglett and Sluglett 2003, 300).

Utilizing From Different Identities as a Function of Regime Survival

Although, the Ba'th regime instituted policies and enacted laws designed to construct an Iraqi national identity, it produced opposite results because of the exclusionary and violent structure of the nation-building process. Since Iraqi national identity did not serve as glue in the hard times of the country like during the Iran-Iraq war, Gulf War and in its aftermath, identities other than the Iraqi national one used. The regime utilized from the Arab identity

during the Iran-Iraq war, Islamic identity during the Gulf War and the tribal identity in the aftermath of the Gulf War.

Arab Identity

Although the regime had decided to invoke an Iraqi nationalist identity rather than Arabism because of domestic and regional considerations in the 1970s, it turned to Arabism once more during the Iran-Iraq war. This was related with the Shi'i population in Iraq. As mentioned earlier, the war with Iran across the border and the Iranian ayatollah's sectarian calls increased Iraqi Shi'is awareness of their sectarian identity. Saddam raised Iraq's Arab identity as a response to the sectarian appeal of Iranian ayatollahs, which he thought that it would draw a clear ethnic distinction between the "Arab" Iraqis and the "Persian" Iranians (Dawisha 2002, 130). This statement of Saddam reflects his strategy in re-emphasizing Iraq's Arab identity:

The ruling clique in Iran persists in using the face of religion to foment sedition and division among the ranks of the Arab nation despite the difficult circumstances through which the Arab nation is passing. The invocation of religion is only a mask to cover Persian racism and a buried resentment of the Arabs. The clique in Iran is trying to institute fanaticism, resentment and division among the peoples of the area (Dawisha 1999, 556).

In order to survive from the Iranian attack, Saddam attempted to unite the various religious and sectarian communities under the ethnic umbrella of Arabism. Such identification had the risk to alienate the Kurds, but it was thought as a loss worth of taking by the regime as Dawisha asserts (Daawisha 1999). Saddam's counterattack contained examples from Arabist symbolism. For example, the war with Iran came to be known as *Qadissiyat Saddam*, the Qadisiyya[1] of Saddam as a result of government propaganda (Dawisha 1999, 558). Another example of the use of historical imagery was to remind the Iraqi Shi'is of the Arab ethnicity of the founders of their sect in emphasizing the ethnic divide between the Arab Shi'is of Iraq and Persian Shi'is of Iran. The government put an official banner at the entrance of Imam Ali mosque in Najaf which declared: "we take pride at the presence here of our great father Ali, because he is a leader of Islam, because he is the son-in-law of the prophet, and *he is an Arab*" (Dawisha 1981, 142).In addition, Imam Ali's birthday was made a national holiday (Simons 1996, 560).

This emphasis on Iraq's Arab identity did not mean that other identities were not invoked however neither was emphasized as much as Iraq's Arab identity. This strategy seemed to work with the co-operation of the Iraqi Shi'is with the government and their identification of themselves as Arabs rather than in terms of sectarian affiliation.

Islamic Identity

During the invasion of Kuwait, Saddam again came up with the re-definition of Iraqi identity in order to legitimize his attack. Initially, he continued to utilize from Arabism in order to take the support of Arab peoples against the United States. But, the entrance of American troops to Saudi Arabia led him to invoke Islamic symbolism in order to attain greater support. Saddam began to repeat consistently the presence of non-Muslim troops

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[1] In the battle of al-Qadissiyya, the Arabs of the Peninsula defeated Sassanid Persia in AD 637, proceeded to capture Ctesiphon, the Sassanid capital and expelled the Persians from Iraq.

in Islam's holy land and called the Arabs and Muslims to liberate Islamic lands from the foreign occupation (Dawisha 1999, 560).

It was the first time that the "secular" Ba'th regime invoked Islamic identity since coming to power in 1968. These Islamic symbols had hardly ever been used by Saddam or any other members of the Ba'th party. This new Islamic orientation of the regime created enthusiasm among the radical Islamist groups who must have been surprised by the conversion of the secularist Iraqi President. Saddam now became a true *mujahid* (struggler), Americans in Saudi Arabia and the Saudis that allow the US to enter the holy lands portrayed as the "infidels". He used images of a new "crusade" against Islam and effectively utilized from this strategy in strengthening his support base. Some radical *'ulama'* even declared him as the Khalifa of Muslims (Dawisha 1999, 560). However, after the military defeat of Iraq at the end of February 1991, Islamist identity used by Saddam during the war immediately abandoned and that not a single mention of Islam or Islamic values was made. When appeals were made, they emphasized Iraqi unity and Arabism.

Tribal Identity

Another identity that Saddam tried to invoke in the aftermath of Gulf War (especially during the period of 1991-1996) was the tribal identity. In reality, the Ba'th party rejected "tribalism" as soon as it came to power in 1968. In the party's Communiqué No.1., it is declared that "we are against religious sectarianism, racism and tribalism" (Baram 1997, 1). Tribalism was regarded as a sign of backwardness and an obstacle to the social transformation and modernity. As a result of this belief, anti-tribal policies were adopted in the 1970s. The 1976 government regulation banned the use of names showing tribal or regional connections. Although the party declared that it is against tribalism, the Ba'th Party itself was "a tribe". Kinship was used as a principle guiding the selection of leaders, Takrit, the town of Saddam's birth, provided a disproportionate number of country's ruling elite.

In the 1970s and 1980s, tribalism was an important element in Saddam's own political identity, but politically it was declared as an obstacle to the regime. After the Iraqi defeat by the US armies in 1991, especially with the Shi'i rebellion in the South of Iraq, Saddam decided to benefit from tribes and tribal values. Regime's most important means of controlling the Shi'i uprising of 1991 was through alliances with tribal chiefs. A number of southern Shi'i tribes receiving benefits from the Baghdad regime either sided with or remained neutral during the intifada. Anti-regime disturbances in the south were put down by the regime with the help of tribes. However, in the mean time, strengthening certain tribal leaders as a means of controlling Shi'i south created problems for the regime. By the early 1997, as result of clash between tribal and state interests, the government had to call on tribes to give national interest first priority (Bengio 1999, 163).

Conclusion

The Iraqi nation-building process during the Saddam regime is a good example to show how national identities are constructed and re-constructed. Although, some kind of

primordialism[2] exists in Iraqi nationalism, which has its roots in the Mesopotamian past, Iraqi elites especially during the Saddam era re-defined the Iraqi identity several times that would be most beneficial to their interests and most suitable to existing socio-political imperatives. In that sense, ethno-symbolism introduced by Anthony D. Smith, which is the middle way between primordialist and constructivist approaches to nationalism, best suits to the case of Iraq as Dawisha (2002, 135) suggests. Secondly, the propagation of nationalism as a state ideology by the state could produce opposite results as it is seen in the Iraqi case. The nationalist ideology used by the Ba'th regime proven to be divisive in Iraq and has promoted "us" and "them" dichotomy rather than national cohesion on the inside. This is related with totalitarianism in Ba'th regime which recognized the necessity of autocratic measures as a part of nation-building process.

The final revelation from Iraqi nationalism is that the nation-building is a difficult process in heterogeneous and fragmented societies. However, the problem with the Iraqi identity formation process is not just related to the heterogeneity of the population. It is known that not many nation states have completely homogenous populations, but they managed to be a nation as opposed to the Iraqi case. The difference is the legitimacy of their authority, based as it must be on popular sovereignty. The state of Iraq at its birth was devoid of this popular sovereignty and Saddam's power was rested on coercion and force rather than the political legitimacy. Lack of popular sovereignty and the coercive methods used by the regime prevented the formation of a common identity and this led the Ba'th elites to utilize from different identities for regime survival. This system has somehow worked until the US invasion of Iraq. The American occupation itself effectively revived the largely dormant form of sectarianism. Now, it seems hard to keep Iraq united given the internal conflicts between different ethnic and religious groups and the rhetoric used by them emphasizing separation or autonomy.

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[2]   The argument that nations are primordial, they exist in the first order of time and lie at the root of subsequent processes and the developments.

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Öz

İçeride "Biz" ve "Siz" Karşıtlığı: Saddam Dönemi'nde Irak Kimlik İnşası Süreci

Bu makale, dışarıda olduğu kadar içeride de "biz" ve "siz" karşıtlığına neden olan Saddam'ın ulus inşası çabalarını incelemektedir Bu çerçevede, Baas Rejimi'nin kendisini zamanla nasıl Saddam Huseyin'in oligarşisine dönüştürdüğünü ve diğer etnik ve dini kimlikleri dışlamak suretiyle Sünnilerin nasıl bir azınlıktan çoğunluk haline getirildiğini göstermektedir. Bu sistemin 2003 Irak savaşı ile birlikte nasıl tamamen çöktüğü ve Saddam'ın Irak ulusal kimliği yaratma konusundaki başarısızlığınının buna katkısı incelenmektedir. Belirli etnik ve dini grupların dışlanmasının, bu grupları ABD ile işbirliğine yönelttiği ve bu durumun Saddam rejiminin çöküşüne zemin hazırladığı ifade edilmektedir. Bugün Irak milletinden çok fazla birşey kalmamıştır ve Irak kimliği hiç olmadığı kadar uzak gözükmektedir. Bu çeşitli Irak rejimlerinin geliştirmeye çalıştığı Irak ulusal kimliğinin, devlet mekanizmanın çökmesi ile birlikte tamamen çözüldüğünü göstermektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler

Irak, ulus-inşası, kimlik, Saddam Hüseyin.

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Yazar Hakkında

Duygu Dersan Orhan Atılım Üniversitesi Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü'nde, 2007 yılından bu yana Araştırma Görevlisi olarak görev yapmaktadır. Aynı zamanda Ortadoğu Teknik Üniversitesi Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü'nde doktora çalışmalarını sürdürmektedir. İlgi alanlarının arasında Ortadoğu'nun uluslararası politikası, uluslararası ilişkiler teorisi ve milliyetçilik teorileri konuları vardır.

Drug Trafficking and Human Security in Guinea-Bissau

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Abstract

There has recently been rising concern amongst Western nations over drug trafficking through West Africa, with Guinea-Bissau identified as a major regional conduit for cocaine. Increasingly Guinea-Bissau's internal political and military turmoil has also been linked to the influence of drug money. This paper will examine this drug trafficking in the context of Guinea-Bissau's history and address what impacts it is having on "human security" in the nation, examining the categories of political, economic, health and personal security. The argument will be made that considering the already low levels of human security in Guinea-Bissau, the impact of drug trafficking may not actually be that significant, and that rather than focusing on drugs as Guinea-Bissau's primary problem, trafficking should be considered as only a symptom of deeper underdevelopment due to European colonization, and the effects of global economic structures and policies.

Keywords

Drug trafficking, Guinea-Bissau, human security.