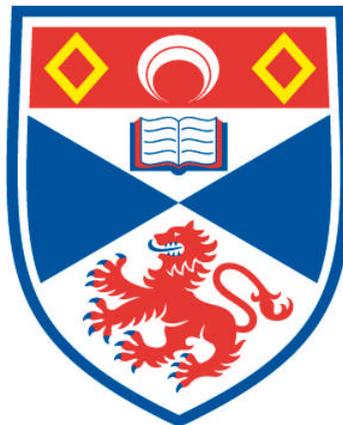


**DILEMMAS OF LATE FORMATION
INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM AND STATE SURVIVAL IN THE
MIDDLE EAST
CASE STUDIES: SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAQ**

Adham Saouli

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews**



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Dilemmas of Late Formation

International System and State Survival in
the Middle East
Case Studies: Saudi Arabia and Iraq

A Thesis submitted to the School of International Relations of the University of St
Andrews in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Adham Saouli

9 January 2009

Abstract

This thesis is a theory-proposing and theory-testing study that examines the conditions of state survival in the Middle East. In contrast to the predominant Political Culture and Political Economy approaches, which focus on domestic factors to account for state survival in the Middle East, this thesis suggests that, more than the individual characteristics of states themselves, state survival in that region is a function of the anarchic state system.

This thesis examines states as a 'process' situating them in time and place. It shows that Middle Eastern states are at once in the early phases of state formation as well as late comers to the international state system. This ontological status contributes to the vulnerability of these states to systematic forces, which in turn shapes their internal development. A major dilemma facing the late-forming state is between regime survival and political incorporation.

The first part of this thesis examines the literatures on the state, the Middle East state, and state survival. The second part proposes a Historical Structuralism model and then examines the ontology of the state in the Middle East, specifying the conditions and variables of state survival. The third part presents an empirical examination of the cases of Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

Thesis Declaration

I, **Adham Saouli** hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately **80, 000** words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student in **September 2005** and as a candidate for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** in **May 2006**; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between **2005** and **2008**.

date signature of candidate

I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy** in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

date signature of supervisor

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Acknowledgments

I began to think about state formation when I was an undergraduate student in Beirut back in 1998. I then decided to pursue a doctoral degree. As a doctoral student, I have discovered that a PhD is not something one ‘does’, but rather something one lives. I have incurred many debts, both personal and academic. The valuable support of the many people I have met, lived and worked with made this thesis possible. The list is long.

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As the PhD process is coming to a close, I also want to recall the universities, institutes, scholarship bodies, employers, department heads and journals that sent me rejection letters on several occasions. These rejections taught me to work harder and so I thank them here.

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Introduction

Too much scholarly attention to the facts makes one blind; too much listening to the rhythms of theory and world history makes one deaf.

—Michael Mann, *The Sources of Power*

Research Problem and Purpose

This thesis is about state formation and state collapse in the Middle East. The major question it addresses is: Under what conditions do states stay intact during late formation? I examine the state here as both a territorial entity and a regime of power. In studying the conditions of state survival in the Middle East, a few more questions arise: How and why do states emerge in late formation? Does the timing of their formation inform us of the factors of their survival? More importantly, what does a ‘state’ mean in the context of late formation? Are the conditions of state survival to be found in the internal dynamics of states or in the international system where these states are embedded?

The main purpose of this thesis is to answer the above questions by proposing a model to study the state in the Middle East. I have named the model Historical Structuralism. This model seeks to bridge two divisions that are salient in the social sciences in general and political science in particular. The first involves the dichotomy between theory and practice and the second, which is more peculiar to the discipline of political science, includes the division between domestic and international dynamics. This work is a theory-proposing and theory-testing doctoral thesis (Van Evera 1997, 89). The Middle East, which for a long time has been treated as an ‘area study’, remains largely under-theorised. In answering the above questions, I hope to bridge this gap.

The Historical Structuralism model bridges this gap by proposing a framework to examine state ontology during late formation. This is done by: (1) examining the peculiarity of the state in the Middle East in light of generic theories of state formation; (2) exploring factors of variation in Middle East cases and (3) providing a detailed analysis on the two cases of Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Since there are few studies, if any, that provide a theoretical framework for examining state survival and collapse in the Middle East and testing hypotheses in multiple cases, this project is an exercise in

theory generation and development (for attempts see Ayubi 1995; Bromley 1994). In short, it seeks to theorise state formation and survival in the Middle East.

To avoid statist approaches and their critics, I argue here that what emerged in the Middle East with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire are social fields not states as understood in Weberian lenses. It is within these social fields, or boundaries, that states form, develop or collapse. The theoretical framework examines the dynamics of these social fields looking at the cultural, material, and political structures that constitute them and how they shape and are shaped by the interrelations of social actors. This examination sets the background to visit state formation processes in the Middle East. As opposed to European states, which through their expansion have structured world politics, these emerging states share two generic characteristics. First, these states came late to a pre-existing state system and second, these states are in their early stage of state formation (Ayoub 1995). It is within these structural forces that states survive.

In examining processes of state formation, the making and sustaining of borders, this thesis naturally resists the current division in the fields of comparative politics and international relations. The vulnerability of the state in the Middle East, as I argue here, the fragility of its institutions, and the role it performs in regional and international structures of power dictates the bridging of theories from both fields. The framework presented here theorises the interrelations between domestic and systemic forces to explain state survival. I show how the security dilemmas of rulers in the domestic arena intermingle with the anarchy of the international system to weaken the state in the Middle East.

In theorising the domestic-international nexus, this thesis is neither quick to abhor Neo-realism's main assumptions on the ontology of the international system (for alternative views see Salloukh 2000; Mufti 1995), nor is it in a haste to unreservedly greet constructivist approaches to state behaviour in the Middle East (Barnett 1998). The main contention here is that states in their early formation allow for the presence of numerous power 'sites' competing for power monopoly. In the absence of legitimate state, 'domestic' powers enter into security dilemmas as each power attempts to legitimise and institutionalise its own power within the social field. These security dilemmas lead either to authoritarian regimes or to civil wars. Authoritarian regimes and civil wars in turn contribute to weakening the state as a polity exacerbating external penetration. Given that they are embedded in an anarchic system, these states respond to systemic forces in multiple ways as opposed to Waltzian expectations of a 'uniform'

response by strong states (Waltz 1979). This depends on the degree of power monopolisation in a particular social field, which in turn determines the nature of response to systemic forces.

Building on this theoretical framework, I then examine state formation processes in the cases of Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Looking at the initial stages of formation, social field composition, and state behaviour in each of the cases, I propose a 'Bounded Theory' on state survival in the Middle East. While the theoretical framework is broad and examines generic dynamics, a Bounded Theory is limited in scope and attempts to provide a general explanation to a population of cases forming parts of a system. State survival or collapse in the Middle East, the theory proposes, is partly a function of state's geopolitical position. As a result, a state's internal dynamics are necessary to explain survival but not sufficient. A fuller examination of state survival in the Middle East would attempt to unlock its position within the system to understand its chances of survival or collapse. The more strategically located a state is, the more systemic forces would determine its survival. If this theory is sound, it would challenge cultural and political economy approaches that are predominant in Middle East studies and that focus on domestic factors for state survival.

State Survival in the Middle East: The Literature

The literature on the state and state survival in Middle East studies reflects theoretical developments taking place in Political Science and Sociology. We can identify two phases representing two variables in the development of this literature. The first phase is the explorative/descriptive phase that takes culture as its analytical tool while the second takes an explanatory dimension and focuses on political economy.

The body of literature representing the first phase aimed to explore the Middle East as a geographical area and as an area of study. The conceptual tool used to examine the region is political culture. Examining the region's culture, value and religious systems, it is believed, can inform us of its political characteristics. One of the main conclusions of this school is that the state is an alien notion to the region. Islam has no concept of the state and is incompatible with the modern notions of nationalism (Vatikiotis, p.44) or (popular) sovereignty (Kelidar 1993, 319-321). As an 'imported entity', the state did not figure high in Arab thought of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Ayubi 1995, 21). As a European concept and social organisation, the state, it is argued, is not analogous with Middle East realities (Khoury and Kostiner 1991, 2; Lewis 1988).

Utilising the variable of political cultural, this body of literature made sweeping conclusion on the region's political systems and state survival. Political stagnation and the prevalence of authoritarian regimes in the region are attributed to Islam's rigid code (Tibi 1990), which have facilitated the domination and durability of "oriental despotism" (Kedourie 1992, 12). Islam, and people's submission to it, have constrained the emergence of civil society (for the debate, see Sadowski 1993) to act as a motor of change. The Arab state, as a foreign invention "superimposed on fragmented and hostile infrastructures" (Kelidar 1993, 318), is "all body and muscle..with no theory of liberty" (Ayubi 1995, 22).

For other variants of the political culture school, authoritarian persistence in the Arab world corresponds to the cultural traditions of these countries, where, as in the Arab Peninsula, it is maintained by a strong tribal leader (Hudson 1977, 167). The presence of a central man with absolute power is due to factors found in Arab political culture, which is "neopatriarchal" (Sharabi 1988).

With the political economy approach we realise a shift in the independent variable moving away from cultural factors towards material ones. The ability of Islam to explain varying outcomes in different contexts raised scepticism regarding its power as independent variable (Bromley 1994, 29). As an alternative, scholars working in the political economy school looked at class as a factor to explain politics in the region (Richards and Waterbury 1996; Ayubi 1995; Hinnebusch 1989; Anderson 1986). The main corrective this school proposed is that the Middle East is far from being 'peculiar' and, using a political economy approach, the region can be integrated into debates in Political Science and Political Theory (Anderson 1990).

This development reflected a Marxist resurgence in comparative politics and a return to the state in political sociology (Evans et.al. 1985). Focusing on state structures and social classes, the political economy approach was able to provide more specific explanation, not only of state survival, but also of political change in the Middle East (Waterbury 1983; Batatu 1978). A main outcome of this research agenda was Rentier State Theory (RST). RST provided a lucid argument on state survival in the Middle East. Oil income, it argues, increases state autonomy in the Middle East. This is because states do not resort to extracting taxes from their populations. Rather, by allocating funds for their societies' welfare, societies do not demand representation. This autonomy consolidates states in the Middle East and maintains their authoritarian

structures (Beblawi and Luciani 1987). What emerges is an ‘allocation state’ as opposed to an extractive state (Luciani 1990).

This thesis will show that these two schools, although advancing our knowledge of the state in the Middle East, have three main deficiencies. First, the state is not treated as a process rather it is either taken as an ideal that does not correspond with Middle East culture or is conflated with regimes. Second, both approaches focus on domestic factors neglecting regional and international structures of power. Finally, in focusing on culture and socio-economics these underplay the role of politics and political actors.

In taking the state to be an imported notion, as in the case of the political culture approaches, an idealisation of the state takes place. The state is seen to be—as the European state in its advanced stage—associated with liberal notions of governance and hence it conflicts with what we observe in the Middle East. Below, I will argue that the state is not a mere concept rather it is a process that both progresses and regresses as it develops.

In searching for the causes of state survival, the political economy approach conflates between regime survival as a domestic factor and the territorial state as a geographical entity. This conflation weakens their overall argument. The conflation leads to theoretical shortcomings. Although oil income is an important factor in explaining a regime’s survival, this doesn’t explain how an oil-poor country such as Jordan survives or how Saudi Arabia and Iraq survived before oil came into the picture. This thesis will show that oil in fact reinforced authoritarian powers but did not cause them, as the Saudi case will show. On the other hand, in its reinforcing of authoritarian power, the case of Iraq will reveal that oil actually weakened the state rather than consolidating it.

Further, as the state is vulnerable in the Middle East, domestic factors cannot solely explain survival. For instance, in *Beyond Coercion: The Durability of the Arab*, Dawisha and Zaartman (1988) provide six factors to account for state survival in the Middle East. All of these factors are domestic without accounting for geopolitical factors. What is also missing in both approaches is an analysis of the political level and, particularly, the role of political entrepreneurs in shaping material and cultural structures in the course of political struggles. This thesis is an intervention in this direction. It seeks not to refute political culture and economy approaches but to

incorporate them into a model that situates the state in the Middle East at the cross-roads of domestic and international arenas.

State Survival in the Middle East: The Argument Stated

The central argument of this thesis centres around four clusters: (1) Conditions of state formation; (2) Social Fields; (3) State ontology during late formation; and (4) State Survival and Collapse.

Conditions of State formation in the Middle East

1. State formation in the Middle East came as a result of two processes; one macro and one micro. The macro process involved the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of competitive European states aiming to re-order the new Middle East. The micro process involved indigenous attempts by local powers to create their own proto-states. Macro processes *determined* the emerging state borders;
2. The emerging state-like polities were neither purely colonial nor indigenous but came as a result of the *interaction* between domestic and external forces;
3. What emerged in the Middle East are not fully developed 'states' as understood in Weberian terms but *social fields* on which states form, deform, and reform;

Social Fields

4. Social fields are the territorial social arenas that structure relations among several social powers who interact in cycles of *domination* and *resistance* in attempts to establish hierarchical power as the first phase of state making;
5. Interactions within a social field generate path-dependent trajectories, memories, histories and identities that *separate* it from other social fields and give meaning to it;

State Ontology in Late Formation

6. The state in the Middle East has two generic characteristics that it shares with other late forming states: first this state is in its *early* stage of formation and second it came *late* to pre-existing state system;
7. This ontological status imposes a dilemma on the late forming state between the *security* of the ruling regime (against its internal and external enemies) and political *incorporation* of dissenting forces. Increased political incorporation (third phase of state formation) requires power sharing by the existing regime;

8. The intensity of the security dilemma is determined by the *nature* of the social field and its *location* in regional state system;

State Survival and Collapse

9. The more strategic the location of a state in a regional system, the less will domestic factors explain its survival or development;
10. The more late forming states are influenced by the anarchic state system, the higher the pressure on them to monopolise power domestically to respond *unitarily* to the systemic forces. This pressure generates different responses emanating from a social field;
11. The way a late forming state responds to systemic forces depends on the level of power monopolisation in a social field. Low domestic power monopolisation and institutionalisation will involve a multiplicity of fragmented responses emanating from a social field making it harder to achieve autonomy and easier for external powers to ‘divide and rule’;
12. Survival and collapse of states in the Middle East is determined by the *level* of domestic power monopolisation and the structure of regional order;
13. While the international state system provides opportunities and constraints for regime change in the Middle East, the territorial survival of the state in that region is a function of the anarchic nature of the international (and by extension the regional) state system, more than the domestic characteristics of individual states.

Research Design and Case Selection

Methodology

In tune with the theoretical framework proposed here, the methodology of this thesis falls within the Comparative Historical Method (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003). This tradition has three distinctive characteristics. Studies in this school depart from an outcome—revolution, war or economic growth—that is concrete in having “real time, places, and people” and “historical” in that it is limited in its scope and time (Tilly 1984, 14). This process tracing resists a synchronic analysis “which effectively freezes the object of analysis in time” preferring a “diachronic analysis [that] proceeds historically, emphasising the process of change over time” (Hay 2002, p.149). The point

is to delineate ‘causal configurations’ that may help in explaining specific outcomes.¹ Finally, Comparative Historical Analysis is interested in systemic and contextualized comparisons (see also Collier 1993). This in turn stems from the aim of causal explanation. The testing of specific causal arguments in different contexts improves the usefulness of the arguments, by revealing their strengths and limitations and hence permitting a bridge between theory and history.²

The Historical Comparative Method resists both ‘Grand Theorizing’, which is ahistorical on the one hand, and Behaviouralist approaches that shun theories on the other hand. The aim is to produce ‘middle range theories’ that act as a bridge between theory and history. The research design for this thesis develops in two phases.

First, a generic theoretical framework is presented, which acts as a meta-theory and suggests the “orienting concepts, targets certain kinds of variables as important, and point of styles of research and explanation” without “specification of any set of directly testable propositions” (Mahoney 2003, 136). The main aim of the framework is to theoretically tackle the research problem suggested here and to devise a “fruitful intellectual framework for the investigation” (Rueschemeyer 2003, 329).

The second phase involves a detailed historical investigation of the cases in light of insights deduced from the framework aiming to establish a “theoretically informed historical narrative” (Hay 2002, 47). Just as the cases are informed by the framework, they in turn improve on that framework by inducing specific and contextualised arguments. The aim of this exercise is to propose a Bounded Theory on state survival and collapse in the Middle East. A Bounded Theory, like all theories, is ambitious in its search for general explanation but restrained in its inclination to historical processes, change, and, above all, the research problem that bounds it. The structured historical comparison between the cases will contribute to the production of a bounded theory and to what Theda Skocpol defines as “doubly engaged social science”: a social science whose practitioners aim to understand real-world transformations and to engage in, and formulate, theoretical frameworks and methods appropriate to handle such questions (2003, 409).

¹ “Causal propositions are carefully selected and tested rather than introduced ad hoc as incidental parts of overall narrative” (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2002, 11)

² “By employing a small number of cases, comparative historical researchers can comfortably move back and forth between theory and history in many iterations of analysis as they formulate new concepts, discover novel explanations, and refine preexisting theoretical expectations in light of detailed case evidence” (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, 2002, 13)

Why the Middle East?

Studying the Middle East can be important for the obvious reason of its strategic importance for major powers in the international system. However, there are other reasons as to why the Middle East is important to examine. Not only do state formation and behaviour, the power of identity to challenge state configuration, the imperviousness of the region to political change taking place elsewhere, and, not least, its vulnerability to external penetration challenge our existing models but their study also contributes to these frameworks.

Middle East studies continue to be under-theorised, historical, and descriptive. Although we have achieved a leap forward in considering the region to be different but not necessarily peculiar (Ayubi 1995), there is much more to be done on how, why, and in what sense the Middle East is different.

Although the empirical focus here is on the cases of Saudi Arabia and Iraq, these are treated as illustrations of the general framework and as contributors to its components. While the generic framework reaches to a wider audience of social theorists and area specialists in, for example, Central Asia, Africa or Southeast Asia, the cases and main conclusion of this thesis are aimed at students of the Middle East. The examination of the case study of Saudi Arabia aims to examine a puzzle, which students of this case have tried to tackle for more than five decades: how do we explain state survival in Saudi Arabia a seemingly weak state? The Iraqi case represents other challenges. The deformation and eventual collapse of the state in the last six decades raises questions on the power of oil income to sustain states, on the limits of indigenous forms of state formation, and, most importantly its geopolitical position. The two cases represent two different outcomes—formation and collapse. The dilemmas of state formation in Iraq, this thesis will show, are not different from Saudi Arabia but more acute. The thesis will conclude by suggesting the broadening of the theory to examine other cases such as Lebanon, Syria, or Yemen.

Thesis Outline

This thesis divides into three parts and six chapters. In Part One, the first chapter aims to examine and define the ‘State’ as a concept and will review the literature on state debate in the context of Middle East Studies. Chapter Two will visit the literature on state survival looking at both domestic—cultural and organisational approaches—and international approaches to explain state survival. Then I will examine the literature on state survival in the Middle East

In Part Two, I present the main argument of this thesis. Chapter Three defines the Historical Structuralism model proposed here looking in particular at social fields and their composition. Chapter Four examines state ontology in late formation and how it pertains to the state in the Middle East. In this chapter, I examine the main dilemmas facing these states, their domestic vulnerabilities and their international behaviour.

Finally, in Part Three, the two cases are examined. Chapter Five looks at the case of Saudi Arabia and Chapter Six examines the case of Iraq. I conclude this thesis by proposing theoretical, methodological, and empirical insights on the study of the state in the Middle East.

Chapter One

State Formation and the Arab State

If no social institutions existed which knew the use of violence, then the concept of 'state' would be eliminated, and a condition would emerge that could be designated as 'anarchy,' in the specific sense of this word.

—Max Weber, *Politics as a Vocation*

For the most part, that experience [European] does not show us modernizing elites articulating the demands and needs of the masses..far from it. We discover a world in which small groups of power hungry men fought off numerous rivals and great in the pursuit of their own ends and inadvertently promoted the formation of national states and wide spread popular involvement in them.

—Charles Tilly, *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*

Introduction

This chapter has two principal aims. First, it will examine the main concepts of this study, which include the state, state formation and state collapse, while introducing other variables such as social fields. And second, it will provide a critical review of the literature on the state in the Middle East. I start by analysing the concepts.

1.1. States and State Formation

1.1.1. What is a state?

As this study's main aim is to examine the state and state survival in the Middle East, the state as a concept will be visited. Although the theoretical framework will focus on the process of its formation and deformation, an introductory definition of the state is vital for the following analysis.

Defining the state, nevertheless, is not a theoretically innocent enterprise. As a multifarious social organisation, state definition cannot escape the student's theoretical assumptions, his or her research aims, or, in some cases, their ideological biases. The state, accordingly, is seen to be the “most problematic concept in politics” (Vincent 1987). Before I examine some of the problems of studying the state, I will start by defining the state on Weberian terms. Max Weber's definition represents an *ideal* state,

which, and specifically for the purposes of this study, helps us not only contrast it with historical realities but also to theoretically problematise it to understand state in late formation.

For Max Weber the state is “compulsory political organizations” whose “administrative staff successfully upholds the claim to the *monopoly* of the legitimate use of physical forces in the enforcement of its order...within a given *territory*” (1968, 54, emphasis original). This definition provides an idealised description of what a state is with several important components that require elaboration. As an authoritative political organisation, the state is a social entity made up of different governmental institutions such as the security and intelligence agencies, the court system or the executive and legislative branches of government.

This organisation is authoritative in the sense that its policies, rules, and identity are *recognised* by those that it seeks to govern. Deviation from these rules involves the state exercising compulsion—or coercion—over the law breakers. This ability requires, however, the presence of the condition of monopoly of physical force, which Weber’s definition highlights. For the state to be able to exercise its power to impose order, it *alone* should hold the instruments of coercion. But Weber is clear in tying this monopoly over coercive forces to *legitimate* use and, by implication, rule.

The final element in Weber’s definition is that state activities take place within a specific territory. Its power, legitimacy, and monopolisation over coercion, at least in theory, are delimited to a particular territory. It is only the state that has a sovereign power over its territory. This power, as with its internal identification, is recognised by other states as sovereign. The delimitation of state territory places the organisation of the state at the cross-roads of two set of relationships. The first involves the relation of this state with other organisations within its territory and, second, it includes the state’s relations with other fellow states forming the ‘international’ system.

Although those elements provide us with an important characterisation of the state, in themselves, however, they *constitute* the difficulty of studying it. The student of state formation will immediately raise questions such as: how does this political organisation come about? How is the monopoly of coercion formed? Further, how does this monopoly acquire and maintain its legitimacy? Finally, how is a state’s territory demarcated?

It is these questions, among others, that have troubled state theorists for many centuries. Depending on the story they want to tell or the political world they want to

see, scholars have treated the state as a source of change or an effect coming about as a result of societal changes. Several political philosophers from Hobbes to Lenin looked at the state as a motor for change towards order, as in the former, or revolution as in the latter. Post-philosophical treatments of the state were largely indirect as in the case of Karl Marx, whose sophisticated class struggle analysis, saw his thought fluctuate between treating the state as ‘epiphenomenon’ of class struggle, instrument of class hegemony, or political structure having a ‘relative autonomy’. It was his students from Antonio Gramsci (1971) to Poulantzas (1978) who sought to examine these questions.

In the fields of politics and sociology the state, as a conceptual variable, remained largely absent until Nettle’s pioneering article of 1968. Both structural-functional approaches and modernisation theory, forming part of the Behavioural Revolution, perceived the state as being shaped by societal factors. The project to ‘bring the state back in’ (Evans et.al 1985) starting with a re-examination of European state making, which raised questions about modernisation theory, (Tilly 1975) attempted to give the state an ‘autonomous’ dimension, and hence analytical independence.

East Asian economic development contributed to the state debate and theory. The literature shifted to deal with the state not as a mere ‘arena’ but also as an ‘actor’—“Developmental State” (Woo-Cummings 1999), or as a state that has the “capacity” to affect changes in society, particularly economic development. Moreover, these cases invited curiosity about the success of the state in one part of the world and its failure in others. The conditions for variation between the “weak” and “strong” became an area of interest for several scholars (Bates 2005; Waldner 1999; Migdal 1988).

One main difficulty remained in our understanding of the state, which still traps many students of the state, is a supposed *separation* of the state from society. In the context of state formation in the developing world, Joel S. Migdal et.al sought to propose an approach that takes the state to be *one* organisation among many and is situated *in* society (1994, 2). Trying to cope with the difficulties that the Weberian definition affords when contrasted to empirical cases, Migdal proposed a new definition of the state, which pertains to his research interests.

Migdal defines the state as “field of power marked by the use and threat of violence and shaped by (1) *the image of a coherent, controlling organization in a territory, which is a representation of the people bounded by that territory*, and (2) *the actual practices of its multiple parts*” (Ibid., 16, emphasis original). What Migdal seeks to distinguish is the ‘image’ of a state—a dominant, autonomous, integrated entity—

from its actual practices. Symbolic power of the state and how it is perceived by its population and other states is crucial for maintaining its power. This definition forms a reaction to previous studies that have exaggerated state capacity but also reflects the reality of politics in many parts of the developing world, where, as Migdal emphasises, the “state is constructed and reconstructed, invented and reinvented, through its interaction as a whole and of its parts with others” (Ibid., 22).

Migdal’s definition is inclined to treat the state as a process. It was Philip Abrams, and before him Engels³, who sought to unmask the state. When studying the state—that is its parts—he realised it would cease to exist. He argued that the “state, conceived as a substantial entity separate from society has proved a remarkably elusive object of analysis” (1977, 61). Michael Mann has further observed that “states are not as distinct from the rest of social life” (1993, 23). On perception and image, Abrams observed that the “state is the unified symbol of an actual disunity” (1977, 79). He suggests that instead of focusing on the state we should study “the actualities of social subordination” (Ibid., 63). What the state conceals is “the actual disunity of political power” (Ibid., 79).

The main contention of this section is that it is pivotal to distinguish between a definition of a state on the one hand and the process of state formation on the other hand. An examination of state formation will bring us closer to the realities of states, their main components, and the political struggles that shape their formation.

1.1.2. What is State Formation and State Collapse?

Max Weber understood the distinction between state definition and the process through which states come about. “Like the political institutions historically preceding it,” first and above all he argued, “the state is a relation of men dominating men, a relation supported by means of legitimate (i.e. considered to be legitimate) violence” (Weber 1946, 2). State formation is a process where individualised forms of power institutionalise over time. This process involves the incorporation of different social forces in institutions that take a public form within a particular territory.

Studying European state formation (see Chapter Four), Norbert Elias observes three phases of state formation:

First, the phase of the free competition or elimination contests, with a tendency for resources to be accumulated in fewer and fewer and finally in one pair of hands, the phase of monopoly formation;

³ Engels, long before Gramsci forwarded his theory of ‘Hegemony’, observed that “the state presents itself to us as the first ideological power over man” (quoted in Abrams 1977, 64)

secondly, the phase in which control over the centralized and monopolized resources tend to pass from the hands of an individual to those of ever greater numbers, and finally to become a function of the interdependent human web as a whole, the phase in which a relatively “private” monopoly becomes a public one (Elias 2000, 276).

Studying the state as a process requires understanding these three generic phases of state formation. The first phase involves a situation in where many social forces are competing for power within an unspecified territory. Power is here understood as “the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance” (Mann 1986, 6). The phase of political struggle ends in the phase of monopoly formation (Midgal 2001, 22).

The monopolisation of power—resources, coercion, religious interpretation—on a particular territory triggers the need to design institutions for its sustainability. Institutions are “humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction” (North 1990, 3). Institutional design “takes place in the context of powerful actors attempting to produce rules of interaction to stabilize their situation vis-à-vis other powerful and less powerful actors” (Flingstein 2003, 108). The more interdependent the relations become between a ruler and his population, the higher the need to institutionalise power.

In the course of the political struggles which continue to take place; institutions become not only a target of resistance but also an arena of struggle to change the rules of interaction. The higher the ability of many different actors to shape the rules and principles of these institutions, the more these institutions begin to take a *public*, and therefore independent, form and the less they are driven by one actor. “The privately owned monopoly in the hands of a single individual or family” observes Elias “comes under the control of broader social strata, and transforms itself as the central organ of a state into a *public* monopoly” (Elias, 270-1, emphasis added). We now call this process democratisation. It is here when the monopoly of physical forces becomes legitimate. The state is not only increasing in size, scope and bureaucracy but also in representation (Mann 1993, 358).

This process, as I suggest above, is generic; it presents us with a broad map of the phases of state emergence. The conditions of state formation, it needs to be noted here, vary among cases. Although European states crystallised around the turn of the century, many developing countries still fluctuate between one phase and the other. State formation, accordingly, is not a uni-linear process. The process can reverse, states can deform or collapse. In search for the state we need to examine the political

struggles—including the main political actors and the cultural and economic factors that shape their behaviour—and the institutions that arise as part of this struggle.

As opposed to state formation, state deformation and collapse “refers to a situation where the structure of authority (legitimate power), law, and political order have fallen apart and must be reconstituted in some form, old or new” (Zaartman 1995, 1). It is here when the monopoly of coercive forces becomes ‘privatised’ as different factions aim to protect themselves in the absence of an authority especially when criminality increases and the authority loses control over different sections of the population in a particular territory (Rotberg 2003, 5-6). When states deform, power disperses to local groups and sources of legitimacy fragments accordingly. Just as the process of state formation varies from one case to another, so also conditions for state collapse differ. One main point to emphasise here is that state collapse is, as a “degenerative disease”, not a short-term crisis. Rather, it is a process, which develops as regimes ‘wear out’ (Zaartman 1995, 8).

A regime can be defined in two ways; either as a type of governance or political system—democratic, authoritarian, or totalitarian. This regime constitutes “the prevailing relations among political actors, including the government” (Tilly 2006, 19). Or, as this study will use the concept, a regime is the institutionalisation of power by one or more competing forces in a social field. In this sense, a regime is “an alliance of dominant ideological, economical, and military power actors coordinated by the rulers of the state” (Mann 1993, 18). It is this force or forces that shape and drive state institutions in particular ways as it competes with its rivals. For example, when we say the ‘Saudi regime’, we mean the Saudi family and its ideological (Islamic establishment), economic (clients), and military (princes in security forces) allies.

In the developing world, the strength of a regime depends on its position in relation to its rivals. While, as I will elaborate in some detail below, in Europe the process of state formation continued to shape and carve political boundaries, in the developing world the expansion of European power led to the establishment of boundaries that accommodated political struggles. In this thesis, I call these boundaries social fields. Chapter Three below will examine this concept, for now it suffices to suggest that “fields refer to situations where organized groups of actors gather and frame their actions vis-à-vis one another” (Flingstein 2003, 108) within a territory. Social fields form the context which we need to demarcate to understand processes of state formation and collapse. In studying state survival, this thesis will examine the

internal and external factors that determine how and why regimes and boundaries are preserved over time.

1.2. The State in the Middle East: Literature Streams

This section aims to examine in some detail the major frameworks that have contributed to our understanding of the state in the Middle East, with particular focus on the Arab state. In reviewing this literature, several shortcomings will emerge.

First, some approaches conflate between state emergence on one hand and state development towards ‘liberal’ forms of governance on the other hand. This confusion obscures our understanding of what the state *is* in the Middle East. Second, in search for the primary factor—the independent variables—to examine the region’s peculiarity, scholars have looked at broad ideational (culture) or material (surplus appropriation; mode of production) factors to understand political phenomena. In particular, negligence of the role of the ‘political’ is observed. Third, the concept of the state remains very vague, making it hard both to delineate it empirically as well as analytically, namely the literature on the Middle East does not contribute to our understanding of the concept of the state; the state is taken for granted leaving the student wondering ‘what is the state?’. Fourth, although state formation in the region was highly dependent on the international state system and the region remains highly penetrated, few studies actually examine the interaction of international state system and domestic structures of power.

One implication I draw from this review is that the literature on the state in the Middle East need not be redirected but has to be *remodelled*. More attention needs to be placed on the formulation of questions that ought to be answered, on the specification of hypothesis, on methods of testing the hypothesis and finally on the careful selection of cases. It is only through such remodelling that we can speak of rigorous and systemic research that is able to attend to the region’s problems and through which we can accumulate knowledge.

1.2.1. Political Culture and State Formation

The correlation between culture—beliefs, norms, tradition, attitudes—and political development has been central for many scholars in the study of political backwardness in the developing world (Chabal and Daloz 2006; Lane and Ersson 2005; Huntington and Harrison 2000; Almond and Verba 1963). A society’s culture, it is argued, constitutes a strong basis to examine its political characteristic.

In trying to explain authoritarian persistence in the Middle East, scholars working in the culturalist tradition sought to look at Islam as a cultural value system to 'explain' political stasis in the region. In this literature the state is indirectly examined with no attempt to conceptualise or theorise its nature. Three general theses are presented. The first is that Islamic political culture is resistant to western notions of democracy and secularism and second Islam offers no accommodation to the notion of the state which was 'imported' from the west. Both theses focus on ideational factors to explain politics in the Middle East. Thirdly, it is argued that tribal societies conflict with the notion and dynamics of the modern state.

Incorporating all aspects of life including its political dimension, Islam, which is based on the Koran—Islam's holy book—and the sayings of the prophet Mohammad, is seen to form a major constraint on political development in Muslim societies. According to Bassam Tibi, Islam, as a cultural system, constitutes a major constraint to social change. It is a rigid system of thought that has been reactive, particularly to western attempts at domination of the Middle East, and not a proactive religion (Tibi 1990). Islam, which calls for 'submission' and its advocacy of life as a transient phase, contributes to 'political quietism'—a major reason to explain 'Oriental despotism' (Bill and Springborg 1990).

Reflecting on theories of state capacity, scholars in this tradition perceived Middle Eastern societies as 'weak' and states are strong, where the societies' obedience to the rulers was a religious duty this despotism for Elie Kedourie resulted in the absence of any "representative bodies being set up to carry on a dialogue between ruler and subject" (Kedourie 1992). It is the absence of what came to be known as 'civil society' that is responsible for the state of political backwardness in the region (Sadowski 1993).

Islam's belief in *al umma* transcends the territorial and national basis of states. However, Islam doesn't only reject the nation-state but also rejects other ingredients of this polity namely, secularism, democracy and nationalism. For P.J. Vatikiotis, "Islam and nationalism are mutually exclusive terms". As a "constructive loyalty to a territorially defined group, nationalism" he adds "has been incompatible with Islam in which the state is not ethnically or territorially defined" (Vatikiotis 1991, 44). Kedourie further maintains that Arab Muslim leaders developed a "tribal polity into one of the most sophisticated and most durable kinds of rule that of oriental despotism, the methods and traditions of which have survived in the Muslim world to the present day."

This is a result of Muslim jurists' attempts "to articulate and theorize the conditions of political life in oriental despotism, and to teach that it was compatible with a Muslim way of life" (Kedourie 1992, 12). Focusing on '*Dar Islam*' and *umma*, Islam has no concept of sovereignty (Kelidar 1993, 319-321).

James P. Piscatori argues that Muslim theorists and politicians do not share a unitary view on the state. Piscatori divides Muslims into political conformists and non-conformists (1986, 40). This division reflects Muslims' acceptance or rejection of the existing international political order, which is centred on the state. In contrast to the views presented by Lewis, Kedouri and others (*ibid.*, 42-44), Piscatori observes that, first, the Islamic theory that these scholars build on is not clear-cut in Islamic discourse and debates; secondly, the political practice of Muslim polities and empires reveals a strong acceptance of "territorial pluralism"; and thirdly several Islamic thinkers starting with Ibn Khaldoun treat the state as "natural" and as a fact of life (*Ibid.*, 82-84). To make his argument, Piscatori relies on both the Quran, which includes verses revealing God's will in the creation of different races to get "to know each other", and on actual Islamic practice. In Islamic history, he shows how the Ottoman and Persian Empires related to other states accepting both their limit and the territorial diversity within Islam. He extends his argument to show how with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the end of colonisation (*Ibid.*, 69-73; see Chapter Four) states within the Muslim world became a fact of political life accepted by both leaders and Islamic thinkers (*Ibid.*, 82-4).

Beyond Islam's incompatibility with the notion of the state, Nazih Ayubi asserts that "Arab thought in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has concerned itself with various concepts of unity and integration except for that of the state" (Ayubi 1994, 21). Islamic scholars rejected the state in favour of the supra-state *umma*. Although the Arabs adopted European state structures "they were rather slow in internalizing the concept of the state itself, or the 'ethics' of public service and the attitudes of collective action (*Ibid.*, 22).

Is the state weak in the Arab world because Islam and Arab thought are unable to internalise or accept it? Before I examine the relation between ideas and processes of state formation, I want to point out that Arab thought *was* concerned with the issue of the state and the observations made by the scholars above are not accurate. As we saw in the previous section, the concept of the state was not clear neither for European philosophers of the 19th century nor sociologists of the 20th. How different are Arab and

Muslim scholars? Ahmad Mahmoud Wald Mohammad, observes that Arab renaissance thought—extending from 1830s to 1920s—from Rifaat Tahtawi to Rachid Rida “was not concerned with Caliphate or Imamate systems but its obsession was the construction of a national state based on the European model” (2008, 24).

Although Mohammad agrees that Arab renaissance thought did not deal directly with the concept of the state, he shows how its scholars, who aimed to account for the decadence of the Islamic civilisation and the Ottoman state, dealt indirectly with the state. For Tahtawi he shows that the state is based on the power of the ruler which secures order and social relations and the power of the ruled. The relationship between the two powers would be regulated by a ‘*dustur*’ or constitution. Khair Aldin al-Tounsi theorised about ‘*Tanzimat*’, which he meant public institutions. For al-Tounsi, the weakness of the Islamic state is caused by the lack of laws, which constitute the basis for state strength. As for Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, the state should come to service the Muslim society. Two pillars form this state: military and Islam as a religion. Religion is a uniting factor substituting citizenship. Finally for Abd al-Rahman Kawakibi, who believed Arab decadence is due to despotism of the rulers, the state was ‘*alhoukouma*’ or simply government (Ibid., 25-34).

Political theories in Islamic thought, similar to philosophical treatments in European thought (Hegel, Kant, Rousseau), were normative and in search of a political order that would bring peace, stability, prosperity or bring about an ideal Islamic state as in the thought of Ibn Khaldoun⁴. Although I give the above examples to make the point that the ‘state’, and the questions of rule in general, has dominated Arab political thought, I don’t believe these in themselves can tell us a lot about the state in the Middle East. The state is not only a concept, it is a process and this needs to be examined historically.

What about territoriality? Here, we need to note the variety of theories *among* Islamic and Arab scholars. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire and other Islamic states, raised a question of the way politics can be ordered. Although several scholars continued to talk about ‘Dar al-Islam’—which in essence is a social/geographical boundary—others had different propositions including Egyptian nationalism (Loutfi al-Sayid), Pharaonic state (Salama Youssef), Mediterranean Nationalism (Taha Hussein)

⁴ Noting, however, that Ibn Khaldoun used a ‘realist’ and sociological method to analyse politics in tribal society, nevertheless his description of regime types—Natural king, political king, and Caliphate—sees him going beyond sociological analysis to a more normative dimension (for a comparison with Machiavelli see Alrawi, 2006, 123).

Syrian⁵ Nationalism—based on Geography—(Antoine Saade), Arab Nationalism (Michel Aflac) (Wald Mohammad, 22-26), and Lebanese Nationalism (Michel Shiha) (Traboulsi 1999). The main issue here is that these ideological questions were solved, once again I stress, not by coming up with a solution to a conceptual problem but through political struggles that shaped and were shaped by these ideologies.

A further problem of the culturalist school involves the fusion of the process of state emergence with the development of the state towards liberal forms of authority. Ayubi adds that in addition to the Arabs' inability to accommodate the notion of the state, they weren't "particularly impressed by the concept of 'freedom' (which Western thinkers closely relate to the development of the modern state), when they learned of it in the European literature. Building on Abdullah al -Arawi (2006), Ayubi shows the diversion in the conceptual understanding of the state in the Arab world from that in the West; "the Arab state is all body and muscle but with little spirit and mind and with no theory of Liberty" (Ayubi 1994) while for al-Arawi, this contrasts with the European concept of the state—"as a totality of instruments aimed at the rationalization of society—a rationalization (the Marxists further maintain) that was historically tied to the practices of the bourgeoisie" (Ibid, 23).⁶ Once again, it takes a reading of the Arab scholars mentioned above to see the limits of this suggestion as most scholars were obsessed with curbing the powers of the despot. Whether it is al-Afghani or Abdo, both saw European parliamentary systems as potential institutions to establish in the Arab east (Wald Mohammad, 32).

This line of reasoning continues with the democratisation debate. Some scholars have held that Islam is incompatible with democracy (Karatnycky 2002; Kramer 1993). Islamic values, it is argued, constrains the ability of predominantly Muslim countries to make the transition towards Democracy. Others link it to the subordination of women in the Muslim world, where differentials in the sex ratio and male-female gap in literacy rates contribute to consolidating authoritarianism (Fish 2002). Similar to the Islam and state debate, these studies have been countered with explanations on the compatibility of Islam and Democracy (Abootalebi 1999; Esposito and Voll 1996). Eva Bellin argues that, far from being exceptional, Middle East states are locked in authoritarian rule "because the coercive apparatus...has been exceptionally willing to crush reform from below" (2004, 144). The four variables she examines, indirectly dovetail with the

⁵ 'Syrian' is understood here as Greater Syria—modern Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan.

⁶ Although al-Arawi differentiates between normative and sociological treatments of the state looking at European as well as Islamic students of the state, his analysis of the difference between theory and practice of the state in the Arab world lacks any contextual or historical substance (2006, 143-158).

arguments presented in this thesis. Bellin argues that the robustness of the coercive apparatus is linked to the fiscal powers of the regime, which, particularly in the Middle East, is shaped by the “international support network” that a regime enjoys. In addition to these two variables, the institutionalisation of the security apparatuses and the degree of popular mobilisation a regime faces all determine the chances of transition to democracy (Ibid., 144-5). By highlighting these factors, Bellin problematises the not only cultural explanations linking Islam to authoritarianism, but also domestic treatments of regime survival in the Middle East.

The problem of state formation in tribal societies has ignited debates on the nature, role and relations of the state with tribal organisations. Khoury and Kostiner, for instance, pose one of the “difficulties” in studying state formation as “the term state is associated with modern European conceptions and institutions that do not necessarily correspond to Middle East realities, even in the late twentieth century” (1991, 2; italics original). In studying state formation, however, we are thinking of a process, which demands an analytical separation between the process and its outcome. Hence, we shall not find a ‘state’ if we are studying the process of its birth, not least in its early stages. If we define a state as an institution that monopolises coercion on a particular territory, in studying state formation, the question that arises is how this monopolising process takes place and who is the driving force behind it. Khoury and Kostiner define three approaches to examining state-tribe relations. The first is the ‘evolutionary approach’, this examines the relations between states and tribes over long periods by looking at how tribes transform into states. The second approach takes an anthropological perspective focusing on state-tribal coexistence states. And finally, the political science approach examines different identities of states and tribes and studies how one infiltrates the other (Khoury and Kostiner 1991). Two points should be noted regarding these perspectives. The first relates to the relation amongst them and the second involves a problem these three perspectives share.

First, there is no contradiction among the three approaches. The difference does not lie in the approach taken—evolutionary, coexistence, or state identity—rather in the degree of stateness. The degree to which tribes evolve and transform to become states or continue to coexist is determined by the degree of political centralisation and socio-economic change and integration. Therefore, different cases offer different degrees of political centralisation and integration: the weaker the state, the more it will have to coexist with pre-existing social organisations, such as tribes. A comparison between the

Yemeni and Saudi states and their respective relations with their tribes would show that the differences between the approaches are narrower than it seems. The problem of tribal infiltration in states brings us to the second point.

The three approaches take the state to be a neutral organisation. States are not neutral. As argued above, states become neutral arenas as they develop but are not born this way. Speaking in terms of states versus tribes misses the point. States are people: a tribe, a family, a highly-organised party that seeks domination over other organisations. It should not be surprising that in the modern Saudi state, as we shall see later, “family networks have...permeated state structures” (Champion 2003, 72).

So what does the political culture school tell us about the state in the Middle East? Given the flaws it presents on ontological, epistemological and methodological levels, it tells us very little. However, any critique of this school should take two things into consideration. First, and to my knowledge, this school does not present us with a particular study intended to theorise state formation or a culturalist theory of that outcome. And second, the emergence of the state in the Middle East is a recent phenomenon without much history to provide us with the foundations for a systemic analysis of its development. Hence the descriptive nature of this school is a natural starting point before we can build better explanations on different political and social processes in the region. But to move beyond this school we need to be clear about its limitations.

Taking Islam, or any religion for that matter, as an independent variable to explain political outcomes is problematic for three reasons. First, religions provide us with no precise political and economic strategies, which can be refuted theoretically or altered empirically, particularly when they fail to satisfy the objectives they have defined. As broad bodies of thought, religions are very elastic providing us with the opportunity to offer different interpretations to a single thought. When such interpretations are implemented in different contexts, we end up having different Islams in motion, as other intervening variables enter into the scene. Second, in searching in religious texts for answers on the real world, we tend to fuse two processes, one theoretical—theological in the case of Islam—and the second actual. However, any general examination of Islamic teaching and thought would show dynamism in interpretation and tells us that religious interpretations *vary*, hence any thesis about the relation between a text and a social outcome could simply be refuted by indicating the

availability of a different textual interpretation. This ends up being a philosophical debate void of any reference to history or to the examination of empirical cases.

Given the presence of different interpretations, no amount of empirical evidence could refute any thesis based on a general body of thought. Hence, taking Islam as an independent variable could service any argument a scholar wants to test. One example is classical Orientalists' notion of Islam as promoting a quietist political culture; this thesis was advanced to explain lack of development in the Middle East (Lewis 1988). With the Islamic resurgence in the 1980s, the 'neo-Orientalists' began to speak about strong societies in the Islamic world where according to John Hall, building on Patricia Crone, Islam has been a "monotheism with a tribal face" (Hall quoted in Sadowski 1993, 18). States in Islamic history had weak roots in society, where societies' strength has not only made states unstable but also retarded the emergence of a 'civil society' necessary for democracy. Now Islam with a "tribal face" has created strong Islamic societies. Commenting on such shifts in explanation, Sadowski observes that:

The irony of this conjuncture needs to be savored. When the consensus of social scientists held that democracy and development depended upon the actions of strong, assertive social groups, Orientalists held that such associations were absent in Islam. When the consensus evolved and social scientists thought a quiescent, undemanding society was essential to progress the neo Orientalists portrayed Islam as beaming with pushy, anarchic solidarities (Ibid, 19).

The availability of different political outcomes in Islamic societies—namely, a variation in the dependent variable—tells us from the outset that Islamic political culture can not be a cause for different effects; this brings us to the third point. How can we explain Islam as a cause in states as diverse as secular Turkey, religious Iran, monarchical Saudi Arabia, Baathist Syria, or multi-ethnic Malaysia? In entering into such an examination of these Muslim countries who differ on various aspects from their colonial power, to their political economy, to their geo-strategic position in the international system of states, etc.. the picture begins to look more complex. In looking at these factors, a new dimension emerges as we shift the explanation from the outcomes to be explained to the explanatory variable—Islam. What explains its variability? Here, Islam becomes the *dependent variable*, the variable that needs to be explained. Why is Islam rigid in the first place? What material factors contribute to its rigidity? Do political structures in those countries help advance this body of thought or retard its development? Is the presence of a multi-ethnic society a factor promoting a moderate understanding of Islam or constraining one? What does the formation of state

tell us about state and religion relations? Do external factors influence the power structures that promote certain interpretations of religion over others? The list of questions could go on further. As we see, such culturalist approaches add more questions than they solve.

In his attempt to analyze Ernest Gellner's (1981) treatment of Islamic societies—particularly those in Northern Africa—Simon Bromley shows that although Gellner starts with culture as the defining moment—"Islam is the blueprint of a social order" (quoted in Bromley 1994, 26)—to explain how Islam is resistant to further development in its doctrine, Gellner relies on the "materialist aspect of the account" (Ibid.) particularly that the classical world of Islam is a "fusion of scripturalism and pastoralism" (quoted in Bromley 1994, 26). Bromley concludes that the "specific features of Islam..are no longer centre-stage". The same faith can issue in three different outcomes: Islamic modernism, secular nationalism (Kemalism) or social conflict and violence (Bromley 1994, 29; emphasis original).

Should we abandon culture as an analytical tool? Culture could provide a fruitful explanation to political phenomena when the scholar sets a specific research agenda with a specific set of questions and arguments and aim to propose a causal chain linking culture to political outcomes. The Islamic Revolution in Iran can not be explained solely by utilizing class analysis. There is a cultural reason as to why the Islamists in Iran emerged triumphant and not their Communist or Nationalist counterparts. But this is debatable and it is only through rigorous analysis that we can *position* culture among other variables to see the *major* driving force for change. Chapter Three will attempt to do this.

However, what about the theory that Muslim countries can not accommodate the notion of the state because the state was 'imported' by the West? Scholars building on the culturalist approach, although providing a more sophisticated analysis than the earlier school (Ayubi 1994, 22-24), argue that the Arab state is weak and go on to show that Arabs, particularly Muslim scholars, have no such notion. This project takes scholars into a search in Islamic scripts about a possible compatibility to the Western notion of the state. But where does this takes us? Does reading and writing about Islamic and Arab concepts of the state help us understand the state in the Middle East? Such inquiries may be of interest to students of Islamic political thought or philosophy, but what is its utility for state weakness in the region? From the outset, the student reading such a text may find a correlation between the fact that Arab resistance to the

notion of the state is causing state weakness. Or, maybe believe that if the Arabs were equipped conceptually to accept the notion of the state, then states in the region would be stronger.

Even if such arguments existed, they actually tell us little. It is simply natural for Muslim societies not to be able to accommodate the notion of the state, particularly because the state, as territory, people and government, is a *new* phenomenon for them. Without a history of a western style state, there is no concept of such a state. But one may ask, what about the Islamists, Arab and Syrian Nationalists resistance to the post-Ottoman state system in the Middle East? Well, this resistance is not a resistance of a *concept* but a resistance to a political project, which in the eyes of these forces, is seeking to divide their territories and hence weakening them vis-à-vis the European colonial power. The state is *not* a concept exclusive to European civilization, but a political structure which emerged first in Europe, due to specific factors of that region, and spread first *in* Europe before extending to the rest of the world, which *had* proto types of states (Tilly 1990; Elias 1990).

The problem has been to deal with the state as a Western concept being sold in a market unable to digest its meaning. The second problem is to link the concept of the state to 'liberty'. This misconception shows not only a misreading of European state formation but also a misreading of state formation in the Middle East. Another futile problem is to compare the current Arab states, which are new political entities, with developed European ones. It is normal to see a liberal European state now; however without appreciating *how* it came to be liberal, we can not understand the dilemmas of state development in the Middle East. I will elaborate on these points below; it suffices to say now that the process of state formation in Europe did not go hand in hand with rosy notions of liberty, but was a bloody process (Bates 2001; Tilly 1985). Before states became liberal, states had to exist. This is because states are not mere institutions with liberal norms, but forms of domination, which are *unbalanced* in early state formation.

1.2.2. Political Economy and State Formation

As we can see, the analysis of the state in the Middle East did not take centre stage in culturalist approaches; its examination was peripheral and was treated as given, while the main object was to explain political authoritarianism by highlighting peculiarities of the Middle East, namely its dominant religion Islam. Disenchanted with this approach, scholars working on the region began to search for new theoretical frameworks to assist them in attending to the region's problems. Two aims were defined: first was the need

to resituate Middle East politics within general political and social theory and second to move beyond vague culturalist explanations to establish more substantive work on the region, namely an examination of the political economy of the region particularly state formation. The sum of these efforts aimed at advancing one thesis: the Middle East is not peculiar. These efforts coincided well with ‘bringing the state back in’ (Evans et.al 1985). In this section I will first provide a general review of this school and then will consider some of its limitations.

Attending to the first objective, Lisa Anderson was “concerned with attempts to integrate the Middle East into the broader concerns of contemporary Political Science and Political Theory rather than with policy-relevant commentary as such” (1990, 54). The way forward towards a more serious and systemic analysis of the Middle East, is to “return to institutions as those of the state” and the method should use history as an alternative to culture (Ibid., 66-73; see also Bromley 1994, 2).

Alan Richards and John Waterbury raised scepticism as to the explanatory power of culture (1996, 2). In their model, they define the state and social class as two important variables in their modular axis, while ‘structural transformation’ is the third corner in this model. With the political economy approach, we observe a shift from culture to a more substantive analysis of the state and social classes in different cases *within* the Middle East. The authors advise that we look at different characteristics of each state such as its natural resources and their utility, its social class composition, and state behaviour (Ibid., 6).

Other country case studies contributed to our understanding of state-society relations in Iraq (Batatu 1978), Egypt (Waterbury 1983), Syria (Hinnebusch 1989), Tunisia and Libya (Anderson 1986) or Saudi Arabia (Chaudry 1997). The main conclusion was that the Middle East is “far from being exceptional” (Hinnebusch 1989, 319). Another important contribution, which I will elaborate on below, is the Rentier state theory (Luciani 1990; Beblawi and Luciani 1987). Rentier theory examined the role of oil in consolidating states in the Middle East and in preserving authoritarian structures. This is the case not only for oil-rich Arab states but also poorer ones such as Syria, Jordan, or Yemen who receive labour remittance and aid as a result of oil.

Therefore, an important shift has taken place in the political study of the Middle East. What can we extract about the state from this literature? What has the literature added to our knowledge of it? And where are its shortcomings? To answer these questions I will examine three works that aimed to understand the state: *Arab State an*

edited volume by Giacomo Luciani (1990), Simon Brombley's *Rethinking Middle East Politics*, (1994) and Nazih Ayubi's *Over-stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East* (1994). Although I will present a specific critique for each of these works, it is important to note that these works share a set of general problems.⁷

The question that Luciani's work aims to answer is whether "the Arab state [is] a solid creation? And why?" It seeks to explain "the stability and persistence of the state in the Arab World". By "persistence" and "stability", Luciani highlights the fact that Arab states "have at least the appearance of stability in the Arab world, and have persisted into the 1980s without fusion, secession, reconstitution, or dissolution into a larger pan-Arab entity" (1990, xvii). As we see the dependent variable is "the appearance of stability"; this refers to a stable situation *within* Arab states, maybe due to *authoritarian* forms of power there. While the latter part of the statement on the persistence of the Arab state—"without fusion, secession, reconstitution, or dissolution into a larger pan-Arab entity"—refers to the *territorial* state. This forms a conceptual confusion that affects the explanation. What is it that they want to explain? Is it internal stability of the Arab state or its survival? Although there is a relation between internal stability and state survival, we need to analytically separate them, because different sets of answers may be provided to each of these questions. An internally unstable state could survive *territorially*, while a *stable* entity could decide to dissolve into a larger one.

Then Luciani turns to Arab regimes, there he observes that "we find that for over a decade and a half they have remained solidly in power and have created a stable organizational structure around them" (Ibid., xvii - xviii). Here the reference is on political consolidation in the Arab world, which takes an authoritarian form. Now, against those who claim that "the state [in the Arab world] is a house of cards, its stability more apparent than real,"—here the apparent "stability" is the dependent variable, and against those who contend that "the Arab nation continues to be the dominant reality"—and hence the Arab territorial states are artificial (dependent variable), Luciani argues that these arguments have "a difficult time explaining away the evident fact of stability even if that stability may only prove to be transient." "Stability" is used as to explain both internal stability and the survival of the territorial Arab states. He continues that "this volume finds that the state has been stable in the last decade and a half, and the durability is not simply an artificial vision" (Ibid., xviii).

⁷ Another work is Roger Owen's *State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East* (2000) however the book does not, nor aims to, conceptualise the state.

Here the confusion becomes clearer. Now again, I am not contesting a possible relation between internal stability and state survival—in fact this will be part of the argument I present in Chapter Four—but I am trying to reveal a confusion in this study’s dependent variable which, as I will show below, confuses the analysis and explanation. Where does this confusion lead?

First, the confusion between internal stability and state survival leads us to search for factors of state survival *inside* the state, namely we will search for factors that explain both stability *and* territorial state survival. Actually, this is what the authors of the volume search into: in describing the Arab state and factors of its survivability, they define six characteristics: (1) The availability of “central strongman, leader and orchestrator”, (2) continuing reshuffling of state elites, (3) political accommodation, (4) ruling elite as a “broad urban middle class”, (5) Large administrative organization, and (6) Arab state operates as an organization of control and regulation (Dawisha and Zartman 1987, 1-4). The chapters in the volume elaborate on these points. Although these factors are necessary to explain political consolidation or authoritarianism in the Middle East, they are not sufficient to explain the durability of the state in the Middle East.

Another implication of this confusion is the effect of oil on state stability. For Luciani, “it is a fact that oil production appears to have a strong and decisive role on the nature of the state” (1990, 70). The reason for is that foreign revenues obtained from oil frees the state from taxing its people, hence it is more autonomous vis-à-vis social forces and is not held accountable before them. Oil, according to Luciani, “has provided the weaker state structures with abundant financial resources” and “thus today it is very rarely the case that the very existence of a state structure is endangered by the lack of resources” (Ibid., 66-7). The implication of this is that “access to oil rents thus contributes to the explanation of stability, and of the persistence in many Arab states of regimes based on a strong central figure...”As a result, rentier states “will display little tendency to evolve towards democratic institutions” (Luciani 1990a, xxiv).

Although this analysis is influential to understand authoritarianism and to understand prospects of democracy in oil-rich states, it need *not* explain the survival states of the Middle East. Why? First, oil is not a cause of these authoritarian forms of power it is a contributing factor (an intervening variable). As the Saudi and Iraqi cases will suggest, authoritarian forms of power were in place *before* the arrival of oil. Oil came to *reinforce* existing power structures and did not cause them. Second, what does

this tell us about state survival, which is a different outcome? If we situate the state in its international context, as the Iraqi case will reveal, oil actually *weakens* the territorial state, how? By reinforcing existing power structures, oil increases regime autonomy vis-à-vis other social forces, and hence the state remains weak as a *whole* vis-à-vis *external* powers, particularly as social and cultural groups within the state are not engaged in the state but also have their *autonomies*, making it easier for outsiders to activate them by penetrating the state.

Another work that sought to present a “broadly defined ‘political economy’ approach is Nazih Ayubi’s *Over-stating the Arab State*. The main argument of the book, according to Ayubi, is “that although most Arab states are ‘hard’ states, and indeed many of them are ‘fierce’ states, few of them are really ‘strong’ states.” Although they have huge armies and bulky bureaucracies, Arab states are weak when it comes to tax collection or winning wars (1994, xi). The study seeks answers on different questions including the causes of state weakness in the Arab world, failure of Arab unity, and Arab state flexibility in its international alliances (Ibid., 1).

Examining the state debate in the Middle East, the analysis stresses the incompatibility of the state with Muslim societies “due to the weakness of individualist and secularist traditions within them” (Ibid., 15). The debate largely takes a normative framework making it more prescriptive than analytical or substantive. Hence, it is difficult to depict if the author is trying to analyze state formation in the Arab world or is trying to prescribe an alternative Arab or Islamic notion of the state (see the debate in Ibid, 10-24). As mentioned above, and although Ayubi aims at showing that the Middle East is not ‘unique’, he ends up revealing the distinctive nature of the region and by doing so he implies a uniform European path of state formation.

What is the argument presented by Ayubi? For Ayubi, “The Middle East has historically possessed modes of production that were mainly tributary in nature”, in modern times:

The tributary modes of production have been articulated with the encroaching capitalist mode of production (especially in its ‘exchange’ manifestations). With few exceptions, the outcome has often been the emergence of a basically ‘circulationist’ type of system whereby the ruling caste is fairly autonomous from the production process and the social classes, but often excessively dependent on the outside world.

The class nature of such society manifests a dispersed, fluid class map with classes excessively dependent on the state (or on the outside world) and with many intermediate strata, *couches moyennes*, in existence. Several of these contend with each other for social and economic prominence but without any of them being

structurally capable of assuming class hegemony with the society
(Ibid., 24-5).

The focus is clearly on the role of material forces in shaping social and political dynamics in the region. Given the complexity of the concept of ‘class’, it is hard to depict a relationship between the mode of production and political outcomes in Ayubi’s analysis. We realise in the first paragraph above that European capitalist advancement to the Middle East combined with existing tributary modes of production to form what Ayubi calls “articulation”—meaning “two or more modes [or production] can often coexist and interlink” (Ibid., 26). This, politically, led (or contributed?) to the emergence of a “ruling caste [that] is fairly autonomous from the production process and the social classes, but often excessively dependent on the outside world.” This echoes theories of dependency but remains unclear. The question that arises is that if the Middle East economy is tributary in nature how can we speak of a “class map”? If it is a tributary economy, I understand an agrarian economic structure, where we find a feudal strata and peasant class. Here, one can suggest that in this economy the ruling class extracts surplus to export it to the “core” and hence there is a dependence on the core. The ruling stratum hence, acts as a medium, but can we suggest that this class is “autonomous” from “social classes”? It is not clear on what form of dependence Ayubi is suggesting. If he is suggesting economic dependence, then the ruling elite can not be autonomous from peasantry class, because it is dependent on this class for labour. If he is suggesting political dependence (let us assume for geo-strategic reasons), then the “tributary” mode of production as an independent variable can not hold. Without making it clear, different analytical implications may be supposed.

In the second paragraph, Ayubi describes the class structure and social classes as “dispersed, fluid”, and “excessively dependent on the state (or on the outside world)”. This makes the confusion clearer. Here, we have classes dependent on the state. This may suggest the first possibility referred to above where the state depends on social classes and hence there is a *mutual* dependence aiming at extracting surplus, but where does the autonomous “ruling caste” fit?

What is the political implication of this class analysis to understanding the state in the Middle East? In the second paragraph, Ayubi claims that the struggle among these classes does not lead to any of them “being structurally capable of assuming class hegemony within the society.” Although, Ayubi does not tell us why this is the case, he continues that “owing to the lack of class hegemony, politics in such a society is not characterized by an orderly process of aggregating demands but by acts of capturing the

state and acts of resisting the state. Once in power the ruling caste usually has no intention of giving it up, but the techniques of maintaining power vary from case to case” (Ibid., 25) Now, who is the “ruling caste”? Is it a class? If yes, then there *is* class hegemony, this contradicts the first statement. If no, then class struggle analysis is *not* relevant to explain politics in this region, hence the absence of class hegemony has nothing to do with this outcome. This is also not clearly identified.

Because the mode of production is ‘articulated’, Ayubi suggests that there is ‘non-correspondence’: in “many social formations there is little correspondence among various ‘instances’ or manifestations of structural power in society” (Ibid., 27). Here power refers to three types, modes of production, modes of coercion, and modes of persuasion. Simply stated these mean economic, coercive, and cultural powers in society. Now, Ayubi’s idea is that different economic modes of production need not correspond to specific culture or coercive instances. Where these ‘instances’ have corresponded well previously (in European cases), in the Middle East there is no correspondence. Hence, “articulation may therefore take the form of linkages not only among various modes of production, but also among (non-corresponding) ‘instances’ of structural power...thus it would be possible to imagine in a particular society an articulation between, for example, certain economic and technical elements of the capitalist mode of production and certain social and cultural elements of pre-capitalist (eg.feudal, even slavery) modes of coercion and persuasion” (Ayubi 1994, 27).

One main problem is that class analysis is assumed *a priori* and it is taken to explain state formation and development—especially in European experience—and therefore its absence in the Middle East contributes to why the state is weak there. The implication of this analysis is that we search for what is *missing* in the Middle East instead of what is *there*. “The predominance of the ‘political’ and the cruciality of the state” observes Ayubi “is in some ways a function of the *lack* of class hegemony in society, which is, in turn, closely related to the articulated nature of the modes of production. The state here comes to fulfil a compensatory function and to enforce a certain kind of formal unity on a body that is not socially homogeneous or balanced” (Ibid., 172-3; emphasis added). But *what* is this state we are talking about? *Who* leads it? *How* and *why* does it ‘enforce a certain kind of formal unity’? Ayubi’s analysis assumes a separation between the state and society. What is missing in this analysis is a definition of the ‘men dominating men’ and the institutions they build to consolidate their power. These men need not be representing a class but simply social forces who

construct strategies—economic, coercive, and cultural—to manage their conflict with their rivals.

Why is the Arab national territorial state weak in the Middle East? Ayubi examines this question by asking if the Arab state is territorial or Pan-Arabist. Because of the influence of the concept of *Umma*, the Arabs, according to Ayubi, “have not been conventionally sympathetic to any concept of the body-politic that bases itself on land or territory” (Ibid., 135). Although Ayubi partially accepts that Islamism and Arabism have “limited the evolution of the national territorial state in the Arab world”, he believes the “the quest for a nation-state tends to correspond with the emergence of an ‘industrial revolution’ and the organisation of a working-class movement”. In the Arab world these have not taken place or if they did they were “directed by the state and not, as in the familiar European cases, by the bourgeoisie” (Ibid., 136).

Once again the state is analysed based on what’s missing and not what is there. Islamic and Pan-Arab ideologies are primarily *political* projects that, without sophisticated concepts of the state, intend on uniting specific *territories* against others. But these projects are not the natural state of affairs in which the current territorial states are the deviation. Rather, these frameworks are projects that required, and continue to require, political struggles with other projects (and identities) representing leaders of the current states. It is not only the absence of a “‘historic bloc’” (Ibid.) that is capable of uniting the Arabs that is missing, but rulers who aim to sustain their power domestically and regionally (Walt 1987) and who are able to manipulate identities (Davis 1991) and sustain ‘historic blocs’ (for a definition, see Cox 1981). As we see above, Ayubi’s work is a *reflection* of Middle East complexity more than a systemic attempt at capturing and explaining such a complexity.

In a similar fashion, Simon Bromley in his *Rethinking Middle East Politics*, attempts to analyse “how do we theorize the linked process of state formation and capitalist development in the modern world?” (1994, 1). However, from the outset we realize that the question, again, inherently and *a priori* sets a link between capitalist development and state formation in the modern world. Bromley’s major message is that against those who take Islam to explain lack of economic and political development, we should look at the mode of production of a country or a time period to explain the *corresponding* cultural value. It is worthwhile to note at this stage that Bromley’s work has two major differences from the works discussed above. First involves the serious attention to the process of state formation, namely the periods before states emerged in

the Middle East. And, second his attention to the role that colonial powers play in shaping Middle East state formation.

According to Bromley, “if we are to make sense of the social formations of the Middle East we must attend to the particular forms by which the material production of these societies was organized, and thence the ways these structured other social arrangements”. Hence, Bromley carefully distinguishes between modes of production in “Ottoman heartlands, the areas dominated by tribal nomadism and the Safavid empire” (Ibid., 38). Each of these had a corresponding Islam. For Bromley, “state formation cannot be understood by isolating it from changes going on elsewhere in society, specifically from changes in the dominant forms of surplus appropriation” (Ibid., 101). The problem here is similar to the problems discussed above on Ayubi’s work, the forms of ‘surplus appropriation’ are taken to explain both the formation of states and their (lack of) development towards liberal polities.

The emergence (simultaneously) of states in authoritarian forms of power in the region is, according to Bromley, due to the lack of a liberal capitalist form of surplus appropriation—recall here Ayubi’s lack of a “class hegemony”. This shaped both the internal dynamics of state formation and state behaviour in the region. The integration of the Middle East in the world market, led many states to take the role previously taken by indigenous minority groups, who under tributary forms of appropriation contributed to establishing state-led models of late industrialization. “By these means, then, *dependent* state formation assisted in imbricating the state directly in the appropriation of surpluses” (Ibid., 104; emphasis original). This further went along with the persecution of minority groups. However, “such projects varied in their relation to imperialist interests”, in regions where states escaped colonial rule or where their development is based on exporting oil to the West such as Turkey, Iran, and Saudi Arabia “then dependent state formation need not take an anti-imperialist form.” Western imperialism, according to this argument created “sub-imperialisms” in those states, who repressed national forces. On the other hand in states such Egypt or Iraq, where colonial influence was marked “state-formation and industrial development were more likely to take an anti-imperialist, if not anti-capitalist, form” as the landed and mercantile classes were perceived as ‘imperial agents’. In all cases, political authoritarianism ensued.

Though the argument presents us with an interesting causal chain between modes of production and state formation, there is danger that the analysis becomes reduced to economic factors. Below I raise a few questions. First, what is the relation

between the absence of a colonial past with the nature of relations with imperial powers? It is understandable that “a degree of independent development might be encouraged by the imperialist power in order to create sub-imperialisms which could then manage the regional system under broad constraints dictated by the West.” But how do we delineate the mode of production factor here? How do we know whether Turkey’s “anti-imperialist” formation is due to a specific mode of production or due to geo-strategic reasons.

Second, such analysis misses major regional and world shifts in the balance of power and their relation to the Middle East. Although world powers are attracted to the Middle East due to, in the final analysis, economic interests, the management and preservation of such interests takes a *political* dimension. Hence, world powers may back or repress a state in the region not necessarily for its potential as a surplus appropriator, but maybe for its potential as geo-strategic asset or threat. What is meant by the general term of ‘imperialism’? Can we speak of imperialism in the singular? Although imperial powers share the same interests, we must not forget, that the ‘core’ does not share similar strategies, but usually contradictory ones. Hence, state formation in the Middle East has to be seen in the context of such structural power balances. For example to understand military coups in Syria of the 1950s, we can not only look at the mode of production there and its political expression in army officers seeking change. We have to examine the British and American struggle for the country during that time and how this reflects on the political environment there. The Middle East state was born within such structural limitations.

Third, modes of production on their own can not explain why Egypt sought an “anti-imperialist” industrial development. Actually, a close examination of Egyptian industrial policy of the early years after the revolution, would show a policy not anti-imperialist (see Waterbury 1983, 63). Egypt *became* anti-imperialist, but then this also was possible only with the emergence of another power in the international system, namely the Soviet Union. Moreover, such analysis can not on its own explain, as we shall see below, the arrival to power in Iraq of ‘progressive’ forces. Interestingly, in Bromley’s analysis of the selected cases, all other factors such as ethnic composition of the country, its geo-strategic position, the timing of its formation and others are discussed but it remains very difficult to distinguish the economic factor and set causal chain of it as an explanatory variable. Bromley concludes that “we should turn first to

political economy of the Middle East in order to explain the current political scene” (Ibid., 169).

A political economy approach can be very useful to examine political dynamics only if, like with political culture, it is situated as one variable among many. There is a danger that the three works above overstretch their analysis to explain other political phenomena in the Middle East. Luciani believes that “an allocation state does not need to refer to a national myth and, as a matter of fact, will usually avoid doing so” (Ibid., 78). Eric Davis and Nicolas Gervreidies actually show how oil-rich states established government programs to promote ‘national’ folklore and manipulate historical memory. Further, they show how these programs vary according to a regime’s interests (Davis and Gavrieliades 1991). Ayubi extends the concept of articulation to explain “why a discourse like that of the Islamists does not seem to carry much by way of clear class content.” Again, it is assumed that political agendas of Islamists ought to have a class ingredient although the priorities of their political agenda may include national liberation or Islamic revival, where the economic objectives (which eventually may include as class ingredient) may take secondary aims.

Conclusion

This chapter sought to examine the state as a concept and the state debate in the Middle East. The first part aimed to define the state and state formation. We realised that scholars differed in their understanding of the state. I argued that it is important to treat the state as a process taking place in social fields and therefore I defined state formation and collapse differentiating between states as a territorial entity and as a regime of power.

In the second part, I examined the state debate in the Middle East. I argued that both the political culture and political economy approaches have reduced politics to a single variable. The two main shortcomings of this literature include their conception of the state and its formation and their (with the exception of Bromley) domestic treatment of state development. What is missing in the role of the ‘political’ structure and particularly the role of political actors as managers of different cultural and material structures.

In chapters Three and Four below I will argue that any theoretical understanding of the state in Middle East will have to start with the ontology of that region before we can come up with epistemological positions. Second, we can not escape a three-level analysis, including domestic, regional, and international, especially that the state was

born and continues to develop in such a highly interconnected system. And third, methodologically, we need clear questions, precise concepts, and testable hypotheses to be able to form a basis on which knowledge could be accumulated. Before that I will examine general theories of state survival in the next chapter.

Chapter Two

Why do States Survive?

To understand social structures and processes, it is never enough to study a single functional stratum within a social field. To be really understood, these structures and processes demand a study of the relationships between the different functional strata which bound together within a social field.

—Norbert Elias, *The Civilising Process*

Introduction

In the previous chapter I discussed the state as a concept and theory and reviewed theories of the state in the Middle East. This chapter will focus on the literature that aims to answer the main question of this research: why and how do states survive? Similar to the literature visited in the previous chapter, the following analysis will show a divide between two approaches. First are theories that stress material factors over ideational ones and, second, theories that emphasise agent over structure or vice-versa.

Most social science research, one could argue, revolve around one or more of these factors or the interaction among them. One of the arguments I present in this work is that the hard question that faces social scientists is not *which* factor is to be demarcated as influential but *when* and *under what conditions*. However, in addition to the above dichotomies, in International Relations we have the domestic-international divide. In other words do we focus on internal dynamics of states or systemic forces. In the following review, I will visit arguments that emphasize international or domestic (or both) sources of change and within each analysis I will discuss the material versus normative approaches to the problem.

One way to study why states stay intact is to understand why some collapse. However, with the exception of a few, most of the studies on state collapse in, for example, the former Yugoslavia, Soviet Union, Somalia, Afghanistan, and Lebanon provide all of the above factors as causes of collapse making it hard to know which

factor matters and when particularly if—as in the case of this study—the object is to understand why certain weak states survive. In examining state survival, as mentioned earlier, we look at how power is reproduced, not only how monopoly over coercion is sustained and challenged but also, how regimes produce cultural strategies to legitimate their power, and finally how they establish internal and external alliances to maintain that power. Accordingly, state survival is not only about institutional survival. I say this here for two reasons. First, because a few of the studies I review here conflate between the territorial state and the state as an institution or bureaucracy or political regime. Second, another body of literature aims at understanding state weakness or erosion—particularly in the industrialized world—in the face of global forces such as multi-national corporations, monetary unions, non-governmental organizations and others (Strange 1996; Camilleri and Falk 1992; for the Middle East see Atrissi 2005). This body of literature is interesting in understanding the state power vis-à-vis these global changes, but not in the survival of the territorial states in new polities. Hence, this body of literature will not be covered below as its aims differ from those in this study.

2.1. International Conditions of State Survival

The collapse of empires such as the Austro-Hungarian or the Ottoman, the emergence of two global powers and the establishment of the United Nations after 1945, and later the collapse of the Soviet Union brought numerous new states to the international system. Politics within these new states, the relations between them and with the established ones tended generally towards two aims: either to maintain the existing configuration (status quo) or to alter it. This was historically contingent on several factors such as the internal cultural composition of the state, its socio-economic foundations, or geo-strategic position within the international state system. The international state system in post-1945 was largely shaped by the two competing powers—U.S. and the Soviet Union—which in turn shaped domestic struggles for power in the new polities.

The structure of world politics—it is argued—kept established state borders intact. States as such were taken by International Relations theories—particularly Structural Realism—as givens without a thorough examination of the internal dynamics of survival. As Joel Migdal argues, International Relations “models emphasized its [state] rationality, thereby assuming its integrity and coherence”

(1988, 138). International structures of powers defined the role states could assume; weak states are more likely to seek support from powerful ones who, in search for spheres of influence, seek to deprive competing powers from such influence or potential domination (Krasner 1999; Waltz 1979).

Another way through which states survive involves their choices in the making of foreign alliances. One of the questions Stephen Walt's (1987) study raises on the origins of alliances regards the causes that lead a state to support another state's territorial integrity or foreign policy. Examining the external alliances of Middle Eastern states, he finds that most alliances involved Arab regimes' choosing allies to balance against 'threats'—as opposed to 'power' as realism argues (*ibid.*, 5). The level of threat is assessed based on geographical proximity, offensive capability of threatening state, and the perception of threats. Although balancing is more common, the weaker the state, argues Walt, the more likely it would bandwagon rather than balance. Through these alliance strategies, regimes can consolidate their power and sustain their states.

Do ideologies play a role in the way a state chooses its alliances? Although "security considerations are likely to take precedence over ideological preferences", Walt (1987), studying a region that continues to be shaped by norms of Arabism and Islamist, observes that "when weak or unstable regimes rely on ideological arguments to bolster their legitimacy this reliance may affect their alliance choices...weak states may enter in alliance to bolster the state". Pre-empting a constructivist critique (see Barnett 1998), Walt expects that "regimes where legitimacy is precarious may enter ideologically based alliances" (*Ibid.*, 38-39). However, he cautions against taking the rhetoric of regimes seriously.

A major shortcoming of Walt's theory is that by not demarcating the process of state formation the theory focuses solely on systemic factors. States form alliances primarily to balance against threats emanating from the regional system in which they exist (*Ibid.*, 264). Although, this may be true, threats that regimes face, as the cases of this thesis will show, start in the domestic arena, which Walt acknowledges may determine the foreign policy options and alliance of a particular regime. Another consequence of not examining state formation is that although regimes in the Middle East attempt to balance against threats and not power, this is because the Middle East state system is "mediated" (Heydemann 2000) or its

development, as I will show below, did not involve a traditional accumulation of power by competing states but rather it was structured by international competition.

Against Realist approaches to state survival are schools that emphasised the role of norms to explain state survival. These approaches examined how norms emanating from the United Nations such as, sovereignty, self determination, and international law contribute to maintaining existing state boundaries. These approaches view the international state system more as an ‘international society’ (Bull 1977) rather than a system that is inherently conflictual or—solely—based on the balance of power; “as always with theorists of international society, it is the normative basis of the relationship that is crucial” (Brown 2001). In their study of African states, Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosenberg observe a dilemma that although central government in Africa may lose its control over its population or territory, the territorial state continues to persist (1982, 1). According to them a Weberian conception of the state—as a sole claimant over coercive forces—would mean that most African states would not qualify as states. We have to view states as legal persons with specific components of a defined territory, population, government, and international recognition. To understand state persistence in Africa we need to examine the juridical quality of states that “is not only a normative but essentially an international attribute” (Ibid., 12-13). The authors conclude that “juridical statehood is more important than empirical statehood in accounting for the persistence of states in Black Africa” (Ibid., 21).

From that analysis, it is hard to be clear on whether this conclusion indicates a causal relation between international law and state survival in Africa. In other words is survival due to international recognition or is it a contributing factor, a legal guarantee. The authors indicate that Africa is not a mere geographical entity but also a “political idea.” They go further to note that the internal weakness of and external vulnerability of African states made their statesmen more conservative vis-à-vis the existing boundaries. It has been clear to the leaders of the Organization of African Union that “a reciprocal respect for boundaries and abstention from demands for their immediate revision, would be to their general advantage” (Ibid., 17). The problem here is that there is no variation in the dependent variable (state survival) and at the same time there is no clear position on what the independent variable is (elite survival or international recognition). Both positions *could* be right,

but examining only Africa would not give us a clear answer to the question of why states survive.

This work has been further developed in Robert H. Jackson's more recent study in *Quasi-states: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World* (1990). The aim is to examine "the international normative framework that upholds sovereign statehood in the Third World" (Ibid., 1). The object is to examine moral and legal norms which sociological and political economy approaches have not given enough attention. Jackson defines 'Quasi-states' as "consisting not of self-standing structures with domestic foundation—like separate buildings—but of territorial jurisdiction supported from above by international law and material aid—a kind of international safety net. In short, they often appear to be juridical more than empirical entities: hence quasi-states" (Ibid., 5). The major characteristic of these states is their "negative sovereignty" as opposed to the "positive sovereignty" of European states where empirical statehood came before juridical one. Negative sovereignty is a "formal legal condition" that secures "freedom from the outside world" (Ibid., 27). Jackson argues that "empirical characteristics of quasi-states are not new", the history of the modern state formation is also of a history of "rulers who are illegitimate, governments that are disorganized or incompetent, and subjects who are indifferent, isolated, alienated, cowed, or in rebellion." Nevertheless, what has changed are the "rules and institutions concerning those conditions" (Ibid., 22-3). Hence, juridical states can not cease to exist. "Quasi-states are therefore disclosed by a new positive international society which fostered the independence of such states and caters for their survival and development" (Ibid., 25).

What implications does this work offer us in terms of understanding state survival? Jackson defines the objective of his work as an examination of the "international normative framework that upholds sovereign statehood in the third world." Does this mean that he will dismiss other factors such as the role of the international state system in keeping states intact, domestic elites urge for survival and how this is linked to state survival, cultural aspects that may keep states intact (see below) and focus solely on legal or normative structures that foster state survival? This is not entirely clear, though the conclusions of the work show that international normative structures explain state survival. Jackson concludes that:

"Up to a point quasi-states are however reversions to the early sixteenth century. But only up to a point, however, and that point is the late-twentieth-century society of states which underwrites their survival. The Third World prince must worry about losing his head

but he need not be concerned about losing his principality”. (Ibid., 167).

Against Hobbesian realist analysis, Jackson believes that the “quasi-state cannot logically collapse into a state of nature because its sovereignty is derived not internally from empirical statehood but externally from the states-system whose members have evidently decided and are resolved that these jurisdiction shall not disappear” (Ibid., 169). It is more likely that Jackson finds a causal link between the legal foundations of the state and its survival. This is problematic however for several reasons.

This would require a general observation of states that have actually both disappeared, both as juridical and real constructs. These include but are not limited to the separation of Bangladesh from Pakistan, division of Czechoslovakia, collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, Palestine/Israel or the United Arab Republic (a union between Egypt and Syria). If we look at de facto collapse the list is even longer, this may include Lebanon, Somalia, Afghanistan, Sudan, Nigeria, and Iraq. In the case of Yugoslavia or Iraq, the survival of the state was potentially linked to the survival of its leader. In the case of Yugoslavia, Tito played an important role in keeping the state intact at least temporarily (Dyker and Vejvoda 1996), in the case of Soviet Union the communist party played a similar role in consolidating the soviet regime (Beissinger 2002), while in Iraq, as I will argue below, Saddam Hussein’s coercive measures led to a similar outcome until he was ousted by force. In all these cases the international legal norms did not suffice to explain either their survival when they survived or their collapse when they collapsed because, put simply, principalities are built whether consciously or unconsciously, by princes. When they succeed, those princes impose recognition (legal and normative) on other princes, they create the law. When the law creates principalities, princes in the third world accommodate their struggles to those impositions. But who created this law? This brings us to the second problem that Jackson’s analysis brings.

To speak of an international law, means also to speak of an author(s) of this law. Laws are not initially givens; they develop out of certain struggles. Africa’s—and the Middle East’s in this respect—current borders were not arbitrarily drawn. Africans may perceive them as such due to the incongruity of these borders with existing nations, tribes or ethnic groups. But from the perception of those who actually drew them, these reflect previous (or existing) colonial competition over Africa and the spheres of influence they created among themselves. Hence, do we

look at the laws of sovereignty or at the power relations that made these Quasi-states possible? Maybe we should look at both, but the persistence of the state in Africa can not solely be attributed to the norms of an international society that keep these states intact, because in other cases, as those discussed above, these norms did not assist in this outcome. How can we only attribute state persistence to that outcome? Isn't it possible that the international state system (i.e. major states in this system) is not interested in Africa? If we combine this with the internal weakness of these states which are ruled by conservative leaders, isn't it possible to look at other factors to explain this outcome? Shouldn't we look at other regions such as South Eastern Europe, Central Asia, or the Middle East to test if different pressures from the international system produce different affects? Is it possible that in regions where powerful states have more interests, international norms do not matter?

Third, one needs to ask what if the authors of international law differ on one case or another. One of the attributes of state sovereignty is international recognition; however what if a few states recognize an entity and others don't? We have an outcome similar to that of Taiwan, which was recognized as China until Western powers recognized the People's Republic in the early seventies. Taiwan however continues to function as an independent entity, although is not recognized as such. But then we also have the northern part of Cyprus that is recognized by Turkey but not the rest of the world, or Israel that is recognized by the rest of the world but not by most Arab states. These formal and legal positions are not affected by norms at the international level but by actual power conflicts. Borders were imposed onto most of the developing world; however the response to these borders wasn't uniform. It is a grand simplification to consider the survival of African states as an effect of international law or norms of an international society. This law provides these states with a legal justification, and as Jackson rightly argues, it provides them with foreign aid and representation in international organizations. However, the real test of these norms is to be examined in regions where international powers have strategic interests, not where international powers are indifferent. Norms matter to the extent that international powers want them to. The real question is to understand why norms matter in one case and not in another, not merely to generalize their effects in the aim of undermining realist approaches. Jackson's approach provides a strong challenge to realism but also raises questions on the role of norms in affecting politics in the developing world.

In his *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival*, Christopher Clapham (1996) presents a challenge to realism by problematising its systemic analysis but raises doubts on the international norms in maintaining states. His main aim is to understand state survival in Sub-Saharan Africa from “a view of international politics from the bottom up”. The point is to examine what African leaders did to survive in their states and not only what the international state system was inclined to do to keep states surviving. The crucial question is “whose survival; the state’s or the ruler’s”. Clapham’s main hypothesis is that in most cases, African rulers “seek to assure their personal survival by the survival and indeed strengthening of their states” (Ibid., 4). Although survival is not the sole objective of these rulers, it nevertheless is a *precondition* to satisfying other aims. However, when economic and political difficulties loom or when the regime begins to face internal challenges the object of survival deepens; borders remain intact as rulers seek to secure their survival against internal and external enemies. Are these borders congruent with African peoples? No. These borders were imposed on Africa in the post-1945 period by European colonial powers largely “in order to regulate competition between themselves” (Ibid., 31) and according to Clapham the Africans were “almost powerless to alter” them (Ibid., 1941). African leaders seeking survival had to accommodate themselves to these borders—a political space necessary to maintain independence and a potential for socio-economic development.

However, was elite survival enough to keep states intact? Clapham observes that international recognition was not sufficient. African elites had to bargain with international powers. External dependence was determined by the strength or weakness of the regime internally. The weaker the regime internally, the more it sought assistance outside its border, and the more it weakened its internal legitimacy. Effective management of internal and external environments was facilitated in two ways. First, on the regional level, Clapham looks at the continent’s population density and concentration—as important indicators for the emergence of states—and finds a low density and a scattered population. Lack of such concentrations has created less competition on a regional level and made possible “islands of relatively settled governments” (Ibid., 29). In the history of European state formation as we will see below, migration, high population density—which resulted in a fierce competition over land—and the blockage of

external exits from the East were important preconditions to the emergence of competing states.

A second facilitator to state survival in Africa is the low pressure from the international state system. With the exception of the Horn, as a major strategic passage between East and West, Africa, according to Clapham, did not matter for the international state system (Ibid., 42). Competition between the U.S. and the Soviet Union during the Cold War was low, as compared to other regions such as East Asia or the Middle East. With the end of the Cold War, interest in the region was limited to foreign assistance particularly to non-governmental organizations, what Clapham call a “de-stating” of external relations with Africa (Ibid., 256).

As we can see, to understand state survival we need to examine several dimensions, which include, but are not limited to, elite strategies of survival, internal composition of states, the geo-political position of the state and the timing of state formation. In weak states these vary and the development towards “empirical statehood” need not be unilinear, rather there are both progressions and regressions. “Quasi-statehood”, concludes Clapham, “provides no bridge across which African or other states can pass in reasonable confidence from their post-colonial origins to the empirical statehood that rests on national integration and a set of viable political and economic institutions.” International recognition “has provided only a temporary respite from external pressure”. Clapham finally recommends that International Relations as a discipline needs to take internal dynamics of states seriously and not to examine solely the interactions amongst them (Ibid., 271).

We could add that the nature of the process of state formation has both domestic and international dimensions. The strengthening of internal domestic structures in the process of power centralization serves not only to consolidate the power of elites internally but also to limit external intervention, which, potentially, could limit the power of those elites. Now the extent of this centralization, its necessity, and the time period it requires is historically and contextually contingent. The study of state formation and collapse is therefore at the meeting point of the two artificially divided subfields of Political Science—Comparative Politics and International Relations.

Because Clapham’s work is attentive to both internal and external dynamics of state survival it is hard to situate it in the division I have intended for this work,

regardless of the fact that he follows a bottom-up approach. My intention is to highlight this division so we can move beyond it. To do this however, we need a theoretical model that provides the seeds of understanding the interactions of domestic, regional, and international levels of dynamics. Studying state survival in new polities provides a fertile ground in this objective. Before I suggest such a model in the next chapters, I turn now to examine domestic factors of state survival.

2. 2. Domestic Explanations of State Survival

To understand the internal factors of state survival scholars have looked at material and cultural factors. Among the material factors is coercion. Although coercion is now treated as the last resort in established states, it was the main ingredient in the process of state formation in those states and continues to shape domestic politics in the new polities. A less coercive form of power intending to keep states together is found in the economic sphere. Here regimes would reward their allies, who could be major capitalists, religious institutions, or even a social class, and punish their enemies whether they are a secessionist group or potential competitors for the reign. A third dimension that is not tangible is the political management of social struggles including: dividing the opposition, bargaining with external powers, emphasizing one religious or cultural interpretation over another, etc.. Another intangible power is found in the cultural domain. Politics, it is argued, takes place within a cultural frame, which gives meaning to people and sometimes explains power and not vice versa. Next, I will look at these factors in turn particularly in their relation to state survival.

2.2.1. Besides Coercion

In most of the cases of the developing world, the emergence of the state in the post-1945 was followed by the emergence of the military—largely through military coups—as a major power in domestic politics, and indeed in the international arena. In numerous cases in East Asia, Africa, Middle East, and Latin America democratic institutions inherited from colonial powers such as parliaments and party systems were seen as ‘divisive’ institutions serving either domestic conservative socio-economic forces, colonial powers, or both. The intervention of the military in politics was perceived as a passage towards socio-economic change but also, and

more importantly, towards power centralisation. These changes were exacerbated by dynamics of the Cold War politics that began to be accommodated in the new polities. The process of power centralization was indeed violent. Yousef Cohen et al., observe that the “entire historical process of creating a national state was a long and violent struggle pitting the agents of state centralisation against myriad local and regional opponents” (1981, 902). This point is stressed by students of state formation discussed above. However, the authors want to stress that violence taking place in the new states “is a function of the conflicts inherent in the process of primitive central state power accumulation” (Ibid.902)

Accumulation involves the transfer of power from local and sub national control to centralised institutions. The process is conflictual in the sense that the initiator of such processes enters into power struggles with pre-existing socio-economic and cultural institutions, be it peasants abstaining from tax payment or religious powers refusing to compromise their power autonomy or coercion-wielding and power-hungry rivals. Again, the intensity of such conflicts is contingent on the context where it takes place. While resistance from socio-economic and cultural institutions is universal, regime response varies. This depends upon how state elites bargain with other societal forces, on the coalitions they build (Waldner 1999) and the power of those social forces in specific territories. The emerging political institutions reflect such conflicts (Moore 1966). Coercion does not explain state formation; it is one of its ingredients, its variance across cases makes this clearer. Coercion is a necessary condition for state survival, but not a sufficient cause.

In their *Beyond Coercion: The Durability of the Arab State*, Aeed Dawisha and William Zaartman eds., (1987) sought to explain “stability and persistence of the state in the Arab world” (Ibid., 1). They define six characteristics that may be of relevance to understanding stability and durability of the Arab state. I have mentioned these factors above when I examined the Middle Eastern state literature, it suffices here to stress that these factors centre on the political management of stability. A major characteristic of the Arab state is the presence of a “central strongman, leader, orchestrator.” The work reveals how through such tools as continual reshuffling of personnel (see also Migdal 1988), the cooptation of opposition and the regulation of the economy, the state in the Arab world survives (Ibid., 4). These factors reveal important political tools that go beyond coercion in

explaining why states stay intact and they do not necessarily refute the assumption that coercion remains a precondition facilitating these less coercive powers.

Among such tools are economic policies which contribute to the survival of elites who establish them. Several studies reveal how economic policies are shaped by state elites worried about their survival or the survival of the state they rule in newly established states such as those in Africa (Bates 2005), East Asia (Amsden 1985) or the Middle East where concepts such as the 'Rentier state' (discussed above) or the 'Patrimonial state' (Harik 1997) reflect regimes' economic strategy that target survival. Arguing that "coercion alone cannot keep a state intact", Migdal provides both Iran under the Shah and the Soviet Union as examples (Migdal 2001, 149). While in both cases state institutions collapsed, in the former the state territory remained intact. In the case of Iran, we see a reconfiguration of public institutions that were imbued with Islamic norms and principles. Soviet collapse, however, is different. Criticizing explanations on the collapse of the Soviet Union, Mark R. Beissinger contends that these explanations "ultimately cannot account for why the Soviet state ended by disintegrating into national pieces as opposed to mere undergoing regime change" (2002, 8).

Another tool regimes possess to consolidate their rule, and sometimes their states, is found in the interaction taking place with their rivals. William Zartman for example, reveals how opposition to these regimes in the Arab world serves to consolidate the state. In trying to gain power, the opposition turns towards the regime, hence justifying its role; "neither uses the other, but each serves the other's interests in performing in its own role" (Zartman 1987b, 61-62). Another involves the foreign policy choices a regime takes and how this contributes to their domestic legitimacy against their rivals (Dawisha 1987b, 260-1). As I mentioned above, these factors help to contribute to regime survival, but this should not be conflated with survivability of the territorial state.

Another explanation as to why states remain intact is to look at what Joel Migdal calls the "organizational imperatives of the state" (2001, 142). This approach regards the state as an organization whose functions pertain to other social organizations. Organizations, it is argued, exist to harmonize interest of different actors. But why don't these organizations fall apart? The proposition is that the centripetal force that keeps them intact has control over the ownership of goods, which these organizations supply. By controlling the access to, and the distribution

of, these goods, the centripetal actor can maintain the integrity of the organization (Ahren 1994) simply by punishing those who seek to alter the existing power configuration and rewarding those who abide by its impositions.

Although the logic of such analysis may be extended to states as social organizations, there is a danger of overemphasizing the role of the organization in itself, particularly when the social structures—be it cultural, political, or economic—are not taken into consideration. The emphasis on organizational capacity of states has complicated our understanding of that institution. Any state requires an institutional apparatus, however, and as I will be discussing below, to understand a state we can not start by examining its institutions. Institutions, as defined above are intervening variables—humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interaction” (North 1991, 97). We need to understand the balance of power that produces, maintains, and develops such institutions. Institutions in this case are reflections of that balance of power. The effect they leave on society is determined by the autonomy they possess. To understand their autonomy, however, we need to look at their origins. Therefore, there is a need to demarcate a political level, whilst defining its main actors, before we understand institutions. Without an appreciation of this political level, we might fall into both theoretical and policy problems.

For instance, Francis Fukuyama (2004) sees institution building in ‘failed states’ as one of the “the most important issues for the world community”. Fukuyama is aware that the demand for institutions “when it emerges is usually the product of crisis or extraordinary circumstances that create no more than a brief window for reform”. Nevertheless, what if such a demand does not exist, Fukuyama is straightforward: “demand for [such] institutions must be generated externally” through aid and “direct exercise of political power by outside authorities” (Ibid., 35). But states are *not* mere institutions; rather, states are: (1) institutions (2) competing social powers. Institutions are *contributing* factors that keep states intact but do not cause state survival. More observant on this issue is William Zartman, who recognizes that *domestic* “power structures must be reconstituted from the bottom up for legitimacy to spring up again” (1995). Zartman, however, directly notices a dilemma: if warlords who are initially responsible for state collapse come to reconstitute the new state then factors of its original collapse might emerge again. On the other hand, if new elites are given the opportunity to build the new state,

they would lack legitimacy. The answer according to him is to bring together both types of elites (Ibid., 268-70). Hence the “cause and remedy” of state collapse “relate to sociopolitical *structure* within a given sovereign territory and people, not the shape of the state” (Ibid.; emphasis added).

2.2.3. Cultural Frames and the Political

Culture presents us with a problem; its effects on our lives, on the decisions we take, on our behaviour, and on the aspirations we foster is apparent. But the power of culture—generally defined here to mean the norms, traditions, and ideas we carry and which our shape social, economic, and political environments—is hard to situate among other dimensions of our lives such as the socio-economic system that preserves—or is preserved by—culture, or the political system that may be a reflection of that culture or simply an effect of it.

I think culture has a life of its own similar to that of the economic or political systems. If this is right then we have two challenges. First, we have to demarcate that life while analytically neutralizing the life of the other two systems. And second, we need to understand the relationship among those systems. If each of these systems has a life of its own, then we should seek to understand the sources that preserve or alter each of these systems. To understand systems and their interaction we need to look at the *actors* that constitute each of those systems. I propose this general proposition here as a lens to look at cultural explanations of state survival, while I keep the details of that suggestion to the following chapters.

“Why do so many states stay intact?” (Migdal 2001: Chapter 5). Trying to answer that question, Joel S. Migdal, against Realist, Organizational theorists, and utilitarian explanations, believes:

That certain areas of state-society interaction can create meaning for people in society, and that meaning, in turn, can naturalize the state. Naturalization means that people consider the state to be as natural as the landscape around them; they cannot imagine their lives without it. If that belief is widespread, it provides a powerful antidote to disintegrative forces, even in the face of continued weakness in delivering goods, effecting policy, and gaining efficiency (Ibid., 137).

Migdal provides three areas in which to examine how “meaning” is practiced and created. These include law generation, public ritual, and the permanent constitution and reconstitution of public space. States create laws to limit the power of their internal and external rivals. Law also limits the power of the state by extending these powers to societies, through the protection of

individual liberties and private properties (Ibid., 157). To surmount the problem of inefficiency, states gain support from their societies by engaging in ‘public rituals’ and ceremonies that “connect the sacred to the notion of the nation and the mundane institutions of the state” (Ibid., 158). In such situations the existing division between state and society become blurred. Building on Clifford Geertz (1980), Migdal observes the presence of a “controlling political idea” that keeps states intact. For Geertz the court and capital “is not just the nucleus, the engine, or the pivot of the state, it *is* the state...it is a statement of controlling political idea—namely, that by the mere act of providing a model, a paragon, a faultless image of civilized existence, the court shapes the world around it into at least a rough approximation of its own excellence” (Geertz quoted in Migdal 2001, 160; emphasis original). States need that “cultural frame” to enhance their ability to remain intact and to justify their domination. Finally, regarding the public sphere, as no state apparatus can be omnipresent in society to provide security, “the *perceived effectiveness of the state rests on how all other sorts of implicit law or rules guide proper behavior* and limit to some manageable level the deviance with which the state must deal” (Ibid. :165; emphasis original). Therefore, Migdal contends that in addition to other factors such as the United Nations, the material foundations of states, or globalization, states stay intact because of “a realm of feelings and implicit understandings that go beyond rational calculation” (Ibid., 167).

Persuasive as it is, Migdal’s explanation, by including its limitations, brings us to the core of the problem, while not taking us far in terms of solving it. Some questions remain: under what conditions does the law contribute to state survival? Why are there different sets of laws in the first place? Why does one set of laws prevail over others? What happens when public rituals and state religions are challenged? Under what conditions do certain public rituals survive? As for the public space, what explains the broadness of public space in one case and its narrowness in others? Last, definitely not least, what is this state we are talking about? Who defines it? What constitutes it?

To consider that the state has meanings in peoples’ lives is a very influential argument, so powerfully influential that we can not refute it. Whether we are supporting a given state or opposing it, that state shapes our behaviour just as we attempt to shape it. Looking at laws may contribute to our understanding of

states, particularly established ones, where state-society dynamics have matured due to a variety of factors such as war and socio-economic changes and their effects on the political—the state or its laws. To understand how laws affect—or whether they do—we need to examine them initially as effects of social development before we look at them as causes. Laws like the institutions that govern them are human devices.

Regarding public rituals and ceremonies and their relation to power we need to be very cautious here, especially if our objective is to explain political phenomena. Political statements with all the diplomatic parlance and symbolism that guides them are theatrical and are aimed at a specific audience, at specific times, and for specific objectives. The problem is that we overstretch or generalize this symbolism and treat it as an end itself. Clifford Geertz observes that:

Court ceremonialism was the driving force of court politics; and mass ritual was not a device to shore up the state, but rather the state, even in its final gasp, was a device for the enactment of mass ritual. Power served pomp, not pomp power. (Geertz 1980, 13)

As we see in the paragraph above, Geertz is suggesting that power was intended to serve public ritual. I do not intend here to discuss the 19th century Balinese state, however, I aim to show that culture could explain power, but what we need to examine are the conditions that preserve such cultural predominance, without falling into synchronic understanding of political phenomena and taking culture or material power *a priori* before looking at the evidence.

It is important to note first that although Geertz aims at understanding the cultural foundations of the Balinese state, its “beliefs and values, for the most part religious ones, which animated it, gave it direction, meaning, and form”, he also looks at the socio-structural “arrangements, the political instruments, in terms of which it attempted, with but intermittent success, to *sustain* such direction and achieve such form” (Geertz 1975c, 331; emphasis added) and geographical landscape, which sets up a “very intricate and unhomogenous field of geopolitical forces whose action was anything but integrative.” In the Balinese state “it is not possible to locate a genuine hegemony anywhere in this entire system” (Ibid., 22-23).

Although Geertz examines the cultural foundations of the Balinese state, he doesn’t believe that culture is power “something to which social events,

behaviors, institutions, or processes can be casually attributed; it is a *context*, something within which they can be intelligibly—that is thickly—described” (Geertz 1975b, 14; emphasis added). Culture is context as I shall elaborate below. This, however, makes it hard to capture the relations between the cultural context and political phenomena taking place within it. Namely, how do these cultural components translate into political authority and hence leave effect on socio-political dynamics. Speaking of Indonesia, Geertz notes “with so much meaning lying scattered openly around it is nearly impossible to frame an argument relating political events to one or another strain of it which is totally lacking in plausibility”. What should be avoided is rushing to conclusions about such relations rather we need to “trace out the sociological links between cultural themes and political developments.” This is because, and based on Weber, ideas need “to be carried by powerful social groups to have powerful social effects; someone must revere them, celebrate theme, defend them, impose them” (1975e, 314).

Conclusion

In this chapter I examined theories of state survival showing how different approaches emphasise structural, agential, material or cultural factors to account for survival. Each of these approaches has contributed to our understanding of state survival, the lack of dialogue between them however has constrained further development of our understanding. Systemic forces are crucial—as I argue in this thesis for the Middle East—to understand state survival. However, these systemic forces can only be demarcated if we account their *effect* on *domestic* structures. It is the interaction between these two realms that we need to focus on. The process of state formation is at the core of understanding the interaction between these two levels of analysis.

As with the domestic-international divide, material and cultural forces need to be situated in the repertoire of political struggles. It is through this repertoire that we are able to understand the effect of cultural and material forces on political phenomenon. The following chapter will provide a model to examine the interactions of these social spheres. The role of political entrepreneurs will be highlighted in examining these interactions. The model will form the basis to understand state formation and survival in the Middle East in general and the cases of Saudi Arabia and Iraq in particular.

Chapter Three

Historical Structuralism

Human beings cannot live and coexist except through social organisations and cooperation for the purpose of obtaining their food and other necessities of life. When they have organized, necessity requires that they deal with each other and thus satisfy their needs. Each one will stretch out their hand for whatever he needs and try to simply take it...the others in turn will try to prevent him from taking it motivated by wrathfulness and spite and the strong human reaction when one's own property is menaced. This causes dissension.

—Ibn Khaldoun, *The Mokadima*

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances found, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, in creating something entirely new, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to the service and borrow from the names, battle slogans and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language.

—Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*

Introduction

The theoretical framework presented here has two aims. First, it presents an approach I name Historical Structuralism that will set the framework through which we can examine the theme of state formation and collapse. Second, the model will provide the necessary analytical tools to examine the conditions of state survival in the Middle East. This part divides into two chapters. While this chapter will be heuristic in nature serving to examine the ontology of the political world and the underlying structures that form it, the following chapter will examine the ontology of the state in the Middle East and the conditions of its formation and survival.

The main components of the approach examined in this chapter and divided into four sections include: (1) structures, (2) structures as social fields, (3) the constitution of social fields, and (4) history of social fields. The complexity of the political world we are dealing with stems from the interrelation between domestic, regional, and international arenas of power, on the one hand, and interrelation of identities, interests, and other institutions of power on the other hand.

I argue here that one way to examine the political world is to examine its situation within structures. To understand these structures, we need to examine their history, observe how they change over time and to specify the actors that constitute them. Examining actors within structures informs us on their identities—its formation and development—and their interaction with other actors. Debates among scholars on agent versus structure and identity versus interest may not be useful if not situated within particular concrete contexts and time frames. Put simply, without structures we can neither understand an agent's behaviour nor the identity and interest that this agent may hold.

When we examine the ontology of the political world we look at “being, to what is, to what exists.” The focus is on the nature of the political and social realities and what exists there which we can gain knowledge of (Hay 2002, 62). Ontological question about the political world include:

What is the polity made of? What are its constituents and how do they hang together? What kinds of general principles govern its functioning, and its change? Are they causal principles and, if so, what is the nature of political causation? What drives political actors and what mental capacities do they possess? Do individual preferences and social institutions exist, and in what sense? Are (and of) these things historically and culturally invariant universals, or are they relative to context? (Hay 2002, 62)

It is these sorts of questions that will guide the analysis presented in this and the following chapters. I start with structures.

3.1. Structures and the study of Politics

‘Structure’ as a concept has become an anathema in the social sciences in the last two decades. Academic interest in identity and its role in shaping actors’ (free) behaviour came against two postulates: materialism and structural determinism. Structuralism for James Mahoney “generally downplays or rejects cultural and value-based explanations of social phenomena” or “opposes approaches that explain social outcomes solely or primarily in terms of psychological states, individual decision-making processes, or

other individual-level characteristics” (2003, 151). We need, I argue here, to go beyond this narrow definition of structures or structuralism and in so doing, we need to go beyond this agent versus structures. To do this, an answer is required on two questions: What is a structure? And second, do structures determine or condition agents’ behaviour? I start with some definitions.

A structure means a “context and refers to the setting within which social, political, and economic events occur and acquire meaning” (Hay 2002, 94). This definition has two main elements. The first involves the context or setting where social events take place within a limited space, circumscribed in place and time. The second refers to where events acquire meaning. The second assumes an *interrelation* between, at least, two actors. Speaking of an event, implies further that somewhere else no such event is taking place or took place. It is here, where such a social event acquires meaning, a meaning that is comprehensible within that context and differentiated from other contexts. When we talk about an ‘Asian Miracle’, for instance, we are referring to a political economic development within particular contexts (territories) in particular times. If this miracle took place in several countries, then the Asian event wouldn’t have taken the meaning it has, it wouldn’t be a ‘miracle’.

Combined together, an interrelation, specific setting, and specific time, form a *distinct* sphere of social activity, a social field, which requires both analytical and empirical isolation to understand while *comparing* to other social fields, or other interrelationships. Actors within a social field acquire meaning in terms of their identities, interests, strategies or development that is different from what they would outside a social field. This brings us closer to a Kenneth Waltz definition of a structure. For him a structure “is akin to a field of forces in Physics where interactions within a field have properties different from those they would have if they occurred outside of it and as the field affects the objects, so the objects affect the field” (Waltz 1979, 73).

Let us provide a concrete example. Let us think of a communal group holding similar identity but situated in different social fields, the Shiites of Lebanon versus the Shiites of Saudi Arabia. Although holding similar sectarian identity, the interests, strategies, and development of each of the groups vary widely. To understand variation, we need to situate every group in its context. We need to focus on three dimensions: (1) the Shiites, (2) their competitors, and (3) social field in which (1) and (2) interact and are situated. Dimensions 1 and 2 inform us about the social actors concerned, meaning the Shiites and their counterparts. Dimension 3 informs us on the interrelation between

the actors and the setting where this takes place. The social field (more on that below) tells us further about the nature of the interrelation and the forms of interactions between different actors; is it a balanced relation? Or who regulates the relation? These three points are related and we cannot understand one without looking at the other. As a matter of research outcome, we might find that the Lebanese social field (dimension 3), due to the multiplicity of power centres (dimensions 1 and 2) within it, provides more opportunities for the Shiites as opposed to the Saudi and Wahhabi more centralised regime (social field, dimension 3) in Saudi Arabia, which places limits on other actors (dimensions 1 and 2), including the Shiites.

On a social level, we can think about relationships such as marriages. Any marriage, similar to a social field, has three dimensions involving a man, a woman, and the relation that governs them. The behaviour of a partner inside a relationship differs from that of his/her behaviour outside marriage. At this stage, I am not examining what determines this relationship but just considering structures as interrelations involving the emergence of a higher level of interaction, such as a social field or a marriage, which is not easily noticeable but requires exploration and theorisation. In marriages, as partners interact they form the relationship that links them together. Just as their interactions constitute the relationship, the relationship affects them. In social fields, as I will elaborate below, this level is the political sphere.

Does the definitional analysis of structures presented so far direct us to any form of determinism? In comparative politics culturalist and socio-economic explanations seemed to look at existing normative and material structures to explain political phenomena. Hence, for some Marxist versions the material structure of society determines the political superstructure. Politics becomes the 'epiphenomenon' of material structures. However, a quick look at concrete historical examples would show the limits of such analysis. Antonio Gramsci, working within the Marxist school, noticed a role of 'hegemonic' ideas held by state power holders that reproduce the (material) structures (Gramsci 1971). Gramscian contribution served to include ideas as important factors for analysis within Marxist discourse. This raises an interesting theoretical question: if material structures determine the political superstructure, what determines those material structures in the first place? Marxists' answers might centre on class struggle and its development. This however will lead us to unpack the concept of class and to examine how class is *politicised*, for what reason, and in combination of factors.

The same question can be raised on treating the international political structure as a mono-cause for state behaviour: what determines this international political structure in the first place? The Waltzian definition of a structure deals with actors' interactions and how this frames the relations among them and eventually *conditioning*, though not determining, their behaviour (Waltz 1986, 334).

The point I wish to make here in regards to structures is that we examine structures to understand the possibilities and limitations—the 'Political Opportunity Structure' (Tilly 2006)—actors face whilst making choices. This returns us to Marx's illuminating point that "men make their own history, but not of their own free will; not under circumstances they themselves have chosen" (1960, 115). The point that needs to be stressed is that structures are not independent of agents; agents' interactions *form* the structure over *time*. Political phenomena can be comprehended when situated within particular structures. In the context of International Relations theory, Constructivists emphasise the role of change, particularly examining how structures not only constrain actors behaviour but how the relationship between agency and structure is 'mutually constituted' (Wendt 1992).

3.2. Structures as Social Fields and the Arenas of Politics

To move, however, from the broad category of a 'structure', I will suggest examining these structures as social fields. By doing this, I intend to move further into the inner world of these social fields. This section will take us two steps in that direction. In the first, I define a social field looking in particular at the ingredients of a social field. Secondly, I map the political world into three social fields, or the major arenas where politics takes place. This will contribute to the aim of examining domestic-international interactions worldwide and, henceforth, the conditions of state survival in the Middle East.

The concept of social field is commonly used in sociology and denotes the arena on which social interaction is bounded and takes place. According to Neil Fligstein, "fields refer to situations where organized groups of actors gather and frame their actions vis-à-vis one another". New institutional theories examine the origins, stability and transformation of fields. Elias argues that "To understand social structures and processes, it is never enough to study a single functional stratum within a social field. To be really understood, these structures and processes demand a study of the relationships between the different functional strata which bound together within a social field" (2001, 108).

I wish here for the sake of the approach needed to examine state formation to provide a precise meaning of a social field. At this stage, the analysis is descriptive that largely represents the political world we want to examine by both modelling the whole and disaggregating it into different parts. The explanatory part is left to the following chapter. Accordingly, to understand a social field we can divide it into four main ingredients: (1) space, (2) social powers, (3) interaction among social powers and (4) institutions.

Space By space, I simply mean a geographical territory separating a social field from other social fields. Factors behind its separation involve the process of the formation of this field, which I will examine in the theoretical framework below. It suffices here to suggest that the space is where certain social events take place leaving (the most) effect on the social field level and not affecting, or indirectly affecting, other social fields. Therefore, we can talk (as of 1953) of South Korean space (social field) as opposed to North Korean space. In each of these spaces, we had different social interactions and, hence, different events and political trajectories.

Social Powers The second ingredient of a social field is the social powers or social actors who through their interactions constitute the field. Social powers are social actors that attempt to monopolise, reproduce, and consolidate power within a particular social field largely to maintain an autonomy vis-à-vis other powers. In reality, a social power could be a leader, tribe, political party, clan, ruling family, monarchy, sectarian elite, or an economic social force. These forms of social powers are represented by a minority, an *elite*, that seeks to articulate the interests of the larger group by attempting to monopolise coercion, the means of financing coercion, and ideas. This largely depends on how a social field is constituted (section 3).

Interaction of Social Powers The third ingredient of a social field is the interrelation that takes place among these social powers. We begin to think about social powers, as actors, to the extent that they *relate* to other social powers and that this relation *recurs* over an *extended* period of time. The driving force for this interrelation initially takes place when one social power seeks to dominate over others. The point of interaction, or the point of engagement between different social powers, establishes a new phase of integration and consequently a new sphere that

structures the relation between these powers. In theory, before this initial engagement takes place, each social power could be considered 'autonomous'. This is very important to understand later state autonomy and state capacity and to differentiate between strong state as a totality and a strong regime in a weak state. That sphere of relation becomes a point of contention among different social powers, who initially attempt to construct institutions to monopolise power at this level.

Institutions The fourth ingredient here is institutions. The rise of a social power to dominance requires the establishment of institutions that consolidate and expand this dominance. Whether they are a tribute or tax extracting agencies, religious or educational establishments, security apparatuses, or a court system, these institutions in the beginning are driven by a need and interest vested in a social power, social powers, or the interrelationship that governs them. These institutions are, as Douglas North observes, "humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction" (North 1990, 3). From the beginning, we realise that institutions are 'intervening variables' because they *evolve* from interactions among social powers. "The process of institution building takes place in the context of powerful actors attempting to produces rules of interaction to stabilize their situation vis-à-vis other powerful and less powerful actors" (Flingstein 2003, 108).

By perceiving institutions as humanly devised, we are thinking about institutions as *intended* and *unintended* outcomes resulting from interaction among social powers. By intended, I mean institutions may be devised by a social power or social powers to consolidate power, regulate power relations, or install constraints against power monopoly. By unintended, I mean that interactions among social powers may lead to the devise of institutions not initially sought or wished for by any of the social powers, but evolve out of long-term interactions. The form, nature, and the strength of institutions largely depend on the *nature* and *history* of interactions among social powers.

The above provide us with the four ingredients of a social field. These, however, don't tell us why a space, and hence a social field, separates from others spaces, why social powers seek to dominate, what are the nature and origins of social powers behaviour or why institutions vary from one social field to another. In section three below, we will examine other dimensions of a social field namely the constitution of a social field, or the body that gives all these ingredients their

dynamism. Before that, I move on to specify the three arenas of politics, I will treat each of them as a social field following the characteristics specified here.

In examining state formation, particularly states that emerged in the developing world that came late in time compared with older states, we are exposed to a social field that is at once interrelated to two other social settings: regional social setting and international social setting. In stating that politics takes place at three major levels including the domestic, the regional, and the international, I am not suggesting anything new. My claim, however, is to treat each of these levels as social fields, following the description I am suggesting here, and to come up with general relations that govern *all* these fields regardless on which level we are dealing. The point I want to make here is that differences between these three social fields lie not in the *content* but in the *degree* of each of the ingredients specified above; space, social powers, interaction and institutions. This will be come clearer in the explanatory part presented below. It suffices for now to extend the description to regional and international social fields.

3.2.1. Regional Social Field

Social fields as I discussed them above constitute the domestic arenas of politics. Within Political Science the examination of domestic politics has largely been limited to the subfield of Comparative Politics (and ‘Area Studies’). This had great advantages but also numerous limitations to political inquiry. Examining state formation and survival cannot afford such division of labour between subfields as will be shown below. Social fields belong to larger regional and international systems. Regional social fields have similar ingredients to those defined above. For Mohammed Ayoub a region includes “ a geographic proximity, regularity and intensity of interaction between actors...internal and external recognition of a group of states as distinctive area, and a size consisting of at least two and probably more actors” (1995, 56). As is clear enough, geographic proximity, regularity of interaction, and recognition fit well with the description of a social field provided above. In a regional social field, states constitute the *major* social powers, while institutions vary from one region to another. Considering states to be the major actors at a regional level should by no means underestimate other non-state or global actors such multinational corporation, transnational movements—such as Al-Qaida—or international institutions (UN) that shape and constrain states action. While the level of

institutionalisation is high in the European Union for instance, institutionalisation remains low in other regions of the world. Once again, I note that I will leave the nature (cooperation versus conflict) of the interaction between actors and the degree of institutionalisation among actors for now.

It suffices for now to suggest that just as social powers within a social field interact and constitute the social field so do states in a regional social field. In varying degrees, just as the regional social field affects the social fields within it, so do the social fields affect the regional social field as whole. The rise of Nasser in 1950s Egypt left its impact on the Middle East region as a whole. The same could be said in regards to the 'rise' of China in Asia and the consequences this may have on Asian regional security management. On a different scale, think of the American invasion of Iraq (as a change in regional setting) and the consequences this caused for states like Lebanon, Syria, Iran and Israel among others.

3.2.2. International Social Field

The third arena of politics is the international social field. It consists of a larger space where states from different regions interact and institutions, such as the United Nations, evolve to regulate inter-state relations. Although states remain the dominant actors, we can observe, due to a higher level of regional integration, a community of states, such as the European Union, emerging as social actors at an international level.

In content, the international social field is similar to other social fields, the difference lies in the degree of each component. While within a domestic social field we see higher levels of power monopolisation, at the international level no power came close to form such monopoly. The multiplicity of social powers and diverse identities and interests of these social powers on one hand, and the limited capabilities and interests of a potential monopole on the other hand, have all historically acted as constraints to domination. On a domestic social field, this reminds us of state constraints or 'capacity' to 'penetrate' the peripheries in that social field (Migdal 1988).

Power centralisation domestically becomes an important dimension as opposed to power decentralisation present at regional and international levels. The international system particularly as theorised by Realists in the field of International Relations, is anarchic and has three main characteristics. First, it is a '*self-help*' system where states (assumed here to be unitary actors) have to protect themselves because there is no higher authority to protect them. Second, states are primarily driven by the need for *self-*

preservation. Realism understands states to be rational and self-interested actors. Thirdly, in striving to sustain their security, states are obliged to adapt to changes (power shifts) in the system. This adaptation leads to the emergence of *balance of power*. States balance against other threatening states to prevent the emergence of hegemony; by doing so they reproduce anarchy in the system. The core of Waltz's theory of international politics is a structural distinction between these two realms of power. The domestic structure is hierarchical where authority is centralised in government institutions. While, "national politics is the realm of authority, of administration and of law", "international politics is the realm of power, of struggle and of accommodation" (Waltz 1979, 111-3). As we shall see, this holds true to a certain extent. His theory assumes that domestic structures of states are centralised and hierarchical; however, this would be problematic for states at their early stages of formation, where centralisation is continually constructed and reconstructed.

In terms of interaction of social powers, while the domestic social fields involves *intense* and *frequent* interaction among major social powers and between social powers and their dependents, the frequency and intensity of interaction at a regional level is less frequent, even lesser at the international level. In all three cases, however, the frequency and intensity of interaction largely depends on the degree of economic and political integration taking place in each of the fields. Within a domestic social field, social powers interact on a daily basis to manage the social field; they hold parliamentary sessions, governmental meetings, they protest, strike, or even kill each other depending on the degree of stateness existing in that social field (more on that below).

What about institutions? Once again, institutions reflect the degree of economic and political integration taking place in the social field. The multiplicity of power centres at international and regional levels, the asymmetrical power relations among them and the permanent quest for independence (sovereignty) provide structural constraints for the operation of institutions. When these institutions exist, they largely reflect the interests and fears of major powers. The structure and rules of the Security Council of the United Nations provides a clear example. Nevertheless, as I shall elaborate below, social fields have histories of their own. Social actors learn over time from their interactions and, where possible, attempt to avoid previous historical tragedies such as war by choosing to design institutions to govern their relations.

The above provides a generic mapping of the political world. It sets the ground to do two contradictory exercises; first, to isolate each social field and treat it on its own for analytical purposes and second, to provide explanations of the interactions of the social fields. Further, arguing that social fields have general characteristics, which differ in degree rather than content, should facilitate the applicability of this exercise.

As mentioned above, a social field includes a space, social powers, interaction of social powers, and institutions. However, on what basis do these social powers interact? What drives their behaviour? Is it the norms that actors hold or the material structure they are embedded in? Is their behaviour determined or conditioned by these structures?

3.3. The Constitution of a Social Field and the Origins of Political Behaviour

This section aims to answer these questions. In the first part, I will describe the three structures that form a social field which are its cultural, material, and political structures. In the second part, I will tie these three structures together and examine the relations that govern them. The objective behind dividing a social field into three structures is not because these exist in reality but to facilitate analysis and to establish a theoretical understanding. In other words, we want to understand the conditions under which identity or class matter and the political implications that entails. I start by the cultural structure of a social field.

3.3.1. Cultural Structures

Culture is a difficult topic to examine not because it is a mysterious phenomenon ‘out there’ that requires explanation but rather because it involves different aspects including languages, symbols, religions, identities, norms, values, or ethnicities. Naturally, defining culture becomes a difficult task, similar to many other concepts in the social sciences. Scholars define culture based on their research question often as an *independent* variable that shapes political behaviour (Lane and Ersson 2005). Accordingly, some examined culture as values (Huntington and Harrison 2000) or norms (Katzenstein 1996) that shape human behaviour, or as system of meanings (Chabal and Daloz 2006). In considering culture here, I don’t seek to examine it on its own or to provide a ‘cultural approach’ to politics, rather, I wish to consider it within a social field or, and more precisely, as constituting this social field.

I intentionally link the concept of ‘structure’ with culture as I consider structure to constitute the basic make-up of a social field, its cultural fabric. By culture I mean “an environment....within which human behaviour follows a number of particular courses” (Chabal and Daloz 2006, 21)⁸. The cultural fabric of a social field constitutes its non-material ingredients, ingredients that shape social actors’ identities and interests as they interact in social fields. The cultural fabric provides individuals and communities with a meaning and justification for their behaviour. Nevertheless, why not call it a religious system, identity structure, normative structure, or ethnic composition? One reason has to do with keeping the analysis at this stage at an abstract level for theoretical purposes. Second, the cultural structure I have in mind could actually include all the above ingredients of a culture. Third, one cultural structure could be the source of *different* political *identities* and *interests*. Let us provide a concrete example.

What is the cultural structure of Turkey? In other words, what is its ethnic, religious, or linguistic composition? In terms of religion, Turkey is Muslim country, with other religious minorities. In its Muslim population, Turkey has several sects including Sunnis, Allawites, or Ismaelies. Ethnically and linguistically, Turkey has a Turkish majority, significant Kurdish minority, and small Arab and Armenian communities. When Turkey formed as a state, this amalgam came to constitute the cultural structure of the Turkish social field. This structure shaped state formation in Turkey, the behaviour of different social actors within it, and its political dynamics. Politics of secularism and nationalism in Turkey shaped and were shaped by the existing cultural structure. While secularism addressed and sought to go beyond religion (Islam), Turkish nationalism provided the political identity of the new state, generally at the expense of other ethnic groups such as the Kurds. This same structure, however, is the source of political Islam and (different) Kurdish political agendas involving calls for autonomy, independence, or integration.

Chabal and Daloz consider culture to be “a constantly evolving setting” (Ibid.). By proposing a cultural structure of a social field, however, I am thinking of a cultural fabric that does not constantly evolve. Rather, I am considering a cultural structure that evolves very slowly over time, which forms the *foundation* on which political development and evolution take place. Two main reasons explain the slow progression and impact of a cultural structure. First, a cultural structure cannot be easily refuted,

⁸ Authors of this work aim to contribute a “cultural approach”, I use their general definition to fit it within the approach followed here, Historical Structuralism.

and, hence, overcome. Think of religion as one ingredient of a cultural structure. The power of religions lies in their fluidity; religions do not provide a specific formula or social agenda as, say, Marxism-Leninism. This fluidity acts as a basis for the permanent interpretation and re-interpretation of religion throughout the centuries and hence explains its survival. Interpretation, nevertheless, requires social actors who have certain social or political intentions. This brings us to the second point.

Think this time of identity and ethnicity. The attempts to overcome ethnic divisions—meaning the politicisation of ethnicity—in the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, or Iraq have actually led to their reproduction. As Yahya Sadowski argues, “individuals make choices about their political identity, but not under circumstances of their own choosing” (2002, 138). In attempting to survive in certain political contexts—social fields—social actors promote, defy, manipulate, and interpret cultural structures and hence *reproduce* them over time (more on that process below). With the weakening of the universal idea (and political identity) of Communism or Baathism, new ideas emerged to fill the gap. These ideas, however, do not come out of a void but from the existing culture structure. Think on the other hand of a case in where one ethnic or sectarian group rules over different groups. Think of Turkey once more. The more the Turkish ruling elites promoted ‘Turkishness’ as a state identity the more the Kurdish identity was (indirectly) being promoted and reproduced. Alternatively, think of Lebanon. The more Lebanon’s ruling Maronites sought to preserve the state for their ‘own’, the more they have created a resistance in their own *image* consisting of sectarian defiance that largely characterised Lebanese politics.

3.3.2. Material Structures

When discussing material structures I have in mind the socio-economic foundations of a social field but also the climatic or geographic conditions under which a socio-economic system becomes possible. These foundations include the socio-economic means through which people produce and exchange goods and services to ensure their survival. Once again the socio-economic structure needs to be seen as the context through which we can understand political behaviour. In human history, we had different types of socio-economic systems ranging from household economy in where people produced and consumed for subsistence purposes within a unit, such as a family or a tribe, to the market economy, which acts as an institution for the exchange of goods and services (Polanyi 2001, 40-65). Where surplus in goods was available, these were

exchanged historically for other goods but later for silver, gold and money, hence going beyond the household economy.

Different socio-economic systems such as tribal, mercantile, feudal or industrial indicate the material foundation or the economic structure of a social field on which politics can be analysed and comprehended. We talk about a structure as this provides limits and opportunities for political actors operating within such structures. As we will see when we examine the case of Saudi Arabia, desert climatic conditions and the dispersion of oasis historically have limited the appropriation of surplus on a grand level and, hence, the emergence of centralised political power in Najd. For example, the extent to which a material structure is agricultural largely depends on the percentage of labour force engaged in farming. We begin to talk about an industrialising society to the extent that there is a *structural* change taking place in the economy indicated by a movement of labour, land, and capital from agriculture to industry. This structural change generates new social forces such as labour or industrial syndicates, movements, or political parties and hence affects the politics of the social field as a whole.

Historically, socio-economic systems did not function on their own independent from the interests of social powers. Rather, different forms of coercion and redistribution existed. Coercion meant that in agrarian economies lords coerced peasants to farm their lands, while slavery was imposed on peasants in some case. Modern states and (previously) city-states imposed taxes on people (Tilly 1990). With the rise of the market as the major economic institution in industrialised economies, it began to coerce producers and consumers to follow its logic of competition. Societies and major social powers within them, however, continually resisted the self-regulating mechanism of the existing socio-economic system by following different forms of economic redistribution. The current welfare states are one example, but historically in countries such as Egypt or China, leaders attempted to redistribute goods and made land accessible for the community as they sought political survival, stability and social order.

Marxist analysis has centred on the concept of class and the dynamic of class struggle; peasant-lord, worker-capitalist, etc.. The attention of this approach as we saw earlier focuses on the material structures of society. Just as culture was examined as an 'approach', so was class by scholars attracted to a materialistic reading of the social world. Like the state, class is a concept that requires not only a clear definition but also (theoretical) assumptions on class behaviour. In other words, should we assume class, as a social category, to behave as a unit in social struggles? What if a class is, as is the case

usually, divided? Do members of a class necessarily identify themselves as such? Against treating class as a unified actor some argue that “unified social classes and wide-ranging social struggles for dominance—class struggles—have often been easier to find in imaginative theorizing than in real societies” (Migdal 2001, 19). Nevertheless, like treatments of culture, in examining class and class struggles the level of theorising needs to go deeper. Theda Skocpol observes that class tension is “always present in industrial societies but the *political* expression of class interests and conflicts is never automatic or economically determined.” There is no rush to abandon class analysis; rather she recommends that “the classical wisdom of Marxian political sociology must be turned, if not on its head, then certainly on its side” (1985, 25; emphasis added).

Karl Marx distinguished between a class ‘in itself’ and a class ‘for itself’. This distinction tells us that not only classes develop but that also there is an ideational level—a ‘vanguard’—involved in making a class conscious of itself. This is to be found initially in the intellectual level before it materialises in the political sphere: “it depends on the capacities classes have for achieving consciousness, organisation, and representation” (Ibid.). Once again, as with culture, we need to situate class within the whole set of social relationships. To do this there is a level, which many schools have identified as the ‘state’, and which I prefer to call here the political structure that ties, manages, shapes and is shaped by other structures.

3.3.3. Political Structure

Where the cultural and material structures form the fabrics of a social field, the foundation on which politics as a whole is based and determined, the political structure acts as an *emerging* sphere. Social powers emerge from existing material and cultural structures. The political structure forms the sphere where social powers meet; it constitutes the sphere of political *engagement*. It is within this sphere that elements of the cultural or material structures are politicised and are given political meaning. Social powers always respond to existing material structures as they attempt to revise or reproduce these structures. By doing so, they enter into political struggles with their rivals forming a political-strategic level.

Dynamics within the political structure can be comprehended by situating them within the whole social field. Commenting on the primacy of the political ‘realm’ in security dimensions, Ayoob argues that “does not mean the political realm can or should be totally insulated from other realms of human and social activity when it

comes to dealing with security issues.” Rather “the political realm must be informed by these other areas of human activity”. Other human activity must be “*filtered* through the political realm and must be directly related to that realm” (1995, 8; emphasis added).

To be sure, political structures exist at different levels such as the interrelations between different families within a tribe, tribes within tribal federation, or political parties in democracy. The higher the level of socio-economic integration, the higher is the level of politicisation between different social units. For the object of this study, I talk about a political structure as the most general and highest sphere where conflict or cooperation within it determines the politics of the *whole* of a specific social field.

In the political structure, social powers act as political entrepreneurs who articulate ideologies, organise and mobilise populations for certain political ends. Political entrepreneurs make three claims: identity, standing, and program. While “identity claims asserts the presence of a substantial collective actor”, standing claims avows that actor has a political weight and program that “calls for the objects to take an action, adopt a policy, or otherwise commit themselves to change” (Tilly 2006, 32). These claims in essence involve political questions: “what is always meant is that interests in the distribution, maintenance, or transfer of power are decisive for answering the questions” (Weber 1964). These claims may be a call by an ethnic group to gain political recognition or a struggle by vulnerable or marginalized social class seeking socio-economic rights.

These claims and the counterclaims they face form the nature of political struggles in a social field. We begin to talk about a structure of a political sphere to the extent that certain social actors within a social field continually relate and the relation forms a structure that defines the opportunities and limitations of their behaviour. In the Middle East, Sami Zubaida observes the emergence of a ‘political field’, where as a result of European state implantation a “whole complex of models, vocabularies, organisations and techniques [which] have established and animated”. This field “developed with the modernist as well as the reactive struggles against patrimonial states and the threats of foreign incursion and domination” (1989, 146).

This political structure and the conflicts taking place in its sphere act as the foundation to the emergence of institutions that seek to regulate the relations among the competing social powers. Institutions emerge as resolutions to underlying conflicts. Institutions here act as another emerging level, which in its turn provide the means through which policies are formulated and applied. Institutions both consolidate

domination where this exists or reflect the underlying balance of power giving it formal and public recognition. With institutions we reach the highest layer present in social relationships. It is now time to bring all these structures together and to define the relations that govern them. Below I provide a simplified model for the social field. The model pyramidically positions different structures that form a social field.

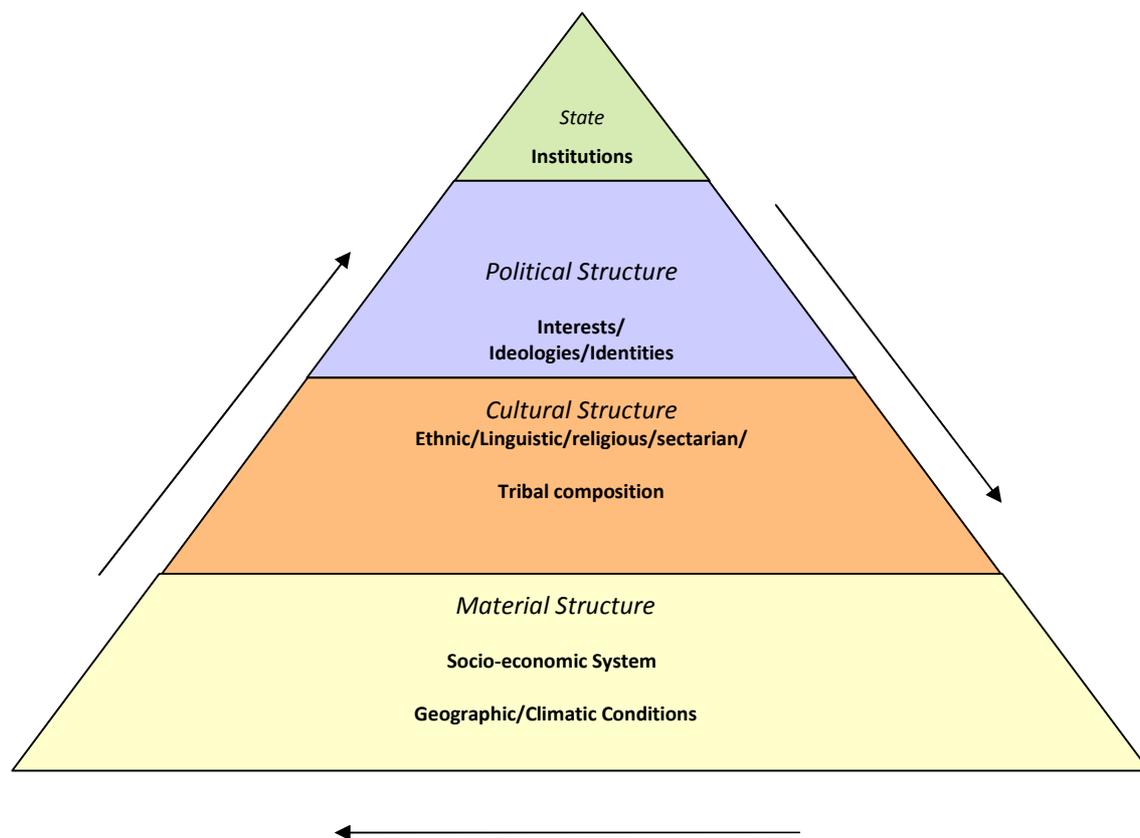


FIGURE 3.1 THE SOCIAL FIELD

The above model represents different structures, which different schools sought to emphasise in their analysis. While Marxists focused on material structures and their role in shaping both domestic and international politics, cultural approaches and the Constructivist school in IR emphasised the role of culture, norms, or religion in shaping political actors behaviour. Constructivism in particular looked at how actors—states or nations—“may build on the basic material of human nature, but they take specific historical, cultural, and political that are a product of human interaction in a social world” (Fierke 2007,168). Realists focused on the political level particularly

at those horizontal relations among actors, usually states at the international level, and the security dilemmas they face in conditions of anarchy. Finally, institutionalists would examine the role of institutions in shaping political behaviour by setting certain standards and norms on social actors. Debates within and among these schools—‘thin’ constructivism, realist Marxism, Gramscianism, social institutionalism—would see these schools sharing more than they are ready to accept.

Below I will examine the relationship between these structures; I will recapitulate some points made earlier and state the main argument:

- The political, cultural and material structures are analytically separable yet in reality are interdependent structures.
- Political behaviour could be analysed and examined only *within* and in *response* to these structures.
- The material and cultural structures (hereafter foundational structures) determine the *nature* of politics as a *whole*, but do not cause *individual* political behaviour.
- Substantive changes in the foundational structures generate changes in the nature of the political within the social field.
- Foundational structures are *latent* (Mann 1993), meaning present and potentially capable of becoming but not necessarily active or obvious.
- In their political struggles, social actors *activate* and *de-activate* (see definitions below) foundational structures.
- Over time, the political sphere becomes an autonomous structure shaping actors’ behaviour.
- Political struggles are resolved in the formation of institutions, which in turn shape the nature of political struggle.

First, when we speak of a political world we assume the presence of conflict involving domination and resistance to this domination. Domination establishes inequality, which “is a relation between persons or sets of persons in which interaction generates greater advantages for one than for another” (Tilly 2005, 104). This inequality could be economic in nature situated at the material structure involving, for example, a socio-economic system where a minority of feudal lords employ a

majority of peasants in their lands and deprive them of basic rights. Or, an inequality can be cultural, consisting of an ethnic group repressing another.

In both cases, the political sphere will involve attempts at managing the reproduction of this inequality by the articulation identities, ideas, and ideologies. This management involves the construction of institutions to make the reproduction possible. These include coercive agencies to punish those who resist the domination or cultural/religious institutions to reproduce existing ideas. So far, the analysis centred on the 'first round', which might seem that material structure determine the politics and institutions of a social field. Looking at the arrow on the right of the pyramid, we realise that institutions and the political structure that support it begin to reproduce certain economic and cultural relations in the foundational structures. Now, the foundational structures become the *dependent* variable, meaning developments within them are determined by the mechanism of reproduction. The statist literature, attempting to go beyond certain Marxist interpretations, emphasises the relation indicated in the movement from the state institutions to material structures (arrow on the right of the figure). This is done, as we recall from Chapter One, by looking at state capacity and autonomy (Evans et al. 1985). Nevertheless, state capacity and autonomy cannot be isolated from the political and foundational structures. This is the argument presented by critics of statist literature, particularly attempting to show the limits of state power (Kohli et al. 1994). As I will show later, state autonomy presumes political autonomy of a social actor in the political structure thus making this possible at an institutional level.

Keeping this dynamic in mind, I argue that we cannot start an inquiry by looking at one structure of a social field because anytime we examine a particular structure we are in essence examining other structures. Social fields are social *configurations* that are interdependent. The underlying assumption of examining a social field is that structures and processes within them cannot be understood by studying individual or actors rather, "they can only be comprehended in connection with structure of relationships *between* people, and with the long-term changes in the structure". Should this entail the examination of every structure in society? "To investigate the totality of a social field" Elias shows, "does not mean to study each individual process within it. It means first of all to discover the *basic structures* which give all the individual processes within this field their *direction* and their *specific stamp*" (Elias 2000, 411; emphasis original). The basic structures here are the

foundational structures, which give political actors their direction and provide a framework of expectations.

The social field as sketched in Figure 4.1 above maps the political world which we try to understand and explain. It provides a basic map of this political world. Maps, as we know them, provide a synchronic picture of the world, which is largely descriptive and static. However, mapping the political world cannot afford such synchronicity. This is because any time we seek to map the *political* world; we are implicitly assuming some sort of dynamism. We assume political change.

The material structure at the bottom layer forms the geographic and climatic conditions of a country acting as a natural constraint/opportunity for human interaction. As described above, the material structure is the socio-economic system, which in its primitive state is largely dependent on climatic conditions, such as the presence of river. In a social field, the material structure forms the common denominator of the field regardless of whether it is culturally or politically homogeneous. The material structure constitutes the first of the two foundational structures.

The second foundational structure is the cultural, which I situate above the material structure. This structure, as mentioned above, informs us on the cultural composition of a social field. It tells us if a social field is culturally homogeneous or if it is ethnically or religiously divided. I place the cultural structure over the material because this structure constitutes a channelling layer between the material and political structures. To give an example, in culturally heterogeneous social field socio-economic inequalities are channelled or ‘filtered’ to the political structure through political entrepreneurs. In culturally homogeneous social fields, socio-economic interests are more likely to take an ideological dimension—Liberalism, Marxism, Conservatism—as political leaders have no heterogeneous structures to activate.

The political structure I argued above emerges from existing foundational structures, from political structures at a lower level of centralisation such as a tribal polities, regions, family etc... . At this level we have political interaction taking place between influential rivals competing for power. These interactions vary from democratic struggles within an institutionalised and legal framework to bloody wars taking place in a total anarchic context. This largely depends on where a social field is situated in the process of state formation and deformation (more on that below). For now, it suffices to mention that it is at the political where socio-economic and cultural

inequalities are *politicised* and negotiated by social actors reflecting and representing these inequalities. The politicising of socio-economic and cultural inequalities leaves *consequential* effects on incumbent power holders creating a dynamic in a social field.

At the pinnacle of the pyramid institutions emerge largely reflecting power struggles taking place at the political structure. As discussed above, institutions are formed to consolidate or reproduce power relations. These institutions can be designed by one powerful social actor or come as a result of interaction amongst several. Institutions in turn become an independent variable in the process of power consolidation and reproduction

The above provide us with a description of the social field. The question now is: how is political power reproduced in social field? I start by specifying a generic process applicable to a wide array of cases and which can be useful to understand political reproduction. The process involves attempts of domination (D) by a social force, forming an inequality (I), establishing the means of reproduction (R), and generating resistance (R) from those effected by the inequality taking place. I will call this process here DIRR.

Domination → *Inequality* → *Reproduction* → *Resistance*

DIRR will serve as framework for us to understand and explain political dynamics in processes of state formation and deformation. Examining DIRR as a process would lead us away from taking particular structures (material foundation) or variables (class or identity) to determine political behaviour within a social field.

To understand DIRR as a process we need to think of *rounds* of power, represented by the arrows surrounding the pyramid in Figure 1 above. In an imagined situation, a first round would involve a powerful social actor emerging from foundational structures and bidding for domination over other competitors. Assuming this actor succeeds in dominating he would then construct institutions that form the instruments to consolidation power. These institutions create the basis on which power—and inequality—is reproduced. What does this power reproduction involve? It consists of the monopolisation of coercion, of a political idea, and the economic means to reproduce the former two monopolies. On Figure 4.1, this reproduction mechanism is represented in the arrow on the right of the pyramid. A quick observation of many regimes in the developing world would find authoritarian

leaders, families, or political parties monopolising these three forms of power. On the state formation scale this reflects a higher stage of political centralisation going beyond existing social and cultural institutions at lower levels of centralisation.

Domination and the inequality it establishes (broadly) divides politics between those who want to *maintain* and others who want to *revise* the *status quo*. Revisionist forces, who could be workers in search for better working conditions, industrialists aiming at restructuring trade policy, or an ethnic community searching for cultural recognition, begin to form resistance. These emerge from foundational structures and politicise their economic or cultural interests and making new claims (see above) challenging political incumbents in the political sphere. If these claims succeed, this means that the political structure is able to accommodate emerging forces and this will end up in the reconstruction of (state) institutions to reflect this change. A new form of domination takes place with a new power balance emerging and creating its own process of reproduction.

What happens if the claims fail? Theoretically there are two expectations, either : (1) the political incumbent succeeds in reproducing its power monopoly, or (2) this monopoly is challenged creating multiple centres of powers. This primarily entails a multiplicity of coercion wielding organisations with different political ideas and sources of economic means. An observation of the collapse of Yugoslavia in 1990, Lebanon in 1975, or Iraq in 2003 would show a collapse of regime leading to the collapse of a state. In this situation, institutions at the top of the pyramid either collapse or, under a multitude of pressure, become neutralised. The latter is a situation where the political structure *expands*, while power devolves and decentralises.

Although the DIRR process is generic the forms and degree it takes vary from one case to the other. Above I argued that the material and cultural structures determine the *nature* of politics as a *whole*, but do not cause *individual* political behaviour. In an agricultural socio-economic system, the material foundation would foster, for example, two major social classes; landowning and peasant social forces. The politicisation of these new interests affects the balance of political forces in a given country.

Let us consider a more complicated picture of the political world by including a cultural structure that is heterogeneous. What happens when a social field is composed of a culturally diverse structure? Where, let us assume, different ethnic groups compete for recognition and political power. Although we can assume that

such a heterogeneous cultural structure would generate a politically heterogeneous political structure, social actors, however, for ideological or political purposes can *resist* structures. A social actor can articulate a political identity that is universal in nature, such as Communism as in the case of Soviet Union, Islamism as in the case of Saudi Arabia, or Arabism as in the case of Syria and Iraq. In all cases, however, structures continue, as Waltz puts it, to “shape and shove” (1986, 343).

However, which foundational structure would we give priority to when in a culturally heterogeneous social field? In a situation where we have a social actor holding a universal ideology, we expect the cultural structure to be *deactivated* or neutralised intentionally by the social actor. Nevertheless, in situations where a universal ideology is lacking, where the political sphere reflects the cultural structure, socio-economic interests are channelled *through* the cultural structures before they become politicised. Identity overrides class. This is because each identity group interprets socio-economic interests through cultural lenses. The weakening of the Yugoslav centralised state was simultaneous with the rise of national identities for the Croats, Slovenes, and other ethnic groups whilst challenging Serbian centralisation of economic resources. However, how are identities activated and what role do political entrepreneurs take in this activation?

I argued above that we need to theoretically treat these structures as latent. This raises the question of who activates cultural structures, why and how. Just as a social field comes together with an actor attempting to accumulate power and hence forming a new social boundary, within social fields cultural boundaries exist. Social boundaries “interrupt, divide, circumscribe, or segregate distributions of population or activity within social fields” (Tilly 2005, 133). Initially, these boundaries are “sites of differences” (Abbott 1995, 862),⁹ “as interaction intensifies between clusters of previously unlinked or indirectly linked social sites, boundaries between them become more salient” (Tilly 2005, 139). These boundaries are activated when “political entrepreneurs draw together credible stories from available cultural materials, similarly create we-they boundaries, activate both stories and boundaries as a function of current political circumstances, and manoeuvre to suppress competing models” (Ibid., 216). The activation of social boundaries forms path dependency making it hard to reverse, as we shall see in the following section.

⁹ Abbott argues that social boundaries initially are not “boundaries *of* anything, but rather simple locations of difference”, (868; italics original).

Three implications arise from the above analysis. First, structures continue to define the nature of politics within a social field as long as there is no *substantive* change in these structures. By substantive change, I mean a structural change that generates new social forces with the capability to alter existing power configurations. In the material foundation this could be a process of industrialisation that fosters new social forces such as a working and industrial class, whose collective action leaves an effect on the nature of the political system (Rueschemeyer et al. 1992; Moore 1966). A cultural substantive change may involve a shift in the demographic balance among different identity groups or a politicisation of one group, which, in both cases, disrupts power balances.

Second, and for research purposes, we need to differentiate between *long-term* changes in foundational structures and *short-term* political interaction. When certain structures define the general parameters of political action, social powers operate within them and, by doing so, contribute to their reproduction. The higher the intensity of political interaction, the more foundational structures are activated. These may include attempts by political actors to extract resources from people to wage wars or to arouse ethnic or sectarian feelings to counter-balance against rising threats. In the short-term, political actors have power over the latent structures, however, certain political interactions may lead to *unanticipated* consequences leading to change in foundational structures. This brings us to the third point.

How do foundational structures change? Long-term changes in foundational structures are caused by the short-term interactions of political actor. In seeking political survival, social actors economically or culturally mobilise populations and therefore alter their composition or identities. European state formation, discussed below, reveals how short-time political interactions created foundational changes causing political and economic shifts.

3.4. Social Fields: History, Memory, and Distinctive Interactions

After having examined structures and social fields, it remains that we look at the second element of this framework: History. The formation of boundaries—whether these are social fields where states develop or other forms of social boundaries—sets a historical path giving social dynamics taking place within it a distinctive form.

History matters in several ways. First by ‘historical’ we mean situating political phenomena in place and time (Pierson 2004). We do this by examining processes—“a connected stream of causes and effects”(Tilly 2006b)—which inform us on the origins of political phenomena—markets, states—and the conditions of its development (or collapse). Second, we examine (contextually) history to see how events taking place in one field influence and shape local practices in another field. Third, in historical processes path dependency (see below) occurs where events taking place at one stage shape and constrain future developments. Finally, once a process has started, it acquires a symbolic meaning making it costly to reverse (Ibid.).

History matters in other ways. Social actors hold memories of their previous struggles that shape their current strategies and political choices. I take historical memory here to mean “the collective understanding that a specific group shares about events in the past that it perceives to have shaped its current economic, social, cultural, and political status and identity” (Davis 2005, 4). In the context of this framework, historical memory can be found in the cultural structure of a society defining and distinguishing one group from the other. This element provides cultural ingredients for organised social forces (both state and state-like organisations) to politicise. Davis calls this “a politically inscribed memory”, which “becomes an important tool for political elites to enhance their legitimacy and control” (Ibid., 1-2). Memories are preserved by social actors, who after several rounds of DIRR process, learn from previous mistakes and avoid being trapped in previously experienced interactions. As an example, we can think about ideological political movements who rise in resistance to a particular regime. Think about Islamic movements. Limits on political participation in the Arab world, leads many Islamic movements to resort to violent resistance. The first encounter usually takes a bloody form. After several interactions, however, these movements change their strategies becoming less ideological, more strategic, and hence more *structured* in existing contexts. This can be observed in Egypt, Turkey, Morocco, Lebanon or Algeria. Memories of previous struggles challenge existing strategies and inform future ones. Islamic movements learn from both the democratic experience of the AK party in Turkey but also from Algeria’s long bloody war. These processes are interesting to observe, particularly to see how political identities and ideologies are bent to accommodate structures within a social field.

On a different level, community groups observe different collective memories of their particular histories. For example German, Italian, or French national groups in Switzerland form different political identities from their counterparts in their respective countries. On the same level, one can differentiate between Egypt's Christian minority's political behaviour from that of Lebanon's Christians minority. While Egypt's Christians were resisting domination and the *status quo*, Lebanon's Christians until 1990 were resisting a revision of the Lebanese political system. The variance has been shaped by the social field in which they are situated *and* in their position in the DIRR processes. In the case of Iraq, we shall see that strategies of different communal groups in Iraq have largely been influenced by their historical experience within Iraq and the Middle East region in general.

To understand the history of a social field, we need to introduce the concepts of path-dependence and positive feedback. We speak of a 'history' of a social field to the extent that developments taking place within this field are different from developments taking place *outside* it. The emergence of a social field may be considered as a 'critical juncture' that sets a path, which defines future choices by individual actors within a social field. Path dependence maybe defined narrowly to mean "that what happened at an earlier point in time will affect the possible outcomes of a sequence of events occurring at a later point in time" (William Sewell quoted in Pierson 2000, 252). A broader definition is that "once a country or region has started down a track, the costs of reversal are very high...the entrenchment of certain institutional arrangements obstruct an easy reversal of the initial choice" (Margaret Levi quoted in Ibid.).

For this study, I take this broad definition of path dependence. The emergence of states in the Middle East has set a general path, as the following chapters will argue, however, it is important to note that this generality requires auxiliary explanations of subtypes—variation in trajectory of path dependence of different states. One of the arguments presented below is that state resilience in the Middle East is due to the structure of international state system, it is, as Levi's quote above suggests, "entrenchment of certain institutional arrangements obstruct an easy reversal". This is largely due to *positive feedback* that generates a path-dependence trajectory (Pierson 2004, 21).

Further, this will tell us, and this is very important to advocates of cultural determinism, that grand cultural explanations that take Islam or Arab Nationalism to

explain politics in the Middle East have very weak ground to build on. Structural constraints, imposed by states and processes within them, shape identities (and hence political choices) and defy grand cultural explanations for the Middle East. When a path is set in motion, status quo powers establish the “mechanism of reproduction which carry and often *amplify* the effects of a critical juncture through time” (Collier and Collier quoted in *Ibid.*, 263; emphasis added).

Conclusion

This chapter aimed to examine the Historical Structuralism model suggested for this thesis. I examined the concepts of ‘structure’ and its usefulness for the study of politics and ‘social field’ including its composition and their internal dynamics. The model provides a basis for studying the interaction of different structures (cultural, material, and political) within a social field while demarcating the role of political actors in responding, activating or deactivating these structures. Further, the model suggested a generic dynamic—DIRR—that can provide a basis to examine the ontology of the political world.

This generic model will act as a framework to examine processes of state formation and collapse in the Middle East. It will set a range of theoretical expectations that will contribute first to examine the conditions of state emergence, ontology, and survival in the Middle East situating these processes in time and place in the following chapter. With the following chapter, this model will provide us with the theoretical lenses to examine the two case studies of Saudi Arabia and Iraq in chapters five and six.

Chapter Four

The Middle East State: Ontology, Formation and Survival

Boundaries come first, then entities....a crucial property of entities is their ability to originate social causation, to do social action.
—Andrew Abbott, *Things of Boundaries*

When things happen within a sequence affects *how* they happen.
—Charles Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons*

Introduction

As the major objective of this thesis is to define the conditions of state survival in the Middle East, the following chapter, drawing on the theoretical framework examined earlier, has four aims. In tune with the need to situate the state in the Middle East in time and place, this chapter will in the first section examine the initial conditions of state formation in the region by specifying the enabling conditions for this emergence and how these would lay the basis to examine state development and survival.

To understand the peculiarity of the state in the Middle East, section two will look at European state formation and examine how this shaped state making in the Middle East. In section three, I will examine more closely the ontology of the state in the Middle East and the dilemmas this state faces. In situating this state at the crossroads of domestic-international arenas, I will provide an explanation of state weakness in the Middle East. Finally, the fourth section will define the main variables that would contribute to our understanding of state survival in the Middle East and which will facilitate the examination of the empirical cases in subsequent chapters. I start with the initial conditions of state formation

4.1. Initial Conditions of State Formation: Theory and History

Examining state survival requires the definition of the theoretical conditions that made the initial emergence possible while keeping contact with history. Before I proceed, I briefly define a state under late state formation to include two major characteristics. Externally, this state came *late* in time relative to European states, which *structure* the international state system. Internally, this state is at the *early* phases of formation, where authority is in state of construction and reconstruction in ongoing rivalries between different forces attempting to monopolise power.

Three enabling conditions had to be present for a state to emerge during late formation: (1) Externality Neutralisation; (2) Boundary Drawing; and (3) Regime Emergence. What we get is the following relation:

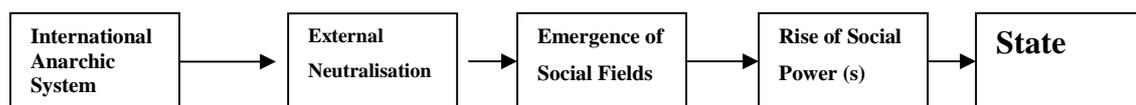


FIGURE 4.1. CONDITIONS OF STATE EMERGENCE IN LATE FORMATION

How do these conditions interact to form the basis for state development? The first condition defines the external conditions for the rise of states. What does External Neutralisation precisely mean? Before I answer this question, it is important to emphasise that state emergence in the Middle East is due to two structural changes affecting the region: collapse of the Ottoman Empire and European encroachment to the Middle East. For local powers to emerge external effects had to be *neutralized*. We realise that European expansion neutralised Ottoman power enabling the emergence of ‘autonomous’ power centres in the Middle East.

This neutralization can take two forms. On one extreme, we have *external indifference*. This indifference largely reflects the disinterest of external power in the geo-political position of a particular proto-state. For example, external indifference to central Arabia in the eighteenth and early twentieth century made possible the rise of Saudi power there. On the other extreme, we have *external engineering* of a state. In this situation a potential state is of great geo-political importance for external powers, who seek to construct its authority, define its territory, and (indirectly) manage its

affairs. Here boundaries are imposed. The division of Syria and, as we shall see below, the drawing of Iraqi borders are examples of external engineering. However, regardless of these two factors the outcome of external neutralisation is maintained.

How does this work? To assume that external powers engineer a state as outlined above, we need to theoretically presuppose that these external powers are *divided*, or else *why* would they engineer a 'state' or a demarcated space and against *who*? However, why would they engineer a state, why not rule it directly? In addition to minimising costs, engineering a state (a 'sphere of influence') reveals a relatively weak power leverage of an external power vis-à-vis its *own* competitors. We assume an international anarchic system. Competition in that system precedes in time the emergence of new states, while these struggles extend to other territories leading to the drawing of boundaries. Had there been no competition among those states, had one state established hegemony, there would be no interest to draw these borders. This is what is meant by diffusion of the European state-system to the rest of the world, as suggested by many scholars. This situation, however, is short of empire because the external power has no direct rule but rules indirectly through local powers, as it competes with other states. It is also short of a state, as understood in terms of 'sovereignty', since agreement between external powers on the distribution of 'spheres of influence' amongst them limits the power of local actors.

This condition—external neutralisation—is in short the antithesis of the preceding period of centralised Ottoman rule, which repressed any centrifugal in its domain. Ottoman rule acted as a centre of gravity attracting power towards it. The weakening of that centre and the emergence of other powers, however, meant that dissenting forces radiate *elsewhere*. Examples include Mohammad Ali in Egypt, then with minority groups in the empire's periphery such as the Christians of Eastern Europe and Greece, and then, with the further weakening of the empire, other parts of the empire rebelled including Sheriff Hussein in Mecca, Saud in Najd, Maronites in Mount Lebanon, and sheikhdoms of the Gulf. This structural change fostered a new mechanism leading to the activation and de-activation of identities establishing new social boundaries. Below, I will explain this mechanism in more detail. Further, as we shall see later, these external conditions contribute to our understanding of state survival during late formation. States emerging late in time live and survive on this external neutralisation.

The argument I want to advance here is that the anarchic state-system emerging in Europe constituted the pre-condition for the emergence of state-system in the developing world, including the Middle East. Accordingly, the history of the Middle East cannot be isolated from the international history of this system. At the core of this encounter is a clash between two forms of political organizations; consolidated states versus loose forms of political organizations such as empires, tribal confederations, or ethnically fragmented polities.

Understanding European state formation is useful here for several reasons. First, European state formation could provide a template to contrast against the state in the Middle East and to understand its peculiarity. The expansion of this system to the rest of the world not only contributed to creating polities in its image, but also continues to structure the development of these organisations. Second, dilemmas of early state formation and development in Europe contribute to our understanding of problems faced in late state formation. The difference, I will show, is not in the actual process but in the different systems within which each state developed. In the European experience states consolidated *before* the pressure for democratisation emerged. A major dilemma for the state in the Middle East is that it faces two *concomitant* pressures of survival and democracy simultaneously. Finally, in examining the origins of that system we can understand its expansion to the rest of the world and how it created polities in its own image.

4.2. Dynamics of European State formation and Peculiarity of the State in the Middle East

How did a continent which hosted hundreds of kingdoms, princedoms and city-states end up with tens of states? Why did the state as a political organisation triumph against other forms of political organizations? (Mann 1986; Tilly 1990; Reinhardt 1996; Elias 2000; Bates 2001)

External blockage to European expansion to the east and the sea from the west shifted the European struggle internally. As the external world was neutralized, combined with demographic shifts and limited resources on the continent, competition intensified. This competition took place among kings over territory and resources. In the process populations were pacified and mobilised, territories demarcated, nationalist fervour substituted for universal ideologies, and states incorporated in different phases

dissenting socio-economic and political forces. Charles Tilly cogently explains this process as follows:

Power holder's pursuit of war involved them willy-nilly in the extraction of resources for war making from the populations over which they had control and in the promotion of capital accumulation by those who could help borrow and buy. War making, extraction and capital accumulation interacted to shape European state making. Power holders did not undertake those three momentous activities with the intention of creating national states—centralized, differentiated, autonomous, extensive political organizations. Nor did they ordinarily foresee that national states would emerge from war making, extraction, and capital accumulation. Instead, the people who controlled European states and states in the making warred in order to check or overcome their competitors and thus to enjoy the advantages of power within a secure or expanding territory....it all began with the effort to monopolize the means of violence within a delimited territory adjacent to a power's holder's base (Tilly 1985, 172).

We realise from this excerpt some dilemmas of early state formation. Intentions (agent) of power-hungry rulers drove them to maintain and expand power in environments (structure) not of their choice. The limitations produced by these environments constituted the unanticipated consequences, not initially planned by social actors. The process starts with what Elias terms as the 'Monopoly Mechanism' a "free competitive struggle" that "arises... when land and military opportunity are so evenly distributed among several interdependent parties and that none of them has clearly the best chance, the greatest social power" (Elias 2000, 303). Wolfgang Reinhardt observes that "Rulers of states were but first among equals, among hundreds of competing and more or less autonomous power-holders" (1996, 1) where power is "diffused" (Mann 1986, 8).

Competition over land and its produce created 'private' dominions, while this contributed to the demarcation of territories and raised the need to secure them against 'external' aggressors. Robert Bates observes that the "growth of northwestern Europe was...accompanied by the militarization of households" (2001, 54). Two monopolies had to be established: coercion and taxation. "The financial resources thus flowing into this central authority maintain its monopoly of military force, while this in turn maintains the monopoly of taxation. Neither has in any sense precedence over the other; they are two sides of the same monopoly" (Elias 2000, 268).

The social power monopolising these activities became a centripetal force. Then centripetal force within a particular social field created a *path-dependent* trajectory and attempts to resist this centripetal force *reinforced* it. Any venture to break this

monopoly meant reconstructing it in one way or in another. This took two forms, either resisting in attempts to capture it or to balance against it therefore creating power on its own image: another monopoly. The establishment of this institution meant that “social conflicts are not concerned with removing monopoly rule but only with the question of who are to control it, from whom they are to be recruited and how the burdens and benefits of the monopoly are to be distributed” (Ibid.)

The monopoly mechanism took centuries to materialise. Elias notes that in the “ninth, tenth, and eleventh century it definitely did not yet exist.” “At first each warrior who controlled a piece of land exerted all the functions of rule; these were then gradually monopolized by a central ruler whose power was administered by specialists” (Ibid.) Pacifying populations meant an end to anarchy in certain territories. Examples include “general seizures of weapons at the end of rebellions, prohibitions of duels, controls over the production of weapons, introduction of licensing for private arms, restrictions on public displays of armed force” (Tilly 1990, 69). In England, for example, the Tudors repressed private armies, co-opted aristocratic challenge, and fought against the autonomies of English magnates.

Here we recognize the rise of two structures of power and, eventually, two arenas of politics. First, we had horizontal struggles between different rulers in different territories and second we had vertical struggles involving rulers and their dependents. These form the seed of what we now term state-society and state-state relations. In the beginning of the process, however, the lines between these two structures are vague. The lines begin to become clearer the more that domestic power monopolise their rule, this being always relative, which gives rise to an ‘international’ realm. The external limits imposed on rulers for ‘external’ expansion reflected structural constraints dictated by those rivals. Tilly substantiates this argument by reflecting how Louis XIII, the seventeenth century French monarch, suppressed domestic autonomies to maintain his monopoly, by observing that he “probably tore down more fortresses than he constructed. But *he built at the frontiers, and destroyed in the interior*” (Ibid., 69; emphasis added).

As we can see, any understanding of the state needs to place it at the crossroads of domestic and international pressures. The peculiarity of the European state formation process is that states were being formed *concomitantly* with the international structure that governed their relations. States made the system and the system made states. Rulers were at the intersection of four activities: (1) war-making with external rivals; (2) state

making, struggling with ‘internal’ rivals; (3) protection, fighting and balancing against rivals of their clients; and (4) extraction, acquiring the resources to carry out these activities (Tilly 1985, 181).

Although these activities were generic, the degree to which each activity took place varied. Tilly adds to Elias’ duopoly—coercion and taxation—the third important factor: credit. Rulers had to borrow to wage wars. The strength of states depended on the availability of such financial support. Robert Bates argues that, “specialists in the use of violence needed revenues to fight their wars; and those who prevailed were those who allied their political force with economic fortunes of the towns” (Bates 2001, 51).

One main transition took place with the shift from private mercenaries to standing armies. Before the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, most armies within Europe consisted of mercenaries recruited by power holders. Before that armies were seen as economically costly and politically risky. This transition meant increased integration within states and involved higher levels of institutionalisation. This both increased the dependence of the ruler on his population and widened the scope of the state. States had to adjudicate, (re-) distribute, and produce goods. Through adjudication states sought to settle disputes among the populace in its own territory. In distribution, states played an important role in the economy in the allocation of goods and services to different social classes. Finally, through bureaucratic powers of taxing and the imposing of tariffs, states affected the production of goods and services and trade (Tilly 1990, 97).

Institutions began to take a *public* dimension. Popular resistance to conscription and taxation obliged rulers to bargain with, co-opt, or coerce their populations, who in turn sought to extract rights from their rulers. Institutions here ceased to be the private domain of rulers. One implication of great importance for this study is to perceive the process of state formation as a transformation from the *private monopoly* rule of one or more individuals in a *loosely* structured polity to a *public monopoly* in highly *integrated* and structured polity. This, as we shall see below, is important to situate the Middle East state along a continuum reflecting this transition. Norbert Elias succinctly describes this complicated and multidimensional process as following:

The more people are made dependent by the monopoly mechanism, the greater becomes the power of the dependent, not only individually but also collectively, in relation to the one or more monopolists. ..Whether it is a question of land, soldiers or money in any form, the more that is accumulated by an individual, the less easily can it be supervised by this individual, and the more surely he becomes by his very monopoly dependent on increasing numbers of others, the more he becomes dependent on his dependents. *The privately owned monopoly in the hands of a single individual or family comes under the control of broader social strata, and*

transforms itself as the central organ of a state into a public monopoly. (Elias 2000, 207-1; emphasis added).

It is here that Max Weber's definition (see Chapter One) becomes perceptible. Moreover, it is only here that Kenneth Waltz's understanding of international political structure becomes possible. This historical presentation gives Weber's ideal state and Waltz's parsimonious theory historical substance. Struggles taking place 'domestically' began to shape the nature of the international system: "The very logic by which a local lord extended or defended the perimeter within which he monopolized the means of violence, and thereby increased his return from tribute, continued on a larger scale into the logic of war. Only the establishment of large perimeters of control within which great lords had checked their rivals sharpened the line between internal and external" (1985, 185). Lecturing more than a century ago, Otto Hintze observed that the method to study the state should centre on two pillars: the social structure of that state and the state system in which a state is embedded (Gilbert 1975, 183).

How did the expansion of this system affect territories outside Europe? This system, as mentioned above, encountered different forms of political organisations. In Africa, the imposition of arbitrary borders by colonial powers divided the continent into different spheres controlled by European powers (Clapham 1996; Jackson 1993). In the Balkans and the Middle East, states emerged in different proportions with the weakening and the eventual collapse of the Ottoman Empire (Hourani 1991). "The Ottoman system was the antithesis of the European nation-state system" (Hinnebusch 2003, 15).

Scholars have debated the extent to which European experience in state formation can be generalised to explain processes in the developing world. Thierry Gongora, for example, examines state expenditure on war in the Middle East to test state power there (1993). Jeffrey Herbst observes that states in Africa are "developing in a fundamentally different new environment." He notes "lessons drawn from the case of Europe show that war is an important cause of state formation that is missing in Africa today" (Herbst 1990, 117-9). Steven Heydemann, on the other hand, doubts the idea that European experience could automatically be generalised to the Middle East, observes a weak correlation between war-making and state formation in the region because "in the Middle East as in other developing regions, war making has been indirect, mediated, and deeply transnationalised". He further notes that the drawing of borders by colonial powers in the Middle East "is far removed from the dynamic that link war making and state formation in early modern Europe" (Heydemen 2000, 9-10).

As we saw above, the formation of the state in Europe formed concomitantly with the environment (structure of European international politics) in which it was embedded leaving its effect on state development there. In the Middle East, I will elaborate below, the environment and rules of the games were defined *before* the states emerged. It is this structural difference that makes state formation in the developing world (the Middle East included) peculiar. Heydemann notes Tilly's warning about the difficulty of generalising European experience to the contemporary developing world for he argues that "our ability to infer the probable events and sequences in contemporary states from informed reading of European history is close to nil" (Tilly quoted in *ibid.*, 4). Tilly, however, was aware of this divergence between the two state formation trajectories arguing that "the later the state making experience...the less likely the sorts of internal processes...are to provide an adequate explanation of the formation, survival or growth of a state" (Tilly 1975b, 46; see also Ayoob 1995).

The Middle Eastern state was born in an international structure not of its own choosing, while competition between European rulers, as we saw above, actually produced (constituted) their system, that of the Middle East was constituted externally. In the Middle East the international system structured the development of the state there and defined the possible responses to that structure. Next, I want to examine more closely these emerging polities, their dynamics, and responses to systemic forces.

4.3. State Ontology in the Middle East: Explaining State Weakness

Situating the Middle East state in time and place requires emphasising two points. First, what emerged in the Middle East with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire is not a state, meaning strong, legitimate, sovereign, and demarcated entity but social fields on which states can form or deform. Boundaries were drawn *before* (national) states emerged as legitimate entities (Anderson 2004). Second, the state formation process needs to take two principles into consideration; first this came *late* in time to the international state system and second this state is at the *early* stage of its formation (Saouli 2006). Mohammad Ayoob maintains that security dilemmas in the developing world involve "the early stage of state making and in which Third world states find themselves, and their late entry into the system of states in which they form the weak, intruder majority" (1995, 4).

The establishment of these boundaries created a ‘critical juncture’—“persistent paths of political development” (Pierson 2004, 51)—taking place within social fields. This critical juncture was amplified by international state system, which made it possible in the first place, and by social powers attempting to preserve their domain. Political dynamics and accompanying ideologies in the Middle East since the emergence of the state system reflect attempts to either maintain the system or to reverse this process. How is a critical juncture amplified?

In the beginning we need to think of an Exogenous Shock (ES). In the Middle East, this is Ottoman weakening and European expansion. This shock establishes a New Political Structure (NPS) that sets a new ‘range of expectations’. An NPS is a political context that emerges out of, and disrupts, previous political structures and existing mechanisms of reproduction: “the transformation of fields is possible when current arrangements start to break down” (Fligstein 2001, 109). In reaction to the new political structure we get Endogenous Responses (ER). Would-be political actors’ reactions’ to new political structures largely reflect their power position in *previous* political structures.

Exogenous Shock —→ New Political Structure —→ Endogenous Responses

The stages in the process laid out above are not neatly separated from one another. First, what makes the initial exogenous shock possible is the internal fertile ground that gives the shock its effect. Within the Ottoman Empire, local rulers who have for centuries attempted to increase their autonomous power vis-à-vis the Ottoman power saw the weakening of the centre as an opportunity to gain this autonomy. The new opportunities arise with the emergence of European powers with the ability to neutralise the Ottomans. In other cases, rulers, in search of political survival, shift alliance. Ottoman rulers and their allies, nevertheless, read the situation differently. For them the new structure, should it succeed, would limit if not end their political power. For example, as we shall see below, civil conflicts between Ibn Saud and Al Rasheed in Najd, reflect this logic stated here. While Saud, in alliance with the British, sought to disrupt Ottoman power in Najd, Al Rasheed, allied with the Ottomans, sought to preserve it.

The first three stages (ES- NPS-ER) overlap. As revisionist local rulers receive signals of potential political changes taking place in their context, they begin a process

of political *adaptation* to a new structure. By political adaptation I mean would-be political leaders begin to politically reposition themselves to new contexts. This takes different forms including the mobilising of forces, activating certain identities (see above), or by building new alliances. Under such conditions, structures lose their latency. Political adaptation through endogenous responses reinforces the initial exogenous act. In concrete historical terms this meant that the more local rulers attempt to politically adapt, for example by revolting against the Ottoman ruler, the more European encroachment was possible. Studies emphasising external designs (Al-Najafi 2007; al-Bushra 2004) usually underestimate the importance of endogenous responses missing important domestic dynamics, which are treated as passive, and which are crucial to understand state formation (see Brown 1984).

This political mechanism not only created new social fields in the Middle East, where new and eventually distinctive interactions may take place, but it also left its effect on the cultural structure in the Middle East. The idea that kept the Ottoman Empire intact was that this empire had Islam, which represented the bulk of ottoman population, as its formal value system. With the collapse of the Ottoman system, new identities were activated. These include, but are not limited to, Arab, Armenian, Greek, Kurdish, Syrian, Lebanese, and Turkish identities. With the emergence of social fields, activated identities began to be expressed within and, as in the case of Arab nationalism, across social fields. Arabism shaped political behaviour particularly as it constituted the source of legitimacy for Arab rulers (Barnett 1995). However, less than a century after the emergence of states in Arab territories, Arabism is beginning to erode under the twin pressures of state identity and, more specific, sectarian identities. In examining the cases of Saudi Arabia and Iraq below we will explore how rulers activate and de-activate identities.

The political mechanism discussed here can be used at smaller scale to understand state deformation in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, or Somalia. In all of these cases, external shock directly or indirectly formed new political structures leading to endogenous (usually contradictory) responses. The external shock in Iraq led to the collapse of the Baathist regime was reinforced with Iraqi elites, especially Kurdish and Shiites, seeing this as an opportunity to overthrow the regime there. Nevertheless, other Iraqi and external actors saw this as a threat and began to resist U.S. designs. The US invasion of Iraq created a potential for new political structure creating different endogenous responses in Lebanon, Palestine or Syria. The

difference between what is happening now and what happened with the Ottoman Empire is that the external shock is taking place in specific states. The political mechanism persists however.

Nevertheless, why are these states after many decades of formation prone to external shocks? One main reason is that these states are in their early phase of formation and second this process regresses as much as it progresses. Before I elaborate on this answer, it is important to situate these states on state a formation continuum. This will help us understand the ontology of the state during late formation. Figure 5.2 below maps this process.

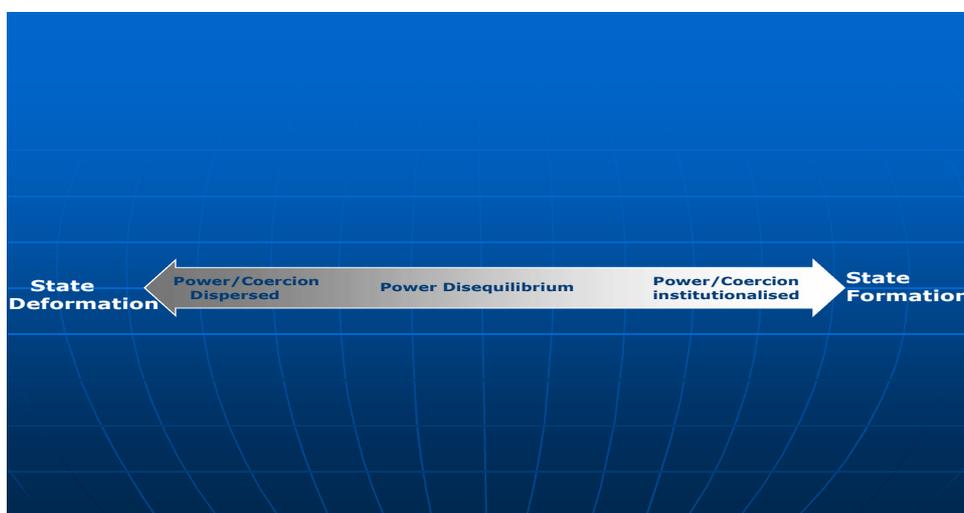


FIGURE 4.2. STATE FORMATION CONTINUUM

The figure above attempts to describe the process of state formation and deformation. Starting on the left side of the arrow, we have a social field where power dispersed, where numerous power holders—tribes, princedoms, war lords—are each in a state of political autonomy. A direct derivative of this situation is that conflict arises between different social powers within these social fields to form a hierarchy, namely to begin the process of internal *interdependence* and external *independence*. At this phase, we have power equilibrium. As one social power begins to dominate over others—moving rightwards in the figure above—a change begins to take place at the political level. A centre of gravity begins to emerge in a social field when one social power initiates an attempt for dominance—the monopoly mechanism. A complimentary strategy is to articulate an ideology, usually existing within the foundational cultural

structure, to legitimise this power monopoly. This forms the seeds for the emergence of ‘public’ institutions challenging other local institutions.

As we move rightwards in the figure above, what emerges is a political organisation—a regime—holding relative power in relation to other organisations. Therefore, what emerges is not a public organisation but an organisation driven by a private social power. As Joel Migdal puts it this organisation sustains the ‘image’ of a “dominant, integrated, autonomous” entity (Chapter One). The capacity of this regime is determined by the strength of its competitors within a social field; the stronger other organisations, the weaker the regime’s capacity. Power struggles foster security dilemmas for the ruling social power. To combat its enemies, the state attempts to pacify and coerce the population in its own territories. This becomes possible as this new social organisation monopolises coercion and extracts taxes. In the case of the Middle East, external rent could come from the international state system (Heydeman 2001).

Finally, at right end of the continuum, we have the category of ‘Strong States’. Let me be clear about state strength. Scholars measure state strength by examining state extractive abilities or to achieve its declared objectives, especially in economic development. State capacity involves “the ability of state leaders to use the agencies of the state to get people in the society to do what they want them to do”(Migdal 1988, xiii). For this study, I take state strength to indicate the extent to which state institutions are able to incorporate different social power in state institutions. The factor to be examined in this case is not capacity but *incorporation*. The process of incorporation involves a transition from an authoritarian state organisation driven by one or more social powers to a democratic institution rising above all social powers in a social field. The question is to what extent is a state representative and legitimate in the eyes of its constituents. State strength accordingly relates to the state as a regime of power and territorial entity.

In studying states as a ‘process’ we need to demarcate three phases, which also represent different population of cases. A ‘no state’ population of cases would see some states (Lebanon, Yemen, Somalia or Iraq) moving in that direction during certain periods in their respective histories. By indicating a no state situation I mean that existing states deform when other state-like organisations challenge existing regimes monopoly on coercion and sources of legitimacy. What we have here are “competing locations of authority; these are usually weaker than the state in terms of

coercive capacity but equal to or stronger than the state in terms of political legitimacy in the view of large segments of the states' population" (Ayoob 1995, 4).

A 'weak state' situation, located on the centre of the graph is where a regime accumulates more power vis-à-vis other social organisations (parties, tribes) and is able to attract power to itself. However, rivals continue to pose threat to the existing regime. This state is weak as it is vulnerable for deformation, a movement to the left of the figure above. Furthermore, it is vulnerable to external penetration. The extent of regime capacity varies from one case to another. While Saudi Arabia has strong regime capacity, the Lebanese counterpart is weaker. Other cases of strong capacity include Morocco, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, Iran, or Tunisia. The regimes have the capacity to coerce their population through, primarily, the monopolisation of coercion and to articulate identities to consolidate power.

Finally, a 'strong state' population of cases sees institutions providing the legal foundation to incorporate different social powers. These institutions and laws define the opportunities and limitation for political actors. Political participation here is open for all actors and political power circulates among different political actors regularly through elections. With the exception of Israel, the Middle East provides no cases that fit this category. Turkey can be situated somewhere in the middle between the centre and the right end of the figure as it has multiparty democracy, while the army continues to structure politics there.

The figure above is descriptive, however, and does not tell us *why* a certain state is on one point of the graph or how it reached there. To understand why the state in the Middle East is on these points, we need to examine some dilemmas of late state formation that these states face. By referring to the factor of political incorporation, I want to argue that there is a relation between state weakness, external penetration and state survival in the region. Examining why these states are weak will leave us one step away from defining the conditions of state survival, which I will look at in the final section of this section. The starting point to understand state weakness in the Middle East and its vulnerability to reformation is to return to the argument presented earlier. Social boundaries, I argued, emerged in the Middle East because of Ottoman collapse and competitive European expansion. In understanding the state in the Middle East, we need to treat European and later international penetration as a *given*. The region's geographical position between east and west was crucial for trade routes (especially Suez Canal), and the vast oil reserves constitute important factors to

account for the region's vulnerability (Halliday 2005; Hinnebusch 2003; Brown 1984).

The division of the region in the post-Ottoman period into different spheres of influence, as in the case of Sykes-Picot Agreement, may constitute the first round of British and French attempts for domination in the region. Attempts to reproduce the system took place in building of state institutions in these social fields, usually by British and French local allies. This however initiated different domestic responses. Ruling elites sought to preserve the status quo while their domestic adversaries sought to reverse it. Similar to mechanisms during Ottoman rule, domestic oppositions began to support the adversary of their mandate power. In Egypt for instance the National Party supported France against Britain, while in Yemen opposition to the Imamate sought British support (al-Bushra 2004, 7). Resistance to the system became rife during World War II and later with the emergence of two new super powers in the Middle East.

The coming of revisionist powers starting in Egypt but later in Syria, Yemen, Algeria, or Tunisia sought to reverse socio-economic and political conditions reproduced by colonial and domestic powers. Emerging state elites attempted to increase their power autonomy by building states to weaken their internal opponents—'reactionary' forces—and to increase their independence vis-à-vis outside powers.¹⁰ This was facilitated with emergence of a new international order centring on the Soviet Union and United States, which left its effect on the Middle East region. Most revisionist powers came from the military, which was the most powerful institution in the new states and which was infiltrated by officers coming from poor social backgrounds and driven by leftist and Arab Nationalist ideologies. The coming to power of those revisionist regimes left its impact on the Middle East regional order, weakening British and French influence there. For example, the political union between Egypt and Syria in 1958, coming two years after the tripartite war, of which Nasser emerged triumphant disrupted British-French order established after WWI.

The intensification of regional and international power struggles exposed the vulnerability of the Middle East region and the state there. External penetration is a form of domination in where external states attempt to influence developments taking place in other domestic and regional social fields. Here we need to think of crises spilling over "from other fields or by the invasion of groups into a particular field" (Fligstein 2001, 109). The weakness of these states emanates from the process of state

¹⁰ Most of these regimes sought economic development involving land reforms, industrialisation, and import-substitution trade policies.

formation where, as mentioned above, in its early phases there exists a multiplicity of state-like organisations struggling to monopolise power there creating a situation of insecurity.

For consolidated states security means protecting the state from *external* threats. As for late forming states, “the sense of insecurity from which these states suffer emanates largely from within their boundaries rather than from outside” (Ayooob 1995, 7). For this study security/insecurity relates to:

Security of the state—in terms of territory and institutions—and to the security of those who profess to represent the state territorially and institutionally. In others words, security-insecurity is defined in relation to vulnerabilities—both internal and external—that threaten or have the potential to bring down or weaken state structures, both territorial and institutional, and governing regimes. (Ibid., 9)

We realise that Ayooob’s definition differentiates between regime and state (see Chapter One for definitions). This differentiation is very important and both theoretically and empirically telling. The existence of a social field—i.e. states information—that hosts competing power sites—potential regimes—with different sources of legitimacy provides the basis on which external penetration becomes possible. I argue here that there is an inverse relationship between regime strength and state weakness during late formation. External penetration increases the security dilemma of rulers who resort to authoritarian forms of power, which in turn weakens the state in terms of political incorporation sustaining the initial cycle of external penetration. This constitutes a major dilemma facing late forming states. What we get is the following dynamic:

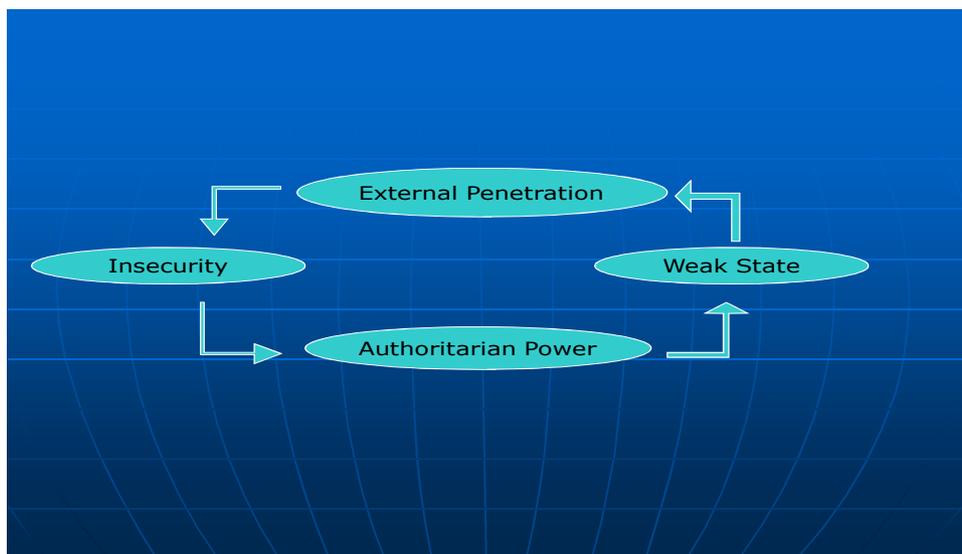


FIGURE 4.3. STATE WEAKNESS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

How does external penetration take place? In the process of domination, external powers ally with one (or more) domestic power at the expense of others within a social field. The monopoly mechanism becomes part of regional power balance. The higher the level of insecurity the more the ruling power becomes authoritarian by repressing its adversaries and the more the state weakens by intensifying opposition or eroding regime legitimacy. State weakness on the other hand facilitates external penetration. We find a relation between the level of democratisation, state weakness, and external penetration. Attempts for political centralisation generate “resistance to state designs by unassimilating minorities or vulnerable peasants and workers clinging for security to tried and true folkways” (Migdal 1988, 14). In their turn ruling elites perceived these vulnerable groups and their opponents as subversive.

To elaborate on this logic we need to examine domestic dynamics of state formation and how these states respond to systemic forces. The main dilemma facing the state in the Middle East is the concomitant need to legitimise itself largely through the process of democratisation on the one hand, and to survive as a regime of power and territorial entity on the other. Hence, while European states established borders and state institutions *before* the democratisation process, in the Middle East, the two pressures are concurrent. Stein Rokkan notes that “What is important is that the Western nation-states were given a chance to solve some of the worst problems of state-building before they had to face the ordeal of mass politics” (quoted in *Ibid.*, 30).

At the early stages of state formation, social powers face a dilemma. Social powers face a dilemma of having a *strong* power hold in a *weak* social field (polity) or a *weak* power hold in a *strong* social field. This dilemma strikes both types of *status quo* and revisionist social powers. By distributing power among competing social powers through the building of democratic institutions, dominating social powers risk losing their own power base. On the other hand, by maintaining their own strong hold by repressing their competitors they weaken the social field. The presence of a strong social power moves the social field one step away from anarchy (movement to the right in Figure 4.2), but that does not constitute an advanced step in state formation.

Samuel Huntington captured this reality in examining modernisation. In an attempt to situate the limited choices faced by monarchs between modernisation (‘success’) and tradition (‘survival’). He observes that:

On the one hand, centralization of power in the monarch was necessary to promote social, cultural, and economic reform. On the

other hand, this centralisation made difficult or impossible the expansion of the power of the traditional polity and the assimilation into it of the new groups produced by modernization. The participation of these groups in politics seemingly could come only at the price of the monarchy... Can he [the king] escape the dilemma of success vs. survival? (1968, 177)

This dilemma was not limited to monarchs, however it has also struck revisionist powers who intended to mobilise their populations for political and economic reform. Raymond Hinnebusch makes the point that Syrian domestic revisionists at an advanced stage began to pursue a “path of convergence” in both policy and structure with the traditional monarchy of Saudi Arabia. (Hinnebusch 2003, 124-129). The point here is that when reforming social powers seek to reconstruct a social field to their own advantage they face structures not of their own choosing. As they ‘socialise’ with these structures they begin to face limitations on their reforming agenda driving them into a security dilemma with their competitors: “Assad put revolution on hold to concentrate on the recovery of Syria’s occupied territory and containment of the Israeli threat through military build-up...Assad, as well as Nasser, was ready to bury the ideological cold war with the traditional monarchies” (Ibid., 126). An examination of the Syrian case would find Assad’s rule as following an internal realist strategy too, largely balancing between an Allawite-dominated security apparatuses, with a secular Baathist party, and a cooptation of the Sunnite Damascene bourgeois (Seale 1988). These acts consolidated the regime but weakened the Syrian state. External attempts to isolate the regime saw opposition to the regime activated, with the regime becoming authoritarian.

In the process of power consolidation rulers—just as states in the international structure—*socialise* in structures not of their own choosing. Under circumstances of domestic and external insecurity, regimes intensify their grip on power limiting it to a narrow circle (political contraction, see below). The initial attempts to establish a state with strong capacity to transform societies leads regimes to establish organs such as political parties, security agencies, or economic councils. These attempts are driven by (private) social power such as a military junta, a tribe, or the political elite of particular a sect. A regime will rely on its entourage to lead these organs. Whether it’s South Korea’s or Egypt’s military junta, Saudi family, or Baathist Syria or Iraq, institutions in each of these states came to reflect the social power that designed and managed them.

Transforming societies, nevertheless, requires social mobilising organisations. One example is the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, whose politburo constituted the major policy making committee in the Soviet Union. In Nasser's Egypt, the Arab Socialist Union constituted a similar organisation. Institutions involve a set of norms, rules, and procedures and go beyond individuals. In a quest for survival leaders may undermine these institutions. Nasser's fear of what he called 'power centres' within his regime weakened the institutions he built. John Waterbury describes Nasser's dilemma as the following:

For two years Nasser laid aside his fears and hesitation and tried to make the ASU an instrument that could promote his increasingly radical goals. He seemed genuinely to want to reach out to new, underprivileged constituencies to sustain the socialist transformation. At the same time he knew that if the ASU became such an instrument it could be turned against him. (Quoted in Migdal 1988, 201)

Nasser's security fears were part of Egypt's regional security dilemmas. Nasser wasn't only a revisionist within Egypt fighting against the monarchy, landlords, and other political communist and Islamic movements, but also a revisionist at the regional level. Analysing Nasser's external strategy, Stephen Walt observe that attempts to preserve "his own leadership of the Arab revolution, whether through formal unity or other mechanisms, became the cardinal principle of Nasser's foreign policy" (1987, 53). In his attempts to weaken his internal opponents he was in essence providing his external opponents with strong ground to penetrate Egypt. This dilemma wasn't limited to Nasser only. All states in the Middle East faced, and continue to face, this dilemma. As Nasser was trying to preserve his domestic regime, he sought to support revisionist powers outside Egypt mainly by supporting the domestic opponents of his regional adversaries. His adversaries, such as Saudi Arabia or Jordan, followed a similar strategy in Egypt. As we shall see below, this was part of regional struggle for influence between the US and the Soviet Union. From an American point of view, Saudi Arabia was a major candidate according to Eisenhower to form "a counterweight to Nasser" (quoted in *ibid.*, 68). These struggles left their imprint on many states such as Algeria, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and Iraq. Insecurity was augmented to unprecedented levels, which in turn contributed to state authoritarianism and weakness. How do we explain state weakness?

To understand this we need to examine state response to systemic forces. Waltzian assumption is that the state—as an actor in the international arena—responds in unitary manner to systemic forces. This provides the basis on which Waltz establishes a distinction between the domestic and international realms and hence the

foundation to build a theory of international politics. Nevertheless, what the Waltzian theory misses is the time factor dividing old—legitimate, differentiated, cohesive—states from late forming states. In the Middle East, states have “started off so fragmented, unstable and permeable to trans-state forces that realism’s unitary rational actor confronting an external chess board cannot be assumed and is only one possible product of a contingent state formation process” (Hinnebusch 2003, 7). Below, I reproduce Figure 4.2 on state formation and deformation and show some theoretical expectation relating to state behaviour at different phases of formation.

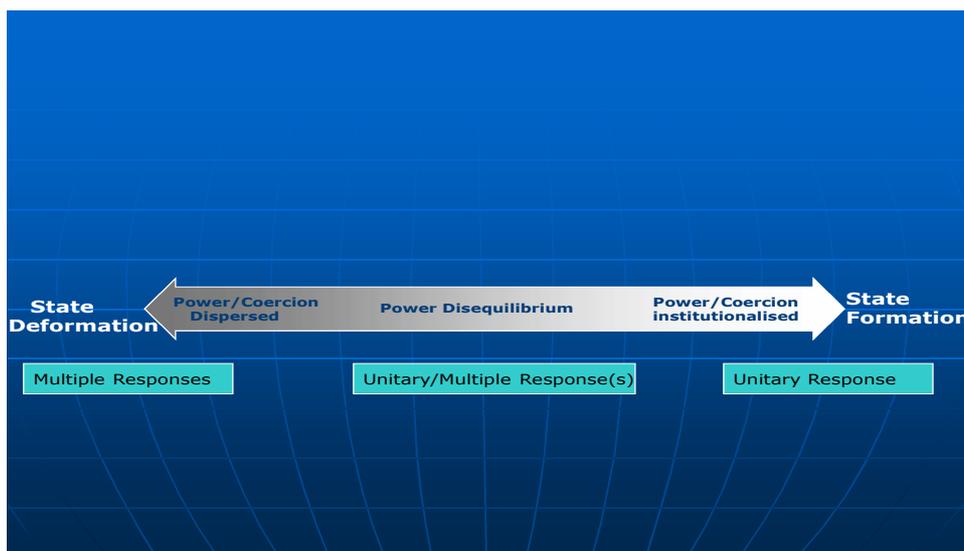


FIGURE 4.4. STATE (DE) FORMATION AND STATE BEHAVIOUR

When a state deforms—a movement to the left in the figure above—power devolves as mentioned above to social organisations existing in a social field. The multiplicity of state-like organisations in a social field forms a political anarchy similar to that described by Waltz for the international arena. The distinction between domestic and international structures of power ceases to exist. What we get is an *extension* of international anarchy with different social organisation competing for power monopoly within a social field. These conflicts take place within one social field without, necessarily, spilling into other social fields because of varying levels of political centralisation in other social fields. For example, the fifteen-year (1975-1990) civil war was contained in Lebanon without directly affecting Syria or Israel as Lebanon’s bordering states.

One direct consequence of state deformation involves the way a state responds to external environment. What we have is one social field responding in *multiple* ways to systemic forces. Each social power within a social field will attempt to improve its

standing there by allying with different external forces. External forces will, on the other hand, provide support for their domestic allies, which reinforce the domestic divide. If we maintain that the regional social field involves competition among states there, then these regional conflicts transfer to weak and fragmented states. External powers interfere in a state to define its role and direction in a regional power balance. This takes place either by *buttressing* existing monopoly of power or by *demonopolising* power there to shift existing foreign behaviour. This contributes to civil wars and state fragmentation.

I have shown elsewhere that variation in the stability of Lebanon is largely due to shifts in regional power balance. Domestic social powers responded differently to external power shifts leading the country to divide in different periods of its modern history (Saouli 2006, 708-714). However, the ability of domestic powers to respond differently to systemic forces assumes that external environment is *divided*. A movement right-ward in the figure above signifies a higher level power centralisation. The higher the level of coercion monopolisation in a social field, the more the social field's response to external environment becomes unitary. Cases like Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Syria or Egypt provide illustrations to this category. The low level of political incorporation and democratisation mean, however, that opposition within these cases respond differently to international developments. This usually takes place from outside the state as the Moroccan, Syrian, or Saudi opposition groups residing in Europe or other Arab states that are usually in conflict with their home state. From the point in the centre moving right-wards we continue to have a state responding in a unitary manner until we reach the point where a state's responses to external environment become legitimated through the democratic process.

4.4. State Survival in the Middle East: Conditions and Variation

Although most states in the developing world in general and the Middle East in particular share many of the characteristics specified earlier, variation exists when it comes to the nature of the social field these states develop in, specifically regime capacity and the geopolitical position of a state. This section will examine some of these variables and by doing so I will specify the main conditions that account to state

survival in the Middle East. These will pave the way to examine the case studies in the following chapters.

In the previous section, I argued that most states in the Middle East are weak when it comes to political incorporation. This deficit contributes to weakening the state—both as a regime of power and a territorial entity—and facilitates external penetration. For states to survive during late formation, I want to argue here, two theoretical conditions need to be present. The first involves the *monopolisation* of power at the domestic level and second the *division* of power at the regional level, or external neutralisation. Monopolising power domestically, maybe due to the presence of economic resources (oil) or due to the homogeneity of a social field, is a necessary condition for state survival but not a sufficient one. Without a division in the regional structure, meaning the absence of a hegemon, domestic monopolisation would be threatened. How does this work?

Monopolising power domestically weakens external intervention in a social field and ensures a unitary response to systemic forces—a projection of power outside a field. This power projection encourages division as other states threatened by this projection aim to balance against it. External division in turn *reinforces* the domestic monopoly. For a state to survive in late formation, this structural distinction—power monopoly (hierarchy) at the unit level and power division (anarchy) at the systemic level—needs to be sustained. In fact, regimes and rulers that lead them will behave in ways to maintain that balance. In studying state survival, we examine how regimes maintain that balance by spurring processes of power monopolisation in their own states and de-monopolisation at regional level and *in* other threatening states.

The above are theoretical conditions. Although theoretical conditions aim to explain reality, these should be distinct from that reality. As Waltz argues a “theory explains some part of reality and is therefore distinct from the reality it explains” (1979, 7). The extent to which each condition is present varies from one case to another. In the following two sub-sections, I will examine variation among the two conditions.

4.4.1. Power Monopolisation: Variables

The level of monopolisation taking place in a particular social field depends on a set of factors including: (1) level of cultural homogeneity of a social field; (2) regime nature and formation; and (3) economic resources available for a regime. These factors will

accordingly affect how a state responds to systemic forces. Let's look in turn at these factors and the relation that governs them.

As argued in Chapter Three, the extent to which a social field is culturally homogeneous affects the political dynamics taking place within it. Although in the early phases of state formation, political struggles take place regardless of the cultural make-up of a field, a culturally heterogeneous social field makes monopolisation difficult. A cultural heterogeneity provides elements that can be politicised creating new social boundaries (see Chapter Three) and makes political incorporation more difficult. Accordingly, *ceteris paribus*, the higher the cultural heterogeneity a field is, the harder (and usually bloodier) the monopolisation process and vice-versa, the higher the cultural homogeneity of a field, the easier the monopolisation process.

As we shall see in the Saudi Arabia case below, the cultural and religious homogeneity of most parts of what is now Saudi Arabia facilitated political centralisation there and made possible the articulation of a universal idea (Islam). We observe the opposite in the case of Iraq, where ethnic and sectarian divisions challenged attempts at power monopolisation and, eventually, the cultural structure shaped the political dynamics with increased saliency. However, why, although sharing similar divisions to Iraq (and Syria for that matter), is Lebanon's political trajectory different from Iraq?

This brings us to the second variable—regime formation. In Lebanon a particular social power's—the Maronites—interest coincided with external powers attempting to establish borders in the region. This (as the case of Ibn Saud and the British will also show) contributed to regime formation in Lebanon. In this formation social (sectarian) boundaries were drawn from the beginning, setting a path-dependent trajectory. State institutions and major positions were distributed along sectarian lines. At the political level a Sunni-Maronite consensus maintained Lebanon's fragile 'consociational democracy' (el Khazen 2000). In Iraq and Syria the absence—with some exceptions—of a domestic power with an interest to maintain the emerging borders saw a rise of universal ideologies aiming to reverse the imposed borders (Mufti 1995). Regime formation set the path for a different trajectory. Sectarian and ethnic boundaries took longer to develop in Iraq and Syria as opposed to Lebanon.

The way a regime is formed affects the prospects of power monopolisation. Regime formation does not only set a path that may explain the foreign policy prospects of a regime but it also figures the nature of *responses* a regime incurs from revisionists

internally as well as externally. Tilly argues that “identities become *political* identities when governments become parties to them” (2005, 210; emphasis original). One argument presented here is that although some regimes in culturally heterogeneous societies resort to a universal idea to go beyond existing divisions, security dilemmas and inter-elite conflicts agitate cultural divisions leading regimes to become parties to them.

Finally, the available economic resources for a regime determine the prospects of power monopolisation. *Ceteris paribus*, the more the economic resources available for a regime, the higher the potential it has to monopolise power. Economic means contribute, as we saw above, to a regime’s ability to sustain coercive forces, which in turn reinforce the monopoly over the economic power. These means provide a regime with the ability to project power internally as well as externally making it a relatively stronger and distinct organisation within a social field. Saudi Arabia provides a clear example of a monarchy having the economic means to monopolise power and to socially and economically integrate a social field.

Like Saudi Arabia in its early stages, Yemen is a case of a weak regime unable to go beyond other social organisations—particularly tribes—due to weak economic base. Economic resources provide only a contributing factor to regime and state survival and without appreciating other variables, we can lose sight of other causes of state survival as the cases of Jordan, Morocco, or Oman indicate. For example, what should we expect if a regime is rich but operating in a culturally heterogeneous field? While the presence of economic resources might strengthen a state in a culturally homogeneous society by consolidating its cultural and economic ties, the presence of similar resources in heterogeneous society coupled with low political incorporation would strengthen the regime but weaken the state.¹¹ This is especially true if resources are unequally distributed.

The cases of Sudan and Iraq provide examples of how regime behaviour was shaped by the presence of oil in regions where certain ethnic or sectarian groups are present and able to monopolise. In Sudan, successive Khartoum governments sought to redraw the boundaries of oil-rich southern regions such as Upper Nile and Bahr El Ghazal (Alier 1992) in attempts to deter separatist movements in the south. In Iraq, Saddam Hussein attempted to ‘Arabise’ the oil-rich Kirkuk to alter its demographic balance, a move that

¹¹ This led some scholars to consider Iraq to be a ‘strong’ state (Zaartman and Dawisha 1988).

is identical with Saudi attempts to employ thousands of state servants from Najd and Hejaz in the Eastern Province.

The above constitute important factors that account for variation among different cases in the Middle East states. Another factor may be added to the above which is the level of political incorporation. However, as most states in the Middle East, as shown above, figure low in political incorporation the examining of this variable might not be very useful for this population of cases. One can argue that Lebanon may score high in political incorporation given that its sectarian regime aims to incorporate all factions in state institutions. However, this raises the question as to the extent to which state institutions in Lebanon are independent from the social powers that constitute them.

4.4.2 Geo-political Position and External Neutralisation

The geo-political position of a state is determined by the level of monopolisation existing in a social field, which we have just examined and the system (structure) that it is embedded in. In this section we will examine the external variable for state survival. Two external variables may be crucial to understanding state survival: (1) Geographical location of a state and (2) the structure of regional order. It is important to emphasise here that these variables as well as the variables examined above are in reality inseparable. We isolate them here for analytical purposes; however, as we examine the cases these variables will be treated in a configurative way. Let us start with the first variable.

Stephen M. Walt observes that states in the Middle East find others in close geographic proximity more threatening than distant states (1987, 162). The geographical location of a state determines the degree it is influenced by the systematic dynamics. During late state formation, the more strategically located a state is, the higher it is influenced by the system. Moreover, the higher the influence by the system on the state, the less will its domestic conditions affect its chances of survival. A strategically located state is a state whose geographical location is pivotal for the interests of regional and international great powers. The extent to which a state is strategic relates to its *proximity* to main power struggle areas and, therefore, to potentially threatening states. Historically, Egypt (Suez Canal), South Yemen, or Hejaz were crucial for the Ottoman Empire's and European states' trade and naval power. The emergence of oil in the beginning of the twentieth century and outbreak of the Arab-Israeli conflict in 1948 shifted the focus to the Gulf region and to the Near East

respectively. States such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait or Jordan, Lebanon or Syria have been shaped by power struggles taking place over and in these areas.

Jordan's survival and relative stability emanates from its geographical position. As a buffer zone between Israel and major Arab states such as Saudi Arabia (and other gulf monarchies) and Iraq, most states in the region had an interest to keep Jordan intact. Lebanon's varying stability, on the other hand, can be understood to result from shifts in regional balance of power. Other cases where geographical location was less crucial include Tunisia, Libya, or Morocco. However, these states' relative insulation from the main strategic arenas in the region was in certain periods disrupted.

The intensification of regional struggles drew even peripheral states to their dynamics. Hence, we observe that with the rise of Egypt under Nasser, the Algerian revolution was given impetus while Libya was ready to emulate the Egyptian model. The Saudi attempts to counter the Nasserite expansion saw Yemen drawn to the conflict and, with external support, different factions attempted to monopolise power there. Yemen's late entry into the state system not only reflects its geographical position but also (due to its weak economic base) its low level of power monopolisation. The rise of Nasser on the one hand and the emergence of two new global powers—Soviet Union and U.S.—on the other hand provided new opportunities for revisionist power and constraints for *status quo* ones. Revisionist forces in Egypt itself and in Algeria, Tunisia, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen based their domestic strategies on these emerging new (external) political structures.

This brings us to the second variable, the structure of regional order. The way a regional order is structured affects the chances of state survival and collapse during late formation. The main variable here relates to the extent to which a system is polarised. *Ceteris paribus*, the more a regional structure is polarised the higher the chances for late forming states to survive. The less a state system is polarised (the more hierarchical it is), the less autonomy a late forming state affords. The configuration of the state system provides states with opportunities or constraints that condition their domestic dynamics and international behaviour. We recall from the analysis above that external neutralisation (collapse of the Ottoman Empire and expansion of the European state system) contributed to the emergence of states in the Middle East. In a polarised state system, this external neutralisation is sustained and contributes to the maintenance of state borders. States in the international system will endeavour to prevent their competitors from forming hegemony, in doing so they form alliances to balance against

potentially threatening states. In the context of late state formation, these international dynamics shapes developments taking place within states.

In the post-Cold War period, for instance, we observe that external neutralisation diminished. With the US being the only power internationally, the autonomy of Middle East regional powers eroded paving the way in the Middle East to the isolation of Iraq, for Syria's engagement in the peace process, and later providing the US with the opportunity to attempt to re-order the region by occupying Iraq in 2003.

In explaining state survival, no one factor here can on its own account for that effect. Accordingly, this section defined two theoretical conditions that need to be present for a state to survive and specified a set of variables to account for these conditions. In tune with the methodology of this thesis, these conditions and variables will need to be examined in specific contexts (case studies). In examining different cases, these variables will be interrelated, as we shall see below.

Conclusion

This chapter aimed to situate the state in the Middle East in time and space. In this analysis the state has been treated as a process and not as a given. Accordingly, this chapter first examined the initial conditions of state formation looking at the interrelation of domestic and international forces to account for this emergence. To understand the peculiarity of the state in the Middle East, a comparison with European state formation was made in the second section. I argued that while European states constituted the system that structured their relations and which affected their internal development, the state in the Middle East developed in social fields—boundaries—and a pre-existing state system. Section three examined the ontology of the state in the Middle East situating it on state formation continuum and looking at the main dilemmas facing this state. Further, that section examined how this state responds to systemic forces.

In examining the ontology of the state in the Middle East, it was argued that regime insecurity contribute to the construction of authoritarian regimes, which in turn cause external penetration weakening the state. Finally, in section four two conditions for state survival in late formation were defined: domestic power monopolisation and external neutralisation. Further, variation in these two conditions was examined in light of cases in the Middle East.

This chapter and the one that preceded it constitute the theoretical model to examine state survival during late formation. Moving from the general ontology of the political world in chapter three to the ontology of the state in the Middle East and the conditions of its survival, now we can move to examine the empirical case studies. Next chapter will look at the factors that keep the Saudi Arabian state intact.

Chapter Five

Saudi Arabia: A case of Continued State Survival

Society has created its own religions: Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Mohammedanism—these are social tricks. Jesus is antisocial, Buddha is antisocial—but Christianity is not antisocial, Buddhism is not antisocial. Society is very cunning; it immediately absorbs even antisocial phenomena into the social.

—Osho

State Survival in Saudi Arabia: The Literature

The endurance of the Saudi monarchy and the survival of the Saudi territorial state have been perplexing for both scholars and Middle East observers. Predictions of the fall of the Saudi ruling family started in the 1940s¹² and continued late into the twentieth century (Aburish 1994). The perceived weakness of the Saudi state led several neo-conservatives in the wake of September 11 incidents to call for direct regime change in Saudi Arabia while others argued for establishing a state for the Shiites in the eastern oil-rich part of the country (see Teitelbaum 2003). State survival on the other hand has been attributed to local culture (Hudson 1977), regime identity mythmaking and reproduction (Anderson 2000), oil revenues (Gause 2002; Luciani 1990), the accommodation of *Assabia* to capitalism (Champion 2003) or to a combination of oil revenues and Islamic identity (Menoret 2005).

Other scholars in search for causes of state survival in Saudi Arabia have protested against these domestic explanations of state survival in Saudi Arabia. Paul Aarts, for instance, calls us to go ‘outside the box’, arguing that “it appears to be far more conceivable that the crucial difference between the success and failure, and the persistence and fall of monarchies can be found in the regional and global strategic-economic picture, rather than in the local one” (2004, 4) arguing that Saudi survival is “primarily attributable to *external* forces” (Ibid., Abstract; emphasis original). In a similar fashion, F. Gregory Gause II argues that “the success and failure of monarchy in the Arabian Peninsula in the twentieth century had more to do with the position of Arabian countries in the regional security picture and the international political economy than with their particular domestic characteristics” (2000, 167-8). Both contributions place emphasis on the role of oil (and its security), while Aarts

¹² The American consul to the Kingdom predicted the fall of Saud in the 1940s (Safran 1991, 58).

accentuates the “decisive factor” of the Saudi relations with the United States, in explaining state survival (Aarts 2005, 399-429).

These accounts provide us with a way out of the box and, hence, contribute to our understanding of state survival, particularly in the Gulf region. However, and in tune with the theoretical framework presented here I argue that we should not replace internal (domestic structure) with external (structure of regional and international politics) factors to explain state survival. The debate should not centre on internal *versus* external; rather we need to emphasise the *interaction* between the two realms. Rachel Bronson challenges the simplistic ‘oil-for-security’, which many scholars subscribe to: “After all America’s relationships with other major oil producing states have proven exceedingly troubled.” These not only include the Soviet Union, but also Iraq (since 1967) and Libya in the Arab world or Iran (since 1979) (Bronson 2005, 373).

We can also turn Bronson’s analysis on its head to suggest that US relations are strong with countries that are not oil-rich such as Jordan, Turkey or Morocco, which suggests the presence of other factors. This chapter will illustrate that the Saudi state scores high on most of the variables associated with state survival and discussed in the previous chapter. First, we observe that the cultural homogeneity (Muslim and Tribal) in the territories that later formed the Saudi state facilitated the monopoly mechanism and, later, consolidation of power by the Saudis. The regime’s monopolisation over the means of coercion gave it power over the religious establishment in particular to promote interpretations that converge with the regime’s interest and to alienate others that threaten the regime’s integrity.

Second, this domestic power monopolisation converged, not only with the emergence of a state-system in the Middle East but also, with the interests of the designers (Britain and France) of that system. With the crystallisation of the state-system in the Middle East, power monopolisation in Saudi Arabia had been achieved and a Saudi regime was in place. While the regional state-system contributed to maintaining Saudi domestic power monopolisation, the latter reinforced the system as we shall see below. This in some cases saw the Saudi regime countering British or U.S. interests when these threatened Saudi interest.

Third, the emergence of oil revenue contributed to the above variables. Domestically, oil revenue reinforced the Saudi regime’s hold on power switching the country’s economic focus from Hejaz to Najd, while providing the monarchy with the means to reward allies and punish rivals. The oil wealth of the country further

augmented its geo-political position making it pivotal for regional and external powers engaged in the Middle East.

Fourth, the nature of the Middle East regional system—divided between states aiming for a *status quo* and others seeking revision—provided the Saudi regime with numerous opportunities to maintain its domestic dominance. Whether in its initial alliance with Nasser against the Hashemite monarchies (and in some cases Britain), alliance with the US against revisionist forces in the Middle East during the Cold War, or its current stand in relation to Iran, Saudi Arabia has aimed to maintain a division in the regional system that contributes to its domestic dominance. These shifts come with the activation or deactivation of different identities (Islam, Arabism, or Sunnism).

The following chapter will elaborate on these points. The first section will examine the origins of the Saudi state, the rise and fall of its first states, and the origins of the contemporary one. Section two will examine the nature of the Saudi social field, the process of regime formation, and the monarchy's relations with other social forces. The third section will examine the kingdom's foreign relations. The chapter will conclude by highlighting the theoretical implications drawn from the Saudi case.

5.1. Geographical Position and Origins of the Saudi State

The state of Saudi Arabia is currently composed of historically four distinct regions: the central region of Najd, the Eastern region of Ahsa, the western region of Hejaz, and the south western region of Asir. During Ottoman rule, each of these regions formed a distinct cultural and political sphere (Yamani 2004, 1-3). Situated on the Red Sea and hosting Islam's two holiest cities of Mecca and Medina, Hejaz was always under external influence and rule and "too tempting a booty for any Middle Eastern empire to permit" (Vassiliev 2000, 29).

The central region of Najd is situated between the two "sea sands" of Great al-Nafud in the north and *Rub Al-Khali* or the 'Empty quarter' in the south and consisted mainly of isolated oases ruled by chieftaincies. Difficult climate, aridness, and primitive agricultural techniques meant that economic surplus and development were hard to obtain (Ibid., 31), which in turn made it less attractive for foreign powers. Najdi dwellers, both nomads and settlers, relied on the Ahsa coast for their survival and its traders travelled to Baghdad and as far as India to buy products (Al-Rasheed 2005, 38). The eastern region of Ahsa is strategically situated on the Persian Gulf and came under Ottoman rule in 1550 after their control reached Baghdad in 1534 (Ibid., 37). Including

many oases and forming an important trade route between the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, Ahsa, similar to Hejaz, was crucial for external powers.

Since 1745, there have been three attempts to unify these four regions and all originated in the region of Najd. The first (1745-1818) and second (1824-1891) attempts at state formation reached their limits when political expansion and centralisation threatened pre-existing external structures of power, which was determined by Ottoman power. While Ottoman authorities were indifferent to developments taking place in Najd, Hejaz, due to its symbolic importance for the Muslim world and the income it generates from annual Muslim pilgrimage, meant that it was too important to be left for local forces. The Ottomans ruled over Hejaz by relegating power to local Hashemite rulers, who are believed to have a family lineage traced back to Prophet Mohammad's daughter Fatima and first cousin Ali ibn Abi Talib. When in 1924 Al-Saud occupied Hejaz, the Hashemites had been ruling this region for more than one thousand years (Yamani 2004, 2).

In all its dimensions, the formation of the first Saudi state and its later collapse is theoretically telling to understand the emergence and survival of the current Saudi state. Generic processes of state formation, such as war-making, entangle with processes of legitimacy formation in the establishment of regime and a particular boundary. This process takes place in a locally tribal setting within an externally "restricted" (Niblock 2006, 23) structure defined and regulated by the Ottoman Empire. The lack of external neutralisation meant that any challenger to Ottoman authority was to be punished should it go beyond the limits defined to it by the Ottomans. Emerging in Najd, the first Saudi state exemplifies the ability of a local *Emir*—or prince—to expand his power beyond his own tribe to dominate over other tribes forming a strong state before the expansion saw its limits with stronger external powers rolling back that state to its initial point of departure. These initial attempts at domination included three major dimensions, which have remained with us until now, and involve the monopolisation of coercion, religious interpretation, and political decision making.

The region of Najd lacked any form of political centralisation beyond that of a tribe, which was the most powerful political organisation beyond the family.¹³ A tribe is composed of many *Ashiras*—or clans—which in turn consists of many families. Each tribe has a *Sheikh*—or chief—who acts as an arbitrator in tribal conflicts, convenes and presides over *Majlis*—or tribal council—handles external relations, and declares war

¹³ A tribe is "a group of people who shared a common territorial base, true or mythological kingship ties, and a corporate existence" (Kostiner 1993, 3)

and peace. The qualities a tribal chief should possess include courage, wisdom, wealth and prudence (Vassiliev 2000, 51). Alongside the Sheikh there existed a religious *qadi*—or judge—facilitating adjudication.

Climatic and socio-economic constraints existing in the Arabian Peninsula in general and in Najd in particular contribute to our understanding of tribal persistence. Najdi socio-economy remained similar for many centuries with economic development and integration being constrained by two major impediments. The first involved the inability of any oasis prince to dominate over others to pacify the relations amongst them and create the necessary foundation for further economic exchange and integration. Secondly, the lack of sufficient economic surplus, due to climatic conditions and technological weakness, which provides the basis for such domination, made political centralisation beyond the tribe difficult:

The narrow economic base, the hostile forces of nature, the primitive agricultural technology and the isolation of the oases all resulted in a very slow rate of economic development. Oasis farming was characterized by a fragmentation of effort and was undertaken by small peasant groups and individual families. There were no large-scale irrigation facilities or huge tracts of irrigated and cultivated land in medieval Arabia. Combined with the isolation of the oases, this meant that there was no need for a centralised government (Ibid., 31).

The rise of the first Saudi state forms a historical exception since the rise of Islam. This lack of political monopolisation and socio-economic circumstances meant that inter-tribal relations were governed by war and *Ghazu*—or raids. John Lewis Burckhardt observed that “Arab tribes are in a state of almost perpetual war against each other” (quoted in Ibid., 45). With Saudi expansion this state of affairs came to an end. The process started when Muhammad Ibn Saud, the prince of the small oasis north of Riyadh called Diria, and Mohammad Ibn Abd Al Wahab, a religious reformer, formed a strategic alliance. This initial alliance proved pivotal for Saudi state formation, and continues to shape state-religion relations in Saudi Arabia until this moment. Why would a particular religious interpretation of Islam, however, find its way in Najd of the eighteenth century and not any other country or territory of the Middle East? Why would a tribal prince endorse such an Islamic interpretation, which may place limits on his power?

The alliance, and its success in establishing the Saudi state, had both domestic as well as external enabling sources that provide us with a theoretical understanding of the relation between religion, identity, and political behaviour. The condition of external indifference that enabled the rise of the Saudi state in the eighteenth century acts also as

a source for the rise of a particular religious interpretation of Islam. The political claim of the Saudi tribal leader and the religious movement of Wahhab was such that if they were to succeed they would necessarily challenge Ottoman power.

Locally, the alliance provided a religious legitimating force for Mohammad Ibn Saud going beyond the tribe and acted as a universal identity for tribal unification. Mohammad Ibn Abd Al Ahab's thought constitutes a religious revival in response to the spiritual decay—polytheism, idolatry, and innovations (*bida*)—prevailing in central Arabia. Born in 1703 in Uyaina, a Najdi oasis, and travelled widely in Arab countries, Wahhab sought to purify Islam from existing manifestations and return it to its fundamentals. His thought, based on Taqi al-Din Ibn Taimiyya, a fourteenth century Hanbali¹⁴ scholar, called for *Tawhid*, or monotheism and rejected all religious forms of *bida*, or innovations, while supporting the excommunication of all Islamic sects that deviate from the fundamentals of Islam (Steinberg 2005).

At any time in the process of state formation and political centralisation, several identities compete, usually at different political levels. In Najd, tribal identities competed with other forms of identity such as religion. While the tribe was the main form of social organisation in Najd, Islam constitutes a higher form of identity, particularly in its ability to unite many tribes and Muslim peoples under its banner. However, the extent to which a religion succeeds in uniting different populations cannot be determined purely by the nature of that religion, rather, by other political and economic factors.

The alliance between Ibn Saud and Ibn Wahhab reflects a choice taken by the former to accommodate the latter. Why would Saud accommodate Wahhab? The first engagement of Wahhabi thought with the political world began when Mohammad Ibn Abd Al Wahhab returned after intensive travelling to the Najdi oasis of Uyaina in 1740. In the beginning, Uthman ibn Hamad ibn Muammar the prince of Uyaina supported the religious agenda of the reformer. However, the rigid interpretation of Islam and its literal application such as the destruction of holy places, stoning of women who committed adultery, and the punishment of those abstaining from prayers, led both to local opposition from the Uyaina religious scholars and, when the news reached other oases, from the Bani Khaled tribe of Ahsa. Ibn Hamad's fear of civil conflict and

¹⁴ Hanbalism is the most rigid interpretation of Islam amongst the four schools of Sunni Islam. Other schools include Hannafism, Shafiism, and Malikism. As a representative of Hanbalism, Ibn Taimiyya rejected all innovations or *bida* and advocated a return to the practices of the *salaf al-salih*, Islam's founders (Vassiliev 2000, 65-70).

disruptions of relations and trade with Ahsa led him to send Wahab to exile (Al-Racheed 2005, 41; Vassiliev 2000, 81).

The Uyaina incident shows both the strength and limits of ideas, religious or secular, in influencing existing power structures. In 1744, Wahhab moved to the small oasis of al-Diriya gaining the support of Mohammad ibn Saud: “Ibn Abd al-Wahhab’s need for military support and the emir’s interest in religious backing led them to unite their efforts, and an alliance was concluded” (Vassiliev 2000, 82). It is clear that Ibn abd al Wahab needed a political/military power to protect and spread his doctrine, however, why would Mohammad Ibn Saud need such religious backing? Madawi al-Rashid observes two weaknesses with the Sauds of Al Diriya that may explain Saud’s accommodation of Abd al Wahab. First, the Sauds lacked a clear tribal origin, which could help knit tribal alliances to protect and expand their power. Belonging to the commercial class did not help in the tribal society of eighteenth century Arabia. And second, the oasis size and low economic surplus constrained Sauds’ ability to fortify and expand their power (Al-Racheed 2005, 39).

Ideas, in particular those that have a political effect as in the ability to influence existing power relations, originate in response to existing material and ideational structures aiming to provide a corrective to existing social relations. Early in the process, ideas provide a reaction against dominant ideas but the extent of their success depends on the ability of their holders to transform them into organised power. The choice of a universal identity, Islam, by Mohammad Ibn Saud answers to his first weakness mentioned above. The political logic in the choice of universal ideologies continues with us until this moment. It acts as a centripetal and justifying means to integrate different tribal or communal groups under one centralised power. These factors form the internal enabling conditions for the rise of Wahhabism in the process of Saudi state formation. Nevertheless, what about Wahhab’s thought on politics?

Guido Steinberg observes that the “lack of organizational complexity of the first Saudi state did not require any elaborate rules” (2005, 16). Although Wahhabi thought did not have a comprehensive theory of politics, Vassiliev observes that “the centre of gravity of the Wahhabi doctrine lay in politics rather than in the social sphere” (2005, 71). Here we need to consider principles in the doctrine that contribute to political centralisation and domination. Of these we can think of *Zakat*, or alms-tax, social obedience, and *jihad*. Wahhabism legitimated the payment of *Zakat* and made it

“obligatory rather than voluntary”. Second, Wahhabism considered social obedience to the ruler as congruent with Islam’s major principles; “mutinies and revolts against the emirs must be punished with infernal tortures.” And third, the perception of non-Wahhabis as polytheists justified war against them; “when the Wahhabis seized an oasis or a town, they destroyed gravestones and monuments at the graves of saints and pious people and burnt books by *ulama* who disagreed with them” (Ibid., 76-78).

These tenets provided the Saudi prince with a powerful legitimating force to expand his power beyond his oasis and tribal sphere into, first, larger parts of Najd and later into the wider the Arabian Peninsula.

5.1.1. Formation and Deformation of the first Saudi States

Using a combination of tools such as coercion, strategic marriages, and Wahhabi ideology, Saud managed to occupy most of Najd in a course of three decades (Niblock 2006, 27-8). One of the early marriages took place when Abd al-Aziz ibn Mohammad ibn Saud married the daughter of Uthman ibn Muammar the prince of Uyaina emirate. Muammar was to lead the forces in the early Saudi battles (Vassiliev 2006, 84). Battling against more powerful emirates required “a practical reason for concentrating first on converting the populations to the new religion line” (Niblock 2006, 28; Vassiliev 2006, 85). Saudi-Wahhabi expansion did not go without resistance from the Bedouin tribes of Najran, Ahsa, and southern Najd who attempted to halt Saudi expansion. Many tribes sought to avoid “exposure to Saudi-Wahhabi raiding and share the loot from raiding others” (Safran 1991, 10). By 1773, Riyadh, the future capital of the Saudi kingdom, was captured by the Saudi-Wahhabi forces and controlling Najd cost 4,000 to 5,000 lives (Vassiliev 2006, 85).

Monopolising power in Najd laid the basis, for the first time, to project power externally. By the 1780s the northern part of Najd was under Saudi-Wahhabi power, permitting further expansion to the predominantly Shiite eastern region of al-Ahsa. After a tough resistance from its inhabitants who refused the Wahhabi doctrine and a series of battles by Bani Khalid, who lost more than 1,000 people, Ahsa fell to Saudi-Wahhabi occupation in 1792. Further expansion took place when Qatar and Bahrain came under Saudi suzerainty (Niblock 2006, 28). The sultan of Muscat was obliged to pay tribute to the Saudis; however, by gaining support from the British, whose presence in the Persian Gulf began to increase, the sultan avoided total Saudi control (Safran 1991, 10-11).

Saudi-Wahhabi expansion continued far north reaching Mesopotamia and, occasionally, as far as Syria after 1801. In 1803, the Shiite city of Karbala was razed when more than 4000 Shiites were killed and Shiite holy shrines were destroyed. Under Saud, the grandson of Mohammad Ibn Saud, the Saudi state expanded westward into Hejaz. In three successive years the Saudi-Wahhabi occupied Taif (1802), Mecca (1803), and Medina (1804) (Niblock 2006, 28). “The effective loss of the holy cities”, however, “was more than the Ottoman sultan could countenance” (Safran 1991, 10).

Although gradually weakening, the Ottoman Empire would not accept defeat in Hejaz and its strategic posts on the Red Sea, while the influence of Wahhabism formed a challenge to its own Hanafism interpretation, which constituted the official school in the Ottoman Empire (Vassiliev 2006, 69). Ottoman failure to contain Saudi power from Iraq led the Ottoman Sultan Selim to appoint Mohammad Ali of Egypt as viceroy for Hejaz, who in 1812 ordered his army to recapture the holy cities and, in alliance with tribes that had deserted the Wahhabis, captured Medina in 1812 and Mecca and Taif in 1813. In 1815, Qassim, the region separating Medina and al-Diriya, was recaptured and al-Diriya fell to Ottoman power in 1818.

This brought the first Saudi state to an end. With the collapse of Saudi monopolisation of power, Ahsa returned to the rule of Bani Khalid and central Arabia returned to “its own tribal enmities” (Safran 1991, 14). In a way, the first Saudi attempt at state formation constitutes the first engagement with international politics of the time revealing the limits placed on a late comer to that arena. The experience, as we shall see below, was to leave effect on strategies followed by Saudi-Wahhabi alliance in the future state. The decline of external neutralisation was manifested in the fact that Saudi state survival was determined by the only external power at the time, the Ottoman Empire. In another way, also relevant for forthcoming developments, the rise of the first Saudi state reflects the activation of certain identities already existing in the cultural foundations of the Ottoman Empire. In this regards, the Wahhabi rebellion constitutes a reaction against ‘Turkicized Islam’: “it was a collision between Arabian statehood and the Ottoman empire.” In the Arabian Peninsula, it formed a Najdi reaction against Hejaz (Vassiliev 2006, 80).

While the first attempt of Saudi state formation shows an aspirant revisionist power, largely unfamiliar with limits placed on it by external structure, attempting to establish power, the second Saudi state, established in 1824 by Turki ibn Abdullah ibn Saud, was limited to Najd and exemplifies a *status quo* power. Scholars observe a

policy of ‘Wahhabism in one country’ rather than a revolutionary policy as that pursued earlier: “Though a faithful Wahhabi,” Turki “was careful not to fan the embers of Wahhabi fanaticism and endeavoured to avoid clashing with Ottoman/Egyptian power in the Hejaz and with the increasingly assertive British power in the Persian Gulf and along its shores” (Safran 1991, 16). Seeking to increase his independence however, Faisal “tried to tempt the British into an alliance with him against Ottoman power” (Ibid.). British interests in keeping the Ottoman Empire intact, nevertheless, and indifference to central Arabia meant that Faisal’s calls were unattended. Intra-Saudi divisions and external limits to expansion, however, brought the second Saudi state to collapse in 1887. This happened when Ibn Rashid, ruler of the autonomous emirate of Hail, captured Riyadh. Abd al-Rahman, son of Faisal, fled to Kuwait.

5.1.2. External Neutralisation and the Emergence of the contemporary Saudi State

We observe from the analysis above the external limits to Saudi state survival in the first two attempts at formation. The process of state formation if it were to succeed required, as a necessary condition, external neutralisation to be sustained. This is especially true if this state formation is to go beyond Najd, where external indifference made the rise of a domestic power there possible in the first place. From the beginning we realise that Saudi-Wahhabi power formed a revisionist force in the Ottoman realm. Many scholars date the beginning of the third Saudi state formation to when Abd al-Aziz—son of Abdel al-Rahman (known, and hereafter, as Ibn Saud)—recaptured Riyadh in 1902. Joseph Kostiner observes however that the nascent state as a “renewed version of a traditional chieftaincy” reflecting a “departure from the chieftaincy phase and the assumption of more state attributes” (Kostiner 1991, 29).¹⁵

As argued above, in studying state formation we are thinking of a process that both progresses and regresses. The social bases of Saudi power—Najdi tribes and the Wahhabi establishment—continued to exist outside Saudi state power. In the emergence of the modern Saudi state we observe, sustained by an external indifference to central Arabia, a continued attempt by the Saudis to regain their lost fortune in Najd. In this

¹⁵ Khoury and Kostiner define chieftaincy as “a relatively homogeneous confederacy by comparison to more organized states, which are higher political forms on the evolutionary scale. ...In chiefdoms the bonds between the chief and society are not necessarily institutionalized... Tribes that became chiefdoms usually had to be comparatively well off; they had to produce a regular surplus.” (Khoury and Kostiner 1991, 8-9)

sense, warring relations among different tribes is a constant situation involving attempts to monopolise power as a precondition in the process of state formation. The choice of 1902 as point of departure to Saudi state formation however is important if we look at the changes in external factors which conditioned, regulated and shaped the domestic dynamics in central Arabia and eventually *carved* the future Saudi state. These form the international dynamics of Saudi state formation.

The major developments in this sphere include an increase in British influence in the Persian Gulf, change in British interests' vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire, and European competition in the build up to WWI. Locally, these changing dynamics required adaptation from certain players and resistance from others. The more intense the regional conflict, the more local players became pivotal. Kuwait began a phase of adaptation by accommodating British interests in the Persian Gulf when in 1899 it signed a secret treaty with Britain making it a suzerain power over the sheikdom. Kuwait became pivotal as a Persian Gulf terminal (Safran 1991, 29) when plans of a Turkish-German railway linking Baghdad and Berlin were being discussed.

As argued above, the emergence of states in the Middle East was made possible when external powers—composing the external structure of power—carved territories in attempts to *neutralise* them *against* their competitors. Competition among the British and Turks made possible the rise of social fields in the gulf principalities and Kuwait. This should not lead us to consider these states as 'foreign inventions' or merely as externally implanted polities. Though external factors determined the emergence of states, domestic struggles provided the basis on which external factors would matter. All agreements between external and domestic powers involved: (1) a guarantee by the external power to recognise the autonomy of a domestic leader, and (2) a guarantee by a domestic power not to sign an agreement with another foreign power, effectively diminishing their foreign relations.

In trying to weigh external and domestic factors in explaining the birth of the Saudi state, Madawi Al-Rashid argues that the British played a crucial role in the rise of Ibn Saud, but, on the other hand she believes the Saudi king was not a British invention (Al-Racheed 2005, 23-4). Struggles in central Arabia continued to exist regardless of external changes however, it was the intensification of external conflicts that made these domestic struggles of value to external powers. During his presence in Kuwait, the young Ibn Saud had acquired a complex understanding of changes in the regional balance of power (Kostiner 1991, 227). Defeat against the Rashidis in 1891 made Abd

al-Rahman and his son Ibn Saud a revisionist force seeking to alter power relations in Najd. In their turn the Kuwaitis had an interest in defeating the Rashidis—an Ottoman ally—and becoming a major power in Arabia using Ibn Saud as a vehicle.

Four years after the capturing Riyadh in 1902 most of Najd had fallen under Ibn Saud's control. In 1920, Ahsa and Asir came under the rule of Ibn Saud, and by 1926 Hejaz surrendered to his power. The domestic developments took place in a regional setting defined by international powers and the decaying Ottoman Empire. Though reflecting the traditional attempts to expand power in central Arabia, Ibn Saud's behaviour was responsive to developments in the regional order, particularly those linked to British interests.

“Hardly anyone noticed” argues David E. Long “when, in 1912, Abd Aziz elevated Najd from an emirate to the Sultanate of Najd and Its Dependencies in recognition of its increased size and importance” (Long 1997, 30). Preserving an interest in keeping the Ottoman Empire intact, the British abstained from supporting revisionist powers in central Arabia. Like Faisal before him, Ibn Saud tried to persuade the British to support his efforts in driving the Turks out of Ahsa.

Ibn Saud sought British assistance during the unsuccessful battle of Bukairiya against the Rashidis and in 1906 Ibn Saud when he agreed to the Trucial System (Safran 1991, 34). A series of British rejections, however, led Ibn Saud to initiate a unilateral attack on Hufuf, the capital city of Ahsa in 1913, in search for booty and of British recognition of his power.

This recognition materialised when Britain altered its Middle East policy during WWI. It had become clear that by the end of the war a competition among the victors—now allies (Russia, France, and Britain)—would ensue over the Middle East. The Russian quest for Constantinople led the British to radically alter their strategy: “In the 100 days between the outbreak of the German war and the outbreak of the Ottoman war Britain had overturned the foreign policy of more than a century by abandoning any commitment to the preservation of the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire” (Fromkin 1991, 142). Precursors to this policy started in the late 19th century when Britain expanded its power to the Persian Gulf basin (Vassiliev 2000, 206-7).

With the intensification of the war, Britain provided assistance to local leaders in a ‘Subvention Policy’ aimed at weakening the Ottoman Empire (Kostiner 1993, 55) while the Ottomans delivered assistance to the Rashidis. The Ottomans tried to neutralise Saudi power in the war by seeking a truce between him and the Rashid is and

recognising Ibn Saud as a 'Turkish Vassal' (Safran 1991, 70). The British, fearing instability in the Persian Gulf, responded to these Turkish acts by signing a treaty with Ibn Saud recognizing him as the 'Ruler of Najd, Ahsa, and its Dependencies', that guaranteed him protection against Turkish assault.

The emergence of external neutralisation came with the rise of a Saudi *role* in regional politics and the beginning of the politics of rentierism. To preserve Saudi power, the British provided Ibn Saud with financial assistance and supplied him with weapons¹⁶ while the Turks supported the Rashidis. The defeat of the Ottoman Empire, however, saw the isolation of the Rashidi state and then its total collapse.

On the Arabian Peninsula several rulers gained British patronage in their quest for independence from the Ottomans. In addition to Mobarak of Kuwait, Ibn Saud, and the al-Idrisi of Asir, the most important for the British was Sheriff Hussein of Hejaz. As a custodian of the Holy cities in Hejaz, Hussein could rally Muslims behind him in a potential confrontation with the Europeans. When Britain altered its Middle East policy, Sheriff Hussein was promised an Arab state under his rule after the Arab Revolt. Arab identity was activated during this period especially after the Young Turk's revolution. France and Britain were seen as vital allies in the creation of an Arab state.

Competition among European powers, nevertheless, made initial promises to Hussein null. The Sykes-Picot agreement signed by France and Britain divided Arab territories among the two victors recognising Hussein merely as the 'King of Hejaz.' According to the agreement, France was to take Lebanon and Syria, while the British would take Iraq, Transjordan and Palestine (Fromkin 1989, 189-192). Sheriff Hussein protested against the agreement and his relations with the British deteriorated further after the Balfour Declaration, which promised the Jewish state in Palestine.

With the end of the war and the emergence of a new political order in the Middle East, British monthly subsidy to Ibn Saud was suspended. Financially weak and refusing to accept Hussein as Caliph in 1924, (Al-Racheed 2005, 75), Ibn Saud directed his energies towards the successful occupation of Hejaz in 1926 (Vassiliev 2000, 259) becoming the 'King of Hejaz and Sultan of Najd'. In the process of Saudi state formation, similar to previous episodes, external powers limited Saudi expansion and determined the borders of the Saudi state. In the first attempt of state formation the Ottomans defined the parameters of Saudi state expansion. In the new regional order, it was France and Britain who set those limits. In 1925, Ibn Saud signed the two

¹⁶ In signing the treaty Ibn Saud received 1000 rifles, £20 000, and a monthly subsidy of £5 000 (Al Racheed 2005, 71 ; Vassiliev 2000, 206)

agreements of Bahra and al-Hada delimiting Najdi borders with Iraq and Jordan respectively (Ibid., 264) . Previous agreements with the British confined Saudi expansion southwards with other gulf sheikhdoms. After a dispute over the oasis of Najran, a war took place between Ibn Saud and Yemen. The Italians, occupying Eritrea and Somalia, feared Saudi expansion to the Bab al-Mandab and intervened in support of the Yemenis. British counterbalance, however, brought the war to an end (Safran 1991, 54-5) leading both parties to sign a treaty demarcating their common border in 1934 (Vassiliev 2000, 286).

In signing the treaty with Yemen, Ibn Saud had concluded the process of Saudi state formation. By 1934, Ibn Saud, now King of Saudi Arabia, had transformed from a revisionist power in the Ottoman Empire to a *status quo* force in the new regional order. This will set Saudi Arabia on path dependent trajectory and define its responses to systemic forces. The ability of Saudi Arabia to reproduce the regional power configuration was enhanced by domestic Saudi power monopolisation. Next, I examine Saudi regime formation and the composition of the Saudi social field, which will contribute to explaining Saudi state survival.

5.2. Constituting the Saudi Social Field: Political Monopolisation and Regime Formation

In examining internal processes of Saudi state formation we will draw a broader picture of the Saudi state, the nature of its regime, and conditions of its survival. In a comparative manner, especially with Iraq as we shall see later, the major element of Saudi state formation is the *congruence* in the timing of political monopolisation with the drawing of the state's borders. In other words, the monopoly mechanism was advanced with the formation of the territorial state in 1932. Why? The section above showed that the Saudi state wasn't externally engineered rather; external indifference to Najd, initially, and later Saudi revisionism coupled with British strategy made domestic attempts at political monopolisation possible. As Vassiliev makes clear:

After the capitulation of the Ottoman empire, there were five independent states in Arabia—Hijaz, Najd, Jabal Shammar, Asir, and Yemen. Their future was to be determined both by the struggle between them (eventually won by the strongest, the emirate Najd) and Britain's policy (Ibid., 247).

Where external factors contributed to the emergence of a field— the context setting where state formation takes place—domestic struggles were shaped by the nature of that

field. This section will aim to define this social field, examine strategies of political monopolisation, and the emerging Saudi regime.

The context in which Saudi political expansion took place was defined by a cultural foundation existing in Arabia composed of two components. The first included the tribal system, which provided the normative context in which the Saudis achieved their conquests. The second component included Islam, particularly Sunni Islam, which defined the religious inclination of most of the population of Arabia. This cultural structure formed the source of Saudi political monopolisation which centred on maintaining the tribal value system and using religion as both a unifier and a pacifier in that process. As such, Saudi political monopolisation developed in harmony with that cultural structure, which formed the social base of Saudi power. This would reflect, as we shall see below, on Saudi political structure.

By the time the third Saudi state formation began, tribes continued to exist as the basic social organisation in Arabia. In the process of Saudi political monopolisation tribes were pivotal as a military force and as a source of Saudi value system (Kostiner 1991, 227). The majority of Ibn Saud's forces came from tribes. Tribes legitimised their conquests utilising the Wahhabi creed. As mentioned above, Wahhabism provided for a revivalist religious doctrine challenging existing religious interpretations and, hence, existing political authorities. A combination of tribal traditional activities with religious zeal made conquest possible. These two factors facilitated the emergence of the *Ikwan* (Brotherhood) movement, which was pivotal for Saudi expansion, especially in Hejaz. The movement emerged in Najd by a member of the Shaikh (Ibn Wahhab's) family, *qadi* (religious scholar and judge) of Riyadh and *qadi* of Ahsa (Vassiliev 2000, 227). Consecrating raids in the name of religion and obeying the leader or *Imam* (spiritual leader), which became Ibn Saud's title¹⁷ after recapturing Riyadh, were important reasons leading Ibn Saud to connect his cause with the movement. Composed of tribal forces, the movement initiated a sedentarisation process leading tribal groups to resign from nomadic life and settle in prearranged locations, called *Hujar* (Kostiner 1991, 230) numbering around 120 in 1929. Encouraged by both Ibn Saud and Najdi *ulama* (Vassiliev 2000, 228-9), the *Ikhwan* movement had three important elements in Ibn Saud's power monopoly: "traditional military prowess, religious fervor, and detachment from restraining official positions" (Kostiner 1991, 231).

¹⁷ To differentiate himself from other tribal leaders, Ibn Saud promoted himself not only as tribal and military leader but also as an *Imam* giving his rule a religious basis. (Al-Rasheed 2005, 95-6)

Similar to the founder of the first Saudi state, Ibn Saud succeeded in diverting the movement's energies to his political causes. After all Islam as an ideology transcended tribal affiliation and provided a universal identity. "The crucial Wahhabi connection," argues Ghassan Salame, "gave the Saudis a supra-tribal ideology to manipulate in their drive to establish a permanent principality, rather than one of those numerous volatile and short-lived tribal confederations" (Salame 1989, 70). Building on the tribal and religious elements of the movement, Ibn Saud strengthened his social base as he was expanding his power in Arabia.

Another strategy enabled by the cultural structure that contributed to Ibn Saud's power is intermarriage of different tribes. Ibn Saud's marrying to families of leading tribes formed blood ties among them and demobilised their warring traditions (Niblock 2006, 33). Marriages, such as those with Al Shaikh and Jilawi families, were crucial in the incorporation in the new regime and for consolidating Saudi power. Al-Rasheed observes that most of Ibn Saud's marriages came after he defeated the tribe (Al-Rasheed 2005, 115). Less influential families were incorporated through financial rents and by serving, at later stages, in the Saudi Arabian National Guards. Kostiner and Teitelbaum argue that "the royal family itself ..became subdivided into kinship groups echoing some of the tribal formations of society....the Saudi leaders accommodated themselves to the prevailing principles of tribal loyalty and identity" (Kostiner and Teitelbaum 2000, 131).

In expanding Saudi power in the kingdom's three regions, coercion was pivotal. In consolidating power, however, Ibn Saud used different forms of incorporation depending on the region he conquered. When Ibn Saud occupied Ahsa in 1913, fearing a Turkish retaliation from the Persian Gulf, he made an agreement with major Shiite scholars guaranteeing their religious freedom in return for their loyalty to him (Al-Rasheed 2005, 70). This was in contradiction with the Wahhabi doctrine, which considered the Shiites as 'rejectionists'. He for instance guaranteed their security by issuing a special ordinance after the fall of Jabal Shammar (Vassiliev 2000, 255). In Asir, Ibn Saud signed an agreement with Hussein Ibn Ali al-Idrissi neutralising the latter's external relations but guaranteeing him the local management of Asir and its tribal affairs (Al-Rasheed 2005, 78).

Similar to mechanism taking place at a macro level, the agreement between Ibn Saud and Idrissi sustained Saud's rule to Asir by mediating this power through the Idrissi. As we shall see, increase in regime strength and autonomy, however will lead

over time to the transfer of power from local or regional powers to direct Saudi rule. Finally, in Hejaz and due to the region's cultural and political evolution, its relatively advanced economy in comparison to Najd, the presence of a business class, and higher forms of socio-economic and political institutionalisation, saw Ibn Saud embarking on a different strategy. Kostiner argues that "in contrast to Western experiences, which drew on mobile urban classes and class struggle as stimulants to centralised government, Saudi state bureaucracy resulted from the expedient practical calculations of the local leader" (Kostiner 1991, 233). Practical calculations of the local leader did mean that Ibn Saud had to incorporate certain social forces in the process of state making. "The king understood", observes Vassiliev, "that he had to take account of the interests of Hijazi nobility" (2000, 269). This however is not very different from early European state formation. European kings, before the rise of mobile urban classes and class struggle, had to cope with different feudal factions, particularly as they prepared for and waged wars. Ibn Saud's occupation of Hejaz led him to the establishment of a *Majlis Shura*, or consultative assembly, made of Hejazi notables. The assembly consisted of Faisal, son of Ibn Saud as a viceroy, four of his advisors, and six Hejazi nobles.

These practical considerations, however, did not go without resistance from the more ideological factions of the Saudi alliance, mainly the Ikhwan movement. As we shall see below, these factions will clash with Saudi interests. Nevertheless, what does this form of political monopolisation tell us about the emerging Saudi regime? And, what are the relations that distinguish this regime with other social groupings?

5.2.1. Political Structure, Regime Nature and the Saudi State

The emerging regime in Saudi Arabia cannot be isolated from the process of state formation discussed above and which led to the emergence of a political structure in the Saudi social field dominated and monopolised by the Saudis. In exploring this regime, we will be able to draw a detailed picture of the Saudi state and its formation. To recapitulate, external neutralisation provided the external conditions for domestic monopolisation of power. Monopolisation of power in the Saudi state was facilitated by the existence of a cultural foundation composed of a tribal system with Islam as its religious value system. Saudi strategy relied on these two components as part of its expansion. Political monopolisation will lay the foundations for the emergence of state institutions and explain Saudi unitary response to systemic forces. These will form the internal and external conditions for Saudi state survival. In this section, I will examine the internal conditions.

In going beyond their tribe, beyond their chieftaincy, beyond Najd, in dominating beyond their immediate circle of power, the Saudis have established a political structure; the basis on which we can talk of a Saudi state. Forms of incorporation in the Saudi case did *not* mean *political* incorporation. Rather, this form of inclusion meant political exclusion. As we shall see below, the ulama and business were able to influence policy making in each of their respective areas however political decision making, especially those affecting Saudi regime and state security and its foreign policies, was monopolised by the monarchy. In this way, the Saudis have maintained political autonomy from other social forces. The institution that maintained this autonomy is the Saudi monarchy. Emerging state institutions were designed by the Saudis to (1) consolidate domination and (2) maintain autonomy.

The Saudi state is an expression of *Saudi* domination over other social organisations in Saudi Arabia, initially the tribes but at a later stage other social forces. The domination reflected the ability of one tribe to form hegemony over others. “It is remarkable” observes Salame that “in a tribal society that one tribe has been able to gain the degree of hegemony attained by the Saudis” (1989, 70). The state is a reflection of this hegemony.

The Saudi state is a reflection of the tribal society which it emerged from. The Saudi drive for domination forms the *agential* condition for state emergence, while both coercion and incorporation as we saw above form the *structural* dimension of state formation. As soon as the power of a tribe, party, or any political force begins to project its power outside itself it enters into structural interaction with other social organisations forming a new sphere. The state comprises this sphere; it is a social relationship. Defining the state as a social relationship tells us little about the nature of this relationship, however as this varies from one case to the other. To understand the Saudi state it is important to define it first and then understand its nature.

Saudi political domination forms the locus of this state. The Saudi state constitutes the political sphere separating the Saudis from other social organisations. It is this *difference* that forms the political structure of the Saudi social field that is monopolised by the Saudis. By Saudi political domination, I mean that the Saudis form the major player in the political structure, as defined above. In the Saudi case, given the cultural structure, political conflict has taken vertical forms more than a horizontal one.

Saudi political domination forms not only the locus of the Saudi state there but also constitutes the structure that keeps different Saudi social forces, including tribes, intact and, increasingly, interdependent. Power in Saudi Arabia gravitates to the centre that is monopolised by the Sauds. Through socio-economic policies and religious legitimating processes of power reproduction, a relation of interdependence emerges. According to the formula here, any change in the nature of the Saudi social forces will affect Saudi domination and lead to a change in the totality of the Saudi state. I will show below that there is constancy in the Saudi case in terms of *political* domination. We will examine in some detail as to how and why this is preserved, and therefore how the Saudi state survives.

5.2.2 The Monarchy, Social Forces and State Institutions: Power Reproduction in Saudi Arabia

To understand the nature of the Saudi regime, its predominance in the Saudi social field, and the totality of the Saudi state, we need to locate the main actor or element that keeps the Saudi state intact by examining: (1) The institution of the Monarchy and the dynamics within it, (2) the relation of the monarchy with the religious establishment, and (3) the relation of the monarchy with different socio-economic forces.

Political monopolisation by the monarchy effectively weakened potential adversaries providing it with an autonomy and capacity to influence other social forces. The emergence of oil income reinforced this autonomy. Increasing socio-economic integration in Saudi Arabia required a change in regime tactics and forms of incorporation and institutionalisation. This incorporation, however, did not alter relations in the political sphere, where the Saudi monarchy remains the dominant actor.

The actor responsible for maintaining and reproducing the Saudi domination is the royal family. This constitutes the sons and grandsons of Ibn Saud and now consists of around 7000 princes dominating the major positions in the security, military and bureaucratic apparatuses (Niblock 2006, 14). Naturally, not all princes possess strong political weight as divisions and power struggles within the family imposes a hierarchy of power. All kings of Saudi Arabia were sons of Ibn Saud who died in 1953. Tim Niblock compares the royal family to that of “a political party in a single-party state” (2006, 28). It forms a “patriarchal elite” (Kostiner and Teitelbaum 2000, 132).

Initially, Ibn Saud refrained from appointing his sons in administrative posts (The exception was the appointment of Saud and Faisal as viceroys of Najd and Hejaz

respectively). However, socio-economic and security threats demanded a sophisticated state machinery of which royals were ready to control. In the formative year the king formed the central figure within the monarchy acting as an *imam*, military commander and supreme executive. These roles were later delegated to different state institutions such as the council of ministers, the royal *diwan*, and ministries of justice and defence, commander of the National Guard, and the *majlis al-shura* (advisory council) (Vassiliev 2000, 436).

Monopolising coercion formed the basis of other monopolisations. The main organs of the security apparatuses involved the two military corps, the National Guard and the Army. The guard had its origins in the White Army and included the remnants of the Ikwani movement. The Army on the other hand is an expansion of Hijazi troops inherited from the Sheriff of Mecca (Champion 2003,72; Salame 1989, 72). Regular troops are tasked with defending the kingdom's borders, while the Guard is charged with the protection of cities and oil wells. In addition to the police, which is an organ of the Interior Ministry, each "local emir-governor had a guard of his own" (Vassiliev 2000, 441)?

These two military branches not only reflect instruments of Saudi domination, but also reflect the power balance within the monarchy. Former Prince, and now King, Abdullah has been in command of the National Guard since 1964, while his half brother Crown Prince Sultan, who has been Minister of Defence for 44 years (Lees 2006, 44), commands the regular army forces (Glosemeyer 2004, 149). The National Guard acts as a countervailing force to the Army reflecting two main factions within the monarchy. First the 'Sudairi Seven', who are the seven sons of Ibn Saud and full brothers from Ibn Saud's wife of Al Sudairi of Najd. In addition to Fahd, Crown Prince Sultan is minister of Defence and Aviation, Turki is his deputy, Naif has been minister of the Interior for 31 years, Salman is governor of Riyadh, Ahmad was vice-governor of Mecca, and Sattam is vice-governor of Riyadh (Vassiliev 2000, 436).

King Abdullah on the other hand forms a counterweight to the Sudairis (Salame 1989, 75). He has no full brothers but has strong tribal backing as a descendent from the powerful Shammar tribe. Abdullah earns the support of the opposition-in-exile who see him as an important force to counterweight the power monopoly of the Sudairis (Glosemeyer 2004, 150). Although several scholars point out the dominance of the Sudairis (Ibid., ; Salame 1989, 75; Niblock 2006, 111), Al-Rasheed observes that since the mid-1990s the regime has generated a five-faction power arrangement (2005, 200):

“the royal family itself is best seen as a headless tribe within which several groups have competing claims to leadership” (Ibid., 188). Of the five circles of power, four come from the Sudairis—Al Fahd, Al Salman, Al Sultan, and Al Nayif—while the fifth is Al Abdullah. Each of these circles has its own family, for example, before his death King Fahd made his son Abd al-Aziz his spokesman in his *diwan*, Nayif appointed his son Muhammad to the post of Deputy Minister of Interior Minister (Ibid., 203), King Abdullah, placed his sons Abdu Aziz and Faisal as his advisors and Mitab as the Assistant Deputy Commander of the National Guard and finally Sultan, the new Crown Prince made his sons Khalid as Deputy Defence Minister and Bandar (the former ambassador to Washington) Head of the newly established National Security Council (Lees 2006, 46).

The major security apparatuses, headed by royals, are composed of social forces loyal to the Saudis. For example, in the Interior Ministry, observes Al-Rasheed, “Nayif’s ministry allocates top positions in the Saudi security forces... to loyal Qassimis and southern Najdis... while low-ranking policemen and intelligence personnel are drawn from impoverished and peripheral tribal groups in the Hijaz, Asir and Najd” (2005, 202). The large size of the royal family makes it possible to install its members in sensitive positions within the security organs (Salame 1989, 76). Members of the National Guard, which benefits “up to a million Saudis by providing income, medical support and education”, come from traditional tribal groupings that are loyal to the Saudi regime. The majority of advisers and high ranking officials surrounding King Abdullah come from Najd and Qassim, “mainly the cities of Unayzah and Burydah” (Al-Rasheed 2005, 205). Similar to the major security posts, the posts of provincial governors are reserved for royal princes and families loyal to the Saudi regime (Vassiliev 2000, 446-7).

The domination of these positions in public institutions like the Army, National Guard, and security apparatuses of the Interior Ministry, have formed a strong basis on which Saudi power is reproduced. No social force in the Saudi social field can counterweight the regime’s coercive powers. In 2007, the Saudi government planned to establish special security forces for the protection of oil wells against possible attacks (*al Riyadh* 2007). This provides one major pillar to understanding Saudi domination and the regime’s autonomy in the Saudi field. The other two pillars form the religious legitimacy and socio-economic bases of power reproduction in Saudi Arabia.

Understanding the role and place of *ulama* and the religious establishment in the Saudi social field and exploring its relation to the Saudi regime raises a few important points. The first is the fact that the Saudi state religious interpretation is based on Wahhabi thought. The monopoly of this interpretation is guaranteed by the regime's monopoly over coercion and, as we shall see shortly, economic resources. Second, this Wahhabi monopoly over religious interpretation in turn reinforces the other two monopolies. Accordingly, the structure of relations between the Saudis and the *ulama* is mutually constitutive, with a boundary separating the two. Where these boundaries have been crossed by one actor a crisis ensued. Several instances, nevertheless, reveal that the political regime had the upper hand in solving the crises. Crises emerged when Wahhabi theory could not provide easy answers to changing socio-economic and political domestic and external environments that the Saudi regime faced in the process of state formation.

Niblock observes that “without the support of the Al Su’ud, Wahhabism would not have gained predominant position within the Islamic framework of the Arabian peninsula, and without the militant support of the Wahhabi movement it is unlikely that the Al Su’ud would have gained territorial control of the peninsula” (Niblock 2006, 29). This entailed a division of labour between Al Saud and the Shaikh family, which are the second most ‘prestigious family’ in the kingdom (Long 1997, 22). While the Saudis have concentrated their power in political, security, and economic spheres, the religious elite focused on justice, education, and religious affairs. Their power to issue *fatwas* (religious rulings) has been pivotal to provide a religious rationale for the regime's political strategies giving them “the capacity to legitimize, or delegitimize, the rule of the Al Saud” (Glosemeyer 2004, 33). Their control over Committees for Encouraging Virtue and Forbidding Vice gave the *ulama* strong power over public morality issues. In 1971, Ibrahim Al Shaikh was appointed minister of justice, giving the family a strong influence in this domain (Vassiliev 2000, 440). The *ulamas* weekly meetings with the king and the ‘core elite’ gave them access to and influence on decision-making processes.¹⁸

Outside their educational and religious domains, the religious elite have in several instances been able to alter government policy as in 1960 when they obliged the government to restrict the introduction of income tax to foreigners. The dethronement of King Saud in 1964 was facilitated by a *fatwa* signed by high-level *ulama* (Vassiliev

¹⁸ “By simply not attending their weekly meetings with the crown prince—and thus threatening to withdraw their support— the religious elite blocked decisions” (Glosemeyer 2004, 152)

2000, 440). In 1950, the *ulama* objected to Ibn Saud's plans to celebrate the 50th anniversary of his capture of Riyadh and the celebration was cancelled. Furthermore, an approval from the *ulama* was required before Western equipment was imported into the kingdom (Niblock 2006, 33).

The *ulamas* access, however, to decision-making and their political and economic dependence on the state, which does not only provide them with their income and with the financial resources to expand their ideology but sustains their monopoly on this field, made them *socialise* in socio-economic and political structures pushing them into pursuing a pragmatic behaviour largely resembling that of the political regime. The regime's relation has fluctuated with the religious elements in the kingdom.

When opposition by the *Ikhwan* intensified against Ibn Saud he was able to divide the religious establishment by supporting the Wahhabi *ulama* of Najd against the *Ikhwan* on one hand and to suppress the movement by coercion on the other. The *Ikhwan's* main objection involved Ibn Saud's relationship with the 'infidel' British, prohibition of trade with Kuwait, the incorporation of the 'schismatics' Shiites of Ahsa and Qatif, and the importation of Western equipment to the Kingdom. A *fatwa*, however, was issued by 15 Riyadh *ulama* accepting some of the objections of the *Ikhwan*, but maintained that it was the Imam (Ibn Saud) who only had the right to proclaim war (Vassiliev 2000, 273-4).

The *ulama's* decision balanced against the *Ikhwan* who had the potential (tribal backing and religious legitimacy) to turn against Ibn Saud. This incident is indicative of the pattern of relations between the Saudi regime and the religious establishment. The main factor that needs to be recapitulated here is that religion does not provide a socio-political formula that is easily applied and which can be easily refuted. Islam, like all religions, is fluid and open to interpretation. This is especially true when it comes to mundane issues of socio-economic, political, and security problems and the ways to solve them. In this regards, *what* is to be interpreted is as important as *who* interprets.

This factor has two implications that are important for the analysis here. First, given that religion is open to interpretation and that certain religious scholars socialise (at the expense of others) in political structures, the religious establishment and religious groups do not form a homogeneous group. This provides the political regime with more power to manoeuvre. Second, this means that the religious elements in a system will produce oppositional groups who are not incorporated by the regime or

disagree with its official interpretation of the doctrine, particularly those calling for a return to the original tenets of the doctrine. A few examples may illustrate the point.

In 1941, American experts began to arrive in Saudi Arabia to develop agricultural and other economic projects. For some scholars, particularly the young Abd al-Aziz ibn Baz, who later became an eminent scholar (Glosemeyer 2004, 155), this meant an intrusion into Muslim holy lands by foreigners. Ibn Saud reaction to ibn Baz's objections was to summon him along with other *ulama* and to explain that these foreign experts were under his control. Gaining the backing of other *ulama*, Ibn Saud jailed and threatened to execute ibn Baz. Later ibn Baz "accepted the argumentation" and submitted to the regime's policy (Steinberg 2005, 25-26).

On 20 November 1979, a group of young Saudi Islamists led by Juhaiman al-Utaiba, who was a Wahhabi hardliner and who claimed that his companion Muhammad ibn Abdullah al-Qahtani was the expected *Mahdi*, captured the Grand Mosque in Mecca and took hundreds of Muslim pilgrims as hostages. The group's campaign threatened the integrity of the Saudi regime as it severely criticized the royal family for its corruption and relations with the 'infidel powers', especially the United States. After a two-week confrontation with Saudi forces, the group was defeated with the assistance of French anti-terrorism forces, and its 63 members were executed in 1980.

Another crisis between the monarchy and the religious elite ensued as a result of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait leading the Saudi government to ask for American support. An endorsement from The Council of Senior Scholars headed by Ibn Baz, however, was crucial to legitimate the act. After an initial refusal, scholars submitted to the regime's political line. In issuing the *fatwa*, Steinberg observes that "the Wahhabi *ulama*'s evolution from guardians of an activist ideology to state servants was completed" (Ibid., 30). As a reward for his crucial cooperation, Ibn Baz was appointed Grand Mufti in 1993 (Glosemeyer 2004, 155) filling a post that was vacant since 1970 (Vassiliev 2000, 440).

The 1990s saw a confrontation between the regime and Islamic forces coming after the end of the Afghanistan war and the return of many Saudi's from there to the kingdom and increased American influence in the Middle East. The ideological persuasions of the Islamic opposition ranged from moderate 'Islam Liberal' calling for reform within an Islamic framework to more conservative factions supporting a return to the fundamentals. At the centre of this spectrum is the *Sahwa* (Awakening), whose intellectual origins go back to the 1970s combining traditional Wahhabi tenets and

modern ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood. The second gulf war, according to Lacroix, politicised these intellectual trends (2005, 35-6). Born in 1950s, the “Awakening Shaikhs..came up with their own agenda—thus challenging the core elite and those parts of the religious elites who legitimized the core elites’s policies” (Glosemeyer 2004, 153).

In 1991, 52 scholars from the *Sahwa* movement, supported by Ibn Baz, presented to King Fahd a petition including their demands for reform followed by an elaborate one in 1992. The demands, which called for respect of human rights and for strengthening of religious institutions, were later published in the Arab media (Ibid., 142-153). The regime considered this “an unforgivable crossing of the line” (Lacroix 2005, 42) leading Ibn Baz and the Council for Senior Scholars to withdraw their support and to the arrest of *Sahwa* activists (Glosemeyer 2004, 153).

The above illustrations reflect the regime’s autonomy in relation to the *ulama*, which is possible because they “were far from a homogeneous group” (Ibid.). As some scholars were incorporated in the regime, others’ opposition was either tolerated or repressed. In 1999, Abd al-Aziz Al Shaikh became Grand Mufti. As opposed to his predecessor, he was less ambitious and followed the regime’s political line. The incidents of September 11 and the war in Afghanistan and Iraq activated the Islamic opposition, leading one scholar to issue a *fatwa* calling for support of Taliban against US forces. This led the government to reaffirm the role of Council of Senior Scholars as the only legal council to issue *fatwas* (Steinberg 2005, 32).

Religious legitimating had a dual effect. In some cases—like the support of Afghan wars against the Soviet Union—*ulamas* political line converged with the regimes interest, as we shall see below. In other cases, as the opposition to US war in Iraq and Afghanistan grew, the regime was able to control the religious elements. In the Israel-Lebanon war of 2006, the Saudi regime’s objection of the war was backed by a non-‘official’ *fatwa* by one of the signatories of the 1992 memorandum and which called upon Muslims not to support the Shiite Islamic movement in its war with Israel (Al-Rasheed 2006). In 2007, the Grand Mufti, Abd al-Aziz Al Shaikh, prohibited *jihād* outside Saudi Arabia, in particular Iraq, arguing that Saudi youth should not be used as tools for external powers. Of the major ‘sins’ of this act, according to the mufti, is the opposition to the ruler’s will (*elaph* 2007). In 2007, the official institute of Scientific Research and *Iftaa* established a website confining *fatwas* issuance to the council based on the teaching of Ibn Baz (Mtair 2007).

Another form of religious opposition came from a different element in the Saudi cultural structure: the Shiites of the Eastern Province. The Saudi regime's strategy towards the Shiites differed from other religious or tribal elements in the Saudi cultural structure.¹⁹ The Shiite community constitutes around 8 percent of the Saudi population and is geographically concentrated in the Eastern Province (Ahsa) with another small community residing around Medina.²⁰ Regime-Shiite relations are centred on: (1) the regime's political strategies to coerce and co-opt opposition in the process of political centralisation, (2) the constraints placed on the regime by the *ulama* and the perception of Sunni majority in the country, and (3) the geographical location of the Shiites in the oil-rich Eastern province.

The relationship developed from the Saudis attempts to incorporate the Shiite in the first phase of state formation to the latter becoming a 'security problem' for the regime with the increase of the emergence of oil in 1950s and 1960s and, especially, after the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. The formation of the Saudi state with its Wahhabi elements shaped the political and cultural developments of the Shiites in Saudi Arabia as opposed to Shiites in other states such as Kuwait (Nakash 2006, 42-43), Lebanon, Bahrain or Iraq. As we saw above, when Ibn Saud annexed Ahsa in 1913 he guaranteed the religious freedom of the Shiites in return for their allegiance. His appointment of Ibn Jilawi as governor of the Eastern Province, however, saw the latter aiming to convert the Shiites to Wahhabism, prohibiting their rituals, and introducing Hanbali law into their legal system. Part of the *Ikhwan's* revolt, discussed above, involved their opposition to the incorporation of the Shiites, which the Riyadh *ulama* had shared. During the crisis, these *ulama*, asked Ibn Saud to send teachers to the Ahsa and Qatif to promote 'true' Islam. Yitzhak Nakash succinctly explains Regime-Shiite relations:

In dealing with the Shi'is, the Al Sa'ud has the backing of the Wahhabi religious establishment. While the Wahhabi *ulama* often pushed the Al Sa'ud to impose restrictions on the Shi'is, the rulers used the "Shi'i question" both to appease the *ulama* on issues relating to the status of minorities and religious freedom and as a means of reducing tension among competing Sunni groups within the Kingdom (Ibid., 46).

Sunni-Shiites differences have stood as a barrier for reconciliation between the two communities in Saudi Arabia leading to "intolerance of the Sunni majority of this

¹⁹ For a comparison in Saudi state response towards tribal and religious opposition groups see (Al-Rasheed and Al-Rasheed 1996, 96-119)

²⁰ We don't have an accurate estimate of the size of the Shiite community in Saudi Arabia, which may range from 275,000 to half a million (Ibid., 109)

Shia enclave in Arabia” (Al-Rasheed and Al-Rasheed 1996, 110). The discovery of oil in 1938 in the Eastern Province further transformed the Shiites into a ‘security problem’ for the regime. The community’s predominance in Ahsa and the refusal of Sunni tribesmen to take menial jobs made the Shiites the backbone of the Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco) until 1979. Oil strikes of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s reflected poor work conditions, sectarian discord, and anti-imperialist ideals. On a sectarian level the strikes reflected the Shiites opposition to Ibn Jilawi calling for his removal. Economically it was a protest against the poor work conditions and finally on a nationalist level the strikes indicated a frustration with the presence of foreign workers and American forces in the Dhahran base (Nakash 2006, 48).

Similar to many minorities who resort to universal ideologies in search for equality with the rest of their compatriots, the Shiites of Saudi Arabia embraced Arab Nationalism, especially during Nasser’s rule in Egypt, and Baathism. Those opposed Wahhabi teachings that discriminated against the community (Al-Rasheed and Al-Rasheed 1996, 111). Here, Nasser’s revisionism on the regional level coincided with the revisionism sought by Shiites in Saudi Arabia. Nasser’s death, however, and the regime’s rejection of such ideologies saw the regime repress all political activity during the 1970s.

The Islamic Revolution in Iran both as a national (independence from US dominance) and religious (ending Shiite political ‘quietism’) revolution provided a new impetus for Saudi Shiites. In 1980, an *intifada* (uprising) in the Eastern Province took place in defiance of the government’s ban on celebrating of the ritual of *Muharam*—the annual commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (Nakash 2006, 5). Sparked by Aramco workers and students, the uprising inaugurated a decade of confrontation with the Saudi regime and marked a shift towards political activism. This started with the founding of the secret The Organisation of Islamic Revolution (OIR), which drew its members from students and workers in the oil industry sector and had coordination and information offices in Tehran.

The Shiites accordingly came under attack from the religious scholars, like Ibn Baz who considered them as ‘infidels’ and banned Muslim dealings with the community (Ibid.) and by Saudi authorities especially the National Guard (Al-Rasheed and Al-Rasheed 1996, 111-2). The publication of the Organisation of Islamic Revolution monthly journal *al-jazeera al-arabiya* (The Arabian Peninsula), on the other hand, sought to expose the regime’s strategies against the Shiite community. By 1990,

however, revolutionary attitudes began to shift towards accommodation. Its leaders, exiled in London and Arab countries, “moved from total rejection of the regime during the time when the movement was ‘revolutionary’ to a call for dialogue with the state” (Ibid., 113). In 1992, the OIR became *al-Haraka al-Islahiya* (The Reform Movement) (Ibrahim 2006). Moving away from revolutionary calls, the movement began to advocate religious freedom, democracy and socio-economic and human rights. In 1993, the Saudi regime announced reconciliation with the leaders of the movement pledging to improve their socio-economic conditions and asked them to return back to the kingdom.

Some observe that the “barrier that long separated Sunnis from Shiites—a barrier reinforced by Saudi official mistrust of the big Iranian neighbour—no longer really exists anywhere else than in people’s minds” Regime reconciliation with the Shiites, the latter’s loss of “demographic preponderance” in the Eastern Province²¹ (Ibid., 37), and economic openness with Iran have altered the regime-Shiite relations. Further two Shiites from the Eastern Province were appointed to the Saudi consultative assembly, while Crown Prince Abdullah and the *ulama* recognised the kingdom’s confessional diversity (Menoret 2005, 36-37).

As I have argued throughout this thesis, developments taking place within states are also shaped by systemic forces too. Saudi-Iranian relations may be determined largely by changes taking place at the regional level. The collapse of Baathist Iraq in 2003, the changing balance of power within Iraq, and increased Iranian influence there has soured Saudi-Iranian relations. Further, Iran’s support of Lebanon’s Hizbullah and Hamas, its strategic alliance with Syria, and its resistance to US strategy in the region have placed the two states at extreme poles. These regional changes have intensified sectarian divides between Sunnis and Shiites in the region, signs of which have been acute in Iraq, Lebanon, and occasionally in Bahrain. What about the domestic factor of reconciliation? Nakash argues that “the 1993 reconciliation was a gesture on the part of the government towards the Shi’i minority, but it did not alter the basic relationship between the Al Sau’d and the Shi’is...indeed the decade leading up to the 2003 war in Iraq, the ruling family, as well as the U.S. administration, continued to view the Shi’is as a security problem” although, he argues, “real threats came from al-Qaida” (Nakash 2006, 132). Away from the domestic and regional power balances, some Neoconservatives elements in the US have argued for the detachment of the Eastern

²¹ This process started as early as 1950s when the Saudi regime settled Sunni tribes in new cities and constructed new ports in Dammam and Khobar in the province (Nakash 2006, 49)

Province or the establishment of ‘Muslim Republic’ to weaken or displace the Saudi regime (for a brief review see Aarts 2004)

We have so far examined the Saudi power monopolisation by focusing on external neutralisation, the monopolisation of coercion, and cultural reproduction. What needs to be examined now is the material structure or the socio-economic foundations of political centralisation. Since oil income is a crucial factor here, two historical periods will be emphasised: the pre-oil era until 1950s and the post-oil period.

The discussion above showed how the Saudi regime incorporated different social forces in each of the kingdom’s regions. The political economy of monopolisation followed a similar trajectory. It is important here to differentiate between the *process* of monopolisation and the political economy of regime survival that came *after* that monopolisation was achieved. Initially, the monarchy had to rely on active socio-economic forces, namely the Hijazi nobility, income from *hajj*, and the British subsidy (terminated in 1917) as sources of income. The oil factor changed the socio-economic formula and increased the regime’s autonomy from the Hijazi nobility leading to the formation of a Najdi class created by and largely dependent on the state. These socio-economic developments did not challenge the political monopoly of the Saudi monarchy.

“It is surprising”, observes Kiren Aziz Chaudhry “that the impetus behind the Saudi process—a quest for taxes and a unified army—matches that of Europe more than that of post-colonial states where the bureaucracy, the tax system, and the military were created by European powers” (1997, 47). This, as argued above, has been a result of external neutralisation reflected in the indifference towards Arabia by external powers. In 1934, Saudi Arabia had four distinct political economies: Ahsa oases where oil was later found, the rich agricultural region of Asir, the arid region of Najd, and the commercially rich Hejaz province. Political monopolisation involved the monopoly of tax collection and the establishment of a central bureaucracy, border erosion between regions, and the creation of a national currency. In this regards, institutional building led to the destruction of three constraining social organisations: the tribal confederations of Najd, the guilds of Jeddah, and later the bigger merchants in Jeddah. These social groups either were eliminated or subdued to the state protection (Menoret 2005, 94).

The stabilisation of state-business relations came after “the successful completion of a rudimentary military and institutional infrastructure” (Chaudry 1997, 45). The financial bases of political domination were driven by the need for revenue to

maintain an expanding army and territory, which in turn generated tax-collecting bureaucratic structures and a standardised currency. Two social factions contributed to the emergence of a common currency—these were the Islamist jurists, who by installing universal Islamic law code replaced regional and tribal laws with a standard law imposed by a state, and the commercial Hijazi elite who saw greater opportunities in the emergence of a national market.

The emergence of a national market and a state bureaucracy came at the price of Hijazi guilds, which formed local monopolies, and tribal elements, which disrupted their nomadic economy (Ibid., 67). Tax collection further generated resistance taking violent means in Najd, Ahsa, and Asir encouraging secessionist movements in many parts of the nascent state. The *Ikhwan's* rebellion involved an opposition to the monarch's objective of tax collection. Before the emergence of oil, most state revenues came from Hejaz. As mentioned above, state institutions emerging after the conquest of Hejaz such as *Majlis al Shura* saw commercial elites there having a strong bargaining power in relation to the Saudis in contrast to other agricultural and tribal regions in the kingdom (Ibid., 70-71).

Nevertheless, similar to the regime's reliance on the Riyadh scholars to weaken the *Ikhwan*, Saudi strategy sought to isolate the guilds and support the merchants in Hejaz. While the guilds refused the enlargement of the market and an end to their monopoly, market entry restrictions, and monopsonies, the import merchants of Jeddah allied with the state earning themselves a place in the *Majlis al Shura*. In 1950, the kingdom issued a unified income tax with exemption being made only to the royal family, security forces, ambassadors, and low-income earners and called upon the Department of Zakaat and Income Tax (DZIT) to execute the law. Tax agencies targeted the commercial sector, foreign enterprises, and imports (Ibid., 77). The influx of oil revenue in the 1950s did not directly alter the fiscal policy of the Saudi regime, although national revenues of oil income increased from \$53 million in 1948 to \$337.7 million in 1960 (Niblock 2006,38).

It was only in the 1970s that Saudi Arabia became a purely rentier economy largely relying on oil revenue. Between 1970 and 1975, GDP grew on an average rate of 13.2 percent largely because of oil revenue which increased from an average of \$500 million a year in the 1960s to a staggering \$48 billion by 1979 (Ibid., 52). The introduction of oil began to turn the tide towards strengthening regime autonomy and led to a change in the social bases of the Saudi state and its institutions.

The Saudi state changed from an extractive state to an allocative or distributive state. “In a mere decade” observes Chaudhry, the regulatory and extractive capabilities of the Saudi state had all but vanished...taxing and regulatory agencies..had been replaced by a larger but functionally narrower distributive bureaucracy that governed the economy solely through the domestic employment of oil revenues” (1997, 140). This provided the regime with the ability to reshape the state-society relations. Directly after the 1973 oil embargo, most taxes on Saudi citizens and fees on residents were eliminated, while foreign companies were exempt from taxes for five years. Most of the DZIT offices throughout the kingdom were closed (Ibid., 145). The financial autonomy of the state meant that it relied less on commercial elites or multinational companies and became the major actor driving Saudi economic development. Put simply, the influx of oil resources made taxation unnecessary.

One major result was that the economic focus in Saudi Arabia shifted from the commercial elite of Hejaz to the economic elite from Riyadh. Royals form the core of the new economic elite (Niblock 2006, 76). This takes place through government procurement by contracting selected clients, representation of foreign companies, land distribution by the king to royal princes or his confidants, and government support for industrial development (Luciani 2005, 150-55). This gave rise to ‘*assabiya* capitalism creating a “predominantly Najdi, bureaucratic-business elites and networks based on family and other personal contacts, and *wasta*” (Champion 2003, 76).

The oil revenue increased the financial and political autonomy of the regime contributing to the monopoly mechanism in Saudi Arabia. The shift augmented the ‘Najdization’ of politics bringing back tribal elements into state society relations. Through oil income and its redistribution (Chaudry 1997, 147), the regime has been able to diffuse socio-economic protest and demands for political change. However, has economic development in Saudi Arabia generated new social forces? First, the emergence of a national bourgeoisie,²² which is estimated to be to be around 500,000 constituting 3-4 percent of the population (Luciani 2005, 165) have hitherto been politically passive but influential in economic issues. With the decline in oil revenue in 1986, the business class showed resistance to certain economic policies. A major socio-political concern for the regime has been the high unemployment, which in 2004 was estimated to be around 15-20 percent (Niblock 2006, 117). This led to the initiation of

²² In the Saudi case the bourgeoisie is the class of owners of capital. As opposed to Europe in where this class was in contraposition to a feudal aristocracy, in Saudi Arabia this class was formed by the Saudi regime as a result of oil rent. For definitions see, (Luciani 1995, 145)

‘Saudisation’ programs aimed to replace foreign workers with Saudi nationals. However, as this strategy contributed to increasing costs on business, opposition from the business class and the effect it left in the economy, the program failed. Given that the state’s economic policies are friendly to private enterprise, the national bourgeoisie has otherwise abstained from direct political activity. There is a mutual dependence between the regime and the bourgeoisie: the state relies on business to offer new economic opportunities, expertise and investment, while business understands the regime strength and hence is hesitant to engage beyond political ‘red-lines’: “The ‘dependent bourgeoisie’ at the highest level remains close to the state and its leadership” (Hertog 2005, 127).

A second factor limiting the political consequences of economic change is migrant labour. The vast modernisation program initiated in the early 1950s required the importation of migrant labour, which grew from 115,000 in 1963 to 1,347,000 in 1979 (Niblock 2006, 54). According to 2003 figures, the kingdom hosts around 5- 6 million foreign workers. Where in other cases workers have been crucial in democratisation processes, in Saudi Arabia workers are politically immobile: “the socio-economic and ethnic/cultural composition of Saudi Arabia’s labour force..meant that there was no grouping which could cohere together, acting as a politicised Saudi working class”.

Finally, due to the large expansion of the bureaucracy in the last six decades a new middle class has emerged. Although, many would consider the middle class to constitute an important vehicle for political change, the middle class in Saudi Arabia was, similar to its business counterpart, dependent on the state, which in 1979 had employed 26 percent of the Saudi labour force (Ibid., 55).

As we can see, the socio-economic structure of Saudi Arabia continues to foster a state-led development, but as opposed to East Asian cases, it is the oil rent—a wealth generated from outside the Saudi economy—that drives this economy. This means that oil rent *demobilises* potential socio-economic forces who could challenge Saudi power, as economic growth did not generate new forces—such as an indigenous working class—or the state does not need to extract tax and hence disrupt its relations with society. This implies that social forces emerging from the material structure haven’t been able to politicise their social agendas and break the Saudi monopoly by making political claims.

5.3. External Factors of State Survival: Reproducing the External Neutralisation

The aim of this section is to examine how Saudi external relations contribute to keeping the Saudi state intact. In the previous sections, I examined how the regime reproduces itself in the face of potential threats emanating from both the cultural and material structures in the Saudi social field. I have showed that the Saudi regime has been able to monopolise the political structure through the cooptation and repression of potential threats. Further, I showed that the introduction of the oil factor into the process of Saudi state formation has strengthened the regime giving it more autonomy in its social field. The monopolisation over coercive power, economic decision making, and religious interpretation of Islam, as we saw above, provided the regime with strong autonomy making it difficult for challengers to revise the system. To understand Saudi state behaviour in the international sphere, the departing point should be this domestic political autonomy. How can we explain Saudi state behaviour using the theoretical framework presented here?

External neutralisation—indifference to the inner politics of Najd—contributed to the indigenous attempts at political centralisation in the Arabian Peninsula. Ottoman-British competition, made Ibn Saud's revisionism attractive for the British. Domestic power monopoly after the emergence of the state system, gave the Saudi regime the power to project itself outside its territory in attempts to preserve its internal domination, becoming a *status quo* state that aims to maintain and reproduce the external neutralisation that made it possible for it to emerge in the first place. Therefore, it is not only external factors that contribute to state or regime survival in Saudi Arabia but also how this regime (agent) is *active* in reproducing the environment (regional structure) it is embedded in. Why and how does this take place?

The Saudi regime, which was the actor behind the emergence of a Saudi realm, seeks above all survival (Gause 2002, 193), of which state survival is a direct consequence. Accordingly, power monopoly at the domestic level is a necessary condition, but not a sufficient one. It is a necessary condition to facilitate another condition which is external neutralisation. The sections above focused on how the Saud's monopolise power internally. In this section, we will look at how it reproduces structures at the regional level. It is these two faces of the Saudi state that explain its survival.

In reproducing the external neutralisation, Saudi Arabia attempted to: (1) counterbalance any actor that seeks to revise the existing order; (2) ally itself to international powers that share the same aim; and (3) to activate cultural components existing at the regional structure to achieve its political ends. This behaviour served to consolidate Saudi power domestically as it reproduced the regional structure. In its turn, the structure, composed of different states, contributed directly (regional and international support) and indirectly to keeping the Saudi regime and, consequently, its territorial state intact.

As we have three levels to deal with, domestic, regional and international it is important to make the following argument. In reproducing the external neutralisation, Saudi Arabia's second most important arena is the regional. It is here where the kingdom attempts to balance two regional powers and thus neutralise their potential effect on the kingdom. The less international powers sought to engage in Middle East politics, the more Saudi Arabia sought to activate this strategy sometimes clashing with international patrons (UK and US). Once again, and similar to the domestic arena, the emergence of oil rent consolidated and strengthened the Saudi regime's survivability but did not determine it. Patterns of Saudi external behaviour would find the regime following the above three strategies *before* the emergence of oil as a factor. The oil factor increased the Saudi capacity to reproduce external structures, especially as we will see below, during the Cold War.

To illustrate these points, I will examine three phases that will see the Saud's balancing against the Hashemite, Nasser, Communism, republican Iraq, and Islamic Iran.

5.3.1. Foreign Policy in Pre-Cold War Period

With the emergence of a state-system in the Middle East, Saudi main concern was a Hashemite encirclement of the kingdom by Jordan and Iraq. This may be viewed as a continuation of the process of state formation when, after driving the Hashemite out of Hejaz and having monopolised power in the Saudi Arabia, the Saudis continued to fear a Hashemite incursion to topple the Saudi regime. An agreement was signed with Britain in 1927 (Treaty of Jeddah) to guarantee that both parties abstain from encroaching against each other (Safran 1991, 59).

The run up to WWII, the ensuing of the war and the decline in the number of pilgrims coming to Mecca made the Saudi regime financially weak and politically

vulnerable internally: “Ibn Saud’s financial anxieties and his basic security concern were one and the same thing” (Ibid., 60). Desperate for financial support, Ibn Saud granted Standard Oil of California (SOCAL) a concession to develop his kingdom’s oil resources, guaranteeing him an annual rent and a loan for the first two years. The outbreak of the war however nearly led to the financial collapse of the regime lead Britain and (under the influence of SOCAL) the US to come to the assistance of Ibn Saud. Diplomatic recognition between the Kingdom and the US took place six months after SOCAL secured a concession from the Saudis. In 1939, US representation extended to an ambassadorial level.

Similar to developments in WWI and the emergence of the third Saudi state, the US entry in WWII made Saudi Arabia important as a strategic partner for the latter “largely from a realisation of the strategic importance of Saudi Arabia’s oil now that the United States had joined the war against Germany, Japan and Italy” (Niblock 2006, 37). In 1943, President Roosevelt stated that ‘the defence of Saudi Arabia is vital to the defence of the United States’. The US accordingly became a major supplier of aid to the Kingdom.

From this time on an interregnum begins in regional politics, which is theoretically telling in regards to Saudi behaviour. The US emerges as a major international player largely replacing Britain and bidding for influence in the Middle East, only to be augmented further with increased Soviet competition there. US replacement of the British in the region was *gradual*. During the interregnum Saudi Arabia sought US protection against the Hashemite alliance and also to balance British influence. In the post-war period, Britain’s influence in the Middle East decreased and, due to domestic opposition, it aimed to grant independence to Iraq and Jordan on one hand and to increase cooperation among Arab states.

In addition to British policy, Transjordan’s Abdullah aimed to integrate Syria, Lebanon and Palestine in his ‘Greater Syria’ scheme, while Faisal of Iraq wanted to establish the ‘Fertile Crescent’ including the above countries and Iraq. For Ibn Saud these schemes threatened his own polity and fear of British neutralisation saw him moving in two directions. He both sought a regional ally to balance the Hashemites and the US to balance Britain. In one way, what Ibn Saud was actively engaged in avoiding was the emergence of a regional hegemon that may end what has been described here as an ‘external neutralisation’ and hence threatening the territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia, a scenario similar to that of the collapse of the first Saudi state. As Safran

contends, “to protect himself against the dangers he perceived, he [Ibn Saud] strove to bring in the United States as a *counterweight* to Britain and as a substitute buttress for the Kingdom’s security” (1991, 63; emphasis added).

The strategy involve regularly calling the US to increase its assistance to the kingdom, arguing that Britain’s policy had “cooled down and its interest had deflected to Iraq and Transjordan” and that a Communist threat was emerging particularly in neighbouring countries. In inter-Arab politics, Saudi Arabia tried to strengthen its relations with King Faruk of Egypt, Syria’s President Shukri al-Kuwatly (overthrown in 1949), and other politicians in Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon (Ibid., 67). All these attempts aimed at weakening Hashemite power.

American strategy to contain Soviet expansion culminated in the 1955 Baghdad Pact, which involved a defence alliance under US patronage including Iran, Pakistan, Britain, Turkey, and Iraq. Against such a backdrop, the Saudis, under King Saud, sought an alliance with Egypt, now ruled by the Arab revisionist regime of Nasser. Fearing that the military assistance to the Hashemites in Iraq would increase their threat to the kingdom, it sought to appeal to Arab masses in Lebanon, Jordan and Syria to woo them against joining the pact.

The Middle East cultural structure—specifically the Arab core—is composed of different cultural elements that may be activated and politicised such as Arab nationalism, Islamism, and national state identities. At this stage, given its political-strategic position, Saudi Arabia “did not hesitate to emulate the tactics used by revolutionary Egypt of appealing to the publics of Iraq, Syria, and Jordan over the heads of their governments and inciting them to disobedience” in addition to “the more congenial methods of discreetly trying to buy off politicians and supporting opposition groups in those countries” (Ibid., 68). Arab National identity was activated.

Saudi Arabia’s alliance with Nasser saw the Saudis support Egyptian-Soviet Arms treaty, reject American Point IV allotment in 1954 to and later ordering the aid mission to leave the country, and inviting an Egyptian military mission to train Saudi forces alongside the American mission. The nature of the two regimes varied however. While Nasser had a revisionist plan for the region including the weakening of British influence by extending his power through appealing to other Arab countries, the Saudis had a more limited and pragmatic aim: to contain Hashemite expansion.

The 1956 Suez crisis and Nasser’s appeal to Arab masses raised Saudi concerns. The blockage of the Suez Canal led to gross loss in revenue for the Saudis. In 1956,

thousands of demonstrators took to the streets when Ibn Saud visited Aramco facilities protesting against “imperialism”. Nasser’s visit in the same year however showed his influence in Saudi politics (Ibid., 67-81). Nasser’s anti-British policy in Yemen and Oman and increased Soviet-Egyptian cooperation further increased Saudi and US fears.

5.3.2. Saudi Behaviour in the Cold War

These Saudi fears led King Saud in 1957 “to try to revitalize the American connection as a security asset against Nasser, to reverse his relationship with the Hashemite monarchs from one of hostility to one of cooperation” (Ibid., 82). The new Saudi strategy fit well with the Eisenhower Doctrine, which sought to contain Soviet influence in the region and more importantly to roll back Nasser’s Soviet-supported Arab nationalist policy. In this regards, Saudi Arabia, given its strategic position and appeal to Muslims in the region and beyond it, became pivotal as a counter-force to Arab Nationalism. The activation of the Islamic identity became pivotal.

We recognise here Saudi Arabia’s role in maintaining the *status quo* fits in with regional international strategies (be it Britain or US) and this tells us more than focusing on the role of oil, Islam or the strong relations with the US. All these factors contribute to understanding Saudi behaviour but do not explain long-term patterns of maintaining external neutralisation. Illustrations from the Cold War are noteworthy. Saudi attempts to draw US support materialised during WWII when Ibn Saud permitted Britain and the US to over-fly his territory. The Dhahran airfield was particularly important as a “staging point” in the event of war with the Soviets (Bronson 2005, 378). The US further had a strategic interest in the flow of cheap oil to contribute to Europe’s reconstruction and to contain Soviet expansion there. Saudi Arabia’s regime identity was attractive to the Americans in their fight against Communism, while the Wahhabi establishment further *limited* the choices of the Saudi regime: alignment with the Soviet would have endangered the regime’s survivability at home.

In this regards, the Saudi regime differed from others in Iraq, Syria or Egypt who had progressive political claims to power. The Hashemite threat was abated given Iraq’s containment in the Baghdad Pact and Jordan neutralised in its own political instability. Increased insecurity within each regime in the Middle East and the vulnerability of the state to external penetration saw different regimes plotting against each other. To end the Egyptian-Syrian union, Saudi Arabia plotted a coup in Syria in

1958. This came a year after Saudi police unveiled a plot to assassinate Saud by Palestinians coming from Egypt (Safran 1991, 84).

The union between Egypt and Syria and the Iraqi coup of 1958 that brought a revisionist regime with Soviet inclinations created security dilemmas for Saudi Arabia. Dealing with Nasser divided the Saudi elite. Similar to today's conflict between US and Iran, the conflict in the 1950s was between the US and Nasser. While today the Iranian-Syrian axis coupled with regime change in Iraq raises fears in Saudi Arabia, in 1958 the Arab union and the Iraqi coup raised similar predicaments. The Saudis abstained from public support of the US and British interventions in Lebanon and Jordan, respectively in 1958. The choice taken by Crown Prince Faisal, who conflicted with King Saud, was to appease Nasser in contradiction with US and British interests. This continued until Egypt and Iraq collided leading the Saudis to pursue an 'independent' Saudi policy based on 'neutralisation and Arab nationalism' (Ibid.,87). Appeasing Nasser came to an end when a coup in Syria ended the union with Egypt.

These regional developments led Saudi Arabia to conclude a treaty with Jordan in 1962 that aimed to buttress both regimes against Egypt and Iraq. In the same year Arab Nationalists carried out a coup in neighbouring Yemen and was that followed with Egyptian paratroopers coming to its support. The coup posed major threats for the Saudi regime which feared that the revolutionary regime would provide a model for domestic dissidents, especially the 'Free Princes' within the monarchy. Egyptian support for the new regime in Yemen and the presence of Egyptian troops there aggravated Saudi fears (Ibid., 94). Saudi support for loyalists under Imam Muhammad al-Badr in northern Yemen saw the country enter into a civil war intermittently until 1970. The war not only reflected Saudi-Egyptian struggle at a regional level but was also part of the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union.

During the crisis, King Hussein of Jordan sent a brigade in support of the Saudis, however, Faisal knew that both Jordanian and Saudi forces cannot match Egyptian forces and that the US would intervene only if Egyptian forces invaded Saudi Arabia²³; this led him to fight the Egyptians by proxy, which was made possible by the increased oil income, and to seek British assistance. Unlike the US, Britain had an interest in constraining Egyptian influence in Yemen to protect its position in Aden. However, American growing disagreement with Nasser led them to join forces and assist Saudi Arabia, under the Operation Hard Surface, which included the deployment

²³ American support came in a 'demonstrative' manner in 1962 when planes based in Dhahran flew over cities to raise the "morale of the population and ostensibly to warn the Egyptians." (Safran 1991, 96)

to the Kingdom of eight fighter aircraft and a command support aircraft (Bronson 2006, 87).

To counterbalance Nasser's pan-Arabism, Faisal aimed to activate Islamism in western-friendly countries in 1965 and 1966, at the time when Nasser was, with Soviet assistance, gravely involved in the Yemeni war (Ibid., 93). In 1960s "Saudi Arabia asserted that the organising principle of regional politics should be Islam, not Arabism, trying to draw into the regional mix friendly non-Arab states like the Shah's Iran and Turkey" (Gause 2002, 198). This came in contrast to the emphasis on Arab Nationalism of the previous phase when the Hashemites constituted the major threat. Another cultural element activated during this time was Saudi patriotism, which was poised against the "menace of the alien Egyptians" (Safran 1991, 98). Saudi efforts were bolstered under President Johnson's administration increasing Nasser's fear of a regional alliance, under the banner of Islam. The 1967 Arab defeat by Israel, however, weakened Egypt's regional ambitions and contributed to ending the Yemen war.

The end of Nasser's pan-Arab strategy gave the Saudis more leverage in regional politics. In addition to the oil income which increased in the 1970s, 'Egypt First' policy under Sadat, which contracted Egypt's role in the Middle East, and Assad's 'realist' strategy, saw Saudi Arabia emerging as the most powerful Arab state. Iraq's domestic instability, as we shall see shortly, further kept it neutralised. These factors not only contributed to neutralising any threat to the Saudi regime, but also gave the Saudis leverage to resist its international patron and to be active in the broader Cold War.

A major challenge for the Saudis in the 1970s was the hurdle represented in the Arab-Israeli conflict and the effect this causes on Saudi image in the Arab and Muslim worlds and, more importantly, its relations with the US. US unequivocal support of Israel led Faisal, given the changing factors stated above, to financially support Syria and Egypt in their war effort against Israel (Ibid., 154). The 1973 Arab-Israeli war, however, saw Saudi Arabia using oil as a weapon hesitantly and only two weeks after the start of the war. Faisal's decision had been determined by two major factors. First to placate Arab opinion and second, given the timing of the decision of the embargo, to attempt once again to affect US policy as the military situation was tilting towards Israel after the US secured an airlift military assistance to Israel. The total destruction of the Arab armies would, as a result of Arab popular dissent, have had negative implications for the Saudis. Had Arab armies achieved a victory or had a ceasefire been successful,

the Kingdom's decision to impose an embargo wouldn't have been taken.²⁴ The disagreement on the war (and its implications) led, according to several observers, to a change in Saudi-US relations, changing from one of dependence to that of interdependence. Safran observes that:

the previous simple client-patron connection gave way to a much more complex relationship of interdependence involving shared as well as divergent interests between the two parties and therefore the potential for adversarial bargaining as well as agreement, antagonism as well as cooperation. (1991, 172)

Among the reasons for such a change include the US reaching its full capacity as an oil producer increasing its dependence on the Kingdom's and the recycling of petrodollars into the US economy. In 1974 alone, the US paid \$1.7 billion for Saudi oil, while \$8.5 billion of Saudi funds flowed into the US (Bronson 2005, 380-1). Accordingly, Gause describes the Kingdom's political-strategic position and its integration in world economy as one of "asymmetric interdependence" (Gause 2002, 198).

Revenues from oil increased Saudi capacity to resist and, in certain areas, challenge the power of international patrons. However, as we saw above, Saudi Arabia challenged British and US interests in its alliance with Nasser against the Hashemites before oil became pivotal. Interdependence between the Saudis and external patrons started as we saw above as early as the formation of the third Saudi state. The role played by Ibn Saud in his quest to monopolise power on the Arab peninsula developed before, and later in tune with, British attempts to weaken the Ottoman Empire. Later, the emergence of the Soviet Union as an actor in the Middle East made the Saudi role in that region pivotal for the US and Britain, as it weakened the Soviet's allies—such as Nasser and other revisionist states.

In the latter half of the Cold War, Saudi behaviour transformed from one of a passive *status quo* power to an active one. Oil income contributed to Saudi efforts to be part of an international strategy confronting Communism in different areas extending beyond the Middle East. These operations extended from Morocco, across Africa and the Middle East eastwards to Asia. Examples include the support of anti-Communist movements in Africa (Congo, Angola) and others closer to home (Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti), financially assisting Egypt to free it from Soviet influence and others in Latin America such as the Contras fighting in Nicaragua.²⁵ In Afghanistan US-Saudi

²⁴ Saudi Arabia had opposed a proposal of a total embargo on the US in the Kuwait conference that took place three days into the war. (see *Ibid.*, 151-171)

²⁵ Bronson (2005, 383) argues that "Saudi Arabia was particularly valuable in areas where Congress was hesitant to fund [foreign operations]." The Iran-Contra involved the Saudis providing around \$32 million

cooperation reached its pinnacle. The entry of Soviet troops to Afghanistan in 1979 to protect its ally there and the increasing of Soviet influence in the Horn of Africa, South Yemen and the Soviet naval influence in the Indian Ocean formed an ‘arc of crisis’ encircling the Gulf (Niblock 2006, 145). American strategy to contain the Soviet’s presence there converged with Saudi fears. Saudi money, which matched that of the US (‘dollar for dollar’), its Islamic Wahhabi guidance, and the encouraging of Saudi fighters to fight in Afghanistan, was able to match and later to defeat Soviet influence there (Coll 2004).²⁶

The Islamic Revolution in Iran, which brought to power an Islamic regime opposed to US, Israel and their allies in the region, saw Saudi-US relations strengthening. As a result of the revolution, the US lost a major ally in the Middle East. From a Saudi perspective, the revolution had major implications on its security and the configuration of regional politics. Once again, regime change in Iran brought a revisionist state that countered Saudi *status quo* strategy. The revolution’s Islamic credentials challenged those of Saudi Arabia, especially in their ability to shape politics in Iraq and other Gulf states while presenting an Islamic alternative in countries like Egypt and Pakistan.

Although the Islamic revolution in Iran created challenges, it also generated opportunities for the Saudis. As we shall see later, while Syria saw Islamic Iran as a revisionist state and as a potential ally against others, its Baathist counterpart in Iraq viewed the revolution as a threat to its domestic dominance. It is here where three major states—Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and US—had an interest to abort the revolution before it consolidates. Saudi Arabia encouraged the US ‘dual containment’ strategy relating to Iraq and Iran: “There was a widespread perception that if Iraq were to suffer defeat, the Kingdom would be the next domino to fall.” Accordingly, during the course of the war, some \$25 billion of Saudi grants and loans were diverted to Iraq (Niblock 2006, 146). The Iranian Revolution motivated the establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1981. During the war, the Kingdom, just as the Baathist regime in Iraq, emphasised Arab identity in the face of ‘Persian threat’, as it was difficult to legitimise support against a Muslim (and Islamist) country. Saudi support for Iraq did not

to the Contras at the request of the White House. The money in question were the profits gained from an international deal involving Iran buying arms secretly from the US through Israel and funded by Saudi Arabia. For details see, Said K. Aburish (1994, 269-270).

²⁶ The US and Saudi Arabia invested more than \$3 billion each in the campaign (Bronson 2005, 383). According to some sources more than 30,000 Saudis joined the anti-Soviet campaign in Afghanistan (Al-Rasheed, 2005, 203)

contradict its support, in another arena, of Syria who supported Iran in its war against Iraq.²⁷ In that way, the Saudis maintained during the 1980s and 1990s a strategy that neutralised any potential hegemon in tune with the strategy of the US.

5.3.3. Saudi External Behaviour in the Post-Cold War

The major change taking place internationally two years after the termination of the Iraq-Iran war was the collapse of the Soviet Union.. For the Saudis, the post-Cold War period brought relief in that the burden of the cold war (war in Yemen, Nasserite threat, instability in Oman, rise of revolutionary regimes, Soviets in Afghanistan, and the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict) has receded. The 1990s saw Saudi Arabia achieving progress in most of its external dilemmas: to cope and balance against revisionist states, seek a settlement in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and to maintain close relations with the US. While Syria (and Lebanon) and the Palestinians have strategically agreed for a settlement with Israel, Iraq was in chaos and under UN sanctions but still acted as a buffer against an Iran.

However, just as the new structure of international politics brought relief to the Saudis, it brought with it new challenges. It was about time for countries exhausted of the Cold War, such as Russia, or because of their own war such, as Iraq and Iran, to rise in quest for influence in the Middle East. Two instances require emphasis here. The first involves Iraq's early resurgence after its war with Iran leading to the second Gulf war. The second involved the collapse of the Iraqi regime under the invasion of the US. On one hand the end of the Cold War diminished to a large extent the external neutralisation that Saudi Arabia, as we saw above, tried to activate. US hegemony in the region placed limits on this external neutralisation and weakened the Saudi ability for resistance. On the other hand, the post-Cold war period did not totally eliminate the Kingdom's regional threats, which made the Kingdom *more* dependent on its international patron, somewhat reversing the 'interdependence' relationship discussed earlier. Iraq in the late 1980s and early 1990s represented such a threat, while Iran after the collapse of Iraq became a threat pushing Saudi Arabia to become more dependent on the US.

²⁷ In the Arab-Israeli political arena, Saudi Arabia as a junior partner of the US in the region, sought to advance peace initiatives, especially after Egypt signed its own treaty with Israel. One example was the Fahd Peace Plan in 1981 and later the Crown Prince Faisal Plan in 2000. For history of these plans and the reasoning behind them, (Kostiner 2005, 352-371).

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990, which directly threatened the kingdom's oil fields "once again threw the United States and Saudi Arabia into each others' arms" (Bronson 2005, 385) when the Saudi government decided to allow more than half a million US troops to be deployed on its territory. Most of the attacks on Iraq through the 1990s were carried out from Saudi territory, while the kingdom contributed \$30 billion out of the \$54 billion war cost. Although the US withdrew its troops from Saudi Arabia after the war keeping 5000 military personnel, the US "was now intimately involved in political and strategic developments in the Gulf region, using Saudi territory and resources to pursue there" (Niblock 2006, 151-2).

In 1994, Saddam Hussein threatened Kuwait again dispatching a division of the Republican Guard, leading the US (36000 ground troops), France, and Britain to send their forces to the support of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. In this round, however, "American force levels inside and around Saudi Arabia rose steadily" (Bronson2005, 387). Iraq, nevertheless, continued to be an obstacle in US strategy in the region. UN sanctions and later the imposing of a no-fly on Iraq's northern and southern zones weakened the Iraqi regime. These changes in Iraq, the new world order, and the September 11 attacks, facilitated US invasion of Iraq on 20 March 2003. Just as the Nasserite revolution in Egypt, the 1958 coup in Iraq, and the Islamic revolution in Iran, the collapse of the Iraqi regime had several security implications for the Saudi regime.

Perceptions of the Iraqi threat not only divided the American administration but also created tension with its Saudi ally. For Saudi Arabia, the *status quo* in Iraq, and between it and Iran, neutralised threats emanating from the Gulf region. On the other hand, the US was beginning to move beyond the dual containment policy in consideration of its energy needs and its place in the post-Cold war international system (Aarts 2005, 416-9). Saudi Arabia, as opposed to its behaviour in the second Gulf war, was reluctant to support US plans to invade Iraq (*BBC Online* 2008). Several scholars have attributed this to the deteriorating relations between the two countries after the attacks of September 11, given that 15 of the 19 hijackers came from Saudi Arabia.²⁸ This fact has been exacerbated by calls within the US to change course with Saudi Arabia or toppling the regime there (Aarts 2005).

²⁸ Bronson, *Understanding US-Saudi Relations*, pp.389-91; In addition to these factors, Niblock argues that relations soured because of Saudi Arabia strategic perception of US military presence in the region and its aim to avoid being "seen as the springboard from which the United States attacked other Muslim countries making the country a target for intensified Islamist anger." *Saudi Arabia*, p.167

However, although most of these factors might explain Saudi reluctance, as the analysis here has unfolded, I am more inclined to argue that the position of Saudi Arabia emanates from its fear that US presence in Iraq might diminish its role, as it would end the external neutralisation that maintains its regime and state. The kingdom, as we saw above, has traded its role (including oil) for maintaining its security. The Saudis might have calculated that US presence (if stable) would decrease their relative power in the region, if not threaten their state directly. American presence in Iraq and the Gulf would diminish Saudi power. Already in 2003, disagreement about Iraq led to US shifting its Combat Air Operations Centre to Qatar (Niblock 2006, 167).²⁹ On the other hand, should American invasion fail, Iraq might succumb into civil war or the majority Shiite would (with Iranian support) rule the country. In both cases, Saudi Arabia wouldn't have been keen on a US invasion of Iraq. Although this might sound hypothetical especially since we lack at the moment any evidence of such perception, the course of Saudi behaviour after the invasion and the collapse of the Iraqi regime is telling.

US failure in Iraq, mainly in stabilising a post-Saddam (democratic) regime and projecting power outside Iraq into Iran and Syria, have once again brought different challenges to Saudi security. The coming of Iraqi Shiites to power, after the failure of more secular and US friendly politicians such as Iyad Allawi, saw the *Dawaa* party on top of the Iraqi government and the country in chaos. US failure meant increased Iranian influence in Iraq, which led Saudi Arabia to face a dilemma: supporting Sunnis there to counterbalance the Shiites (and Iran) meant disabling US strategy in Iraq, while remaining passive as the US is failing meant a handing of Iraq to Iran.³⁰ As F. Gregory Gause III observes “any Saudi effort to establish direct patron-client relations with Arab Sunni groups or factions in Iraq might place them in the very uncomfortable position to supporting people who are killing American” (Gause 2007).

Saudi primary threat came from Iran and accordingly the Saudis, just as US allies in Iraq, fear American withdrawal from Iraq. A quick look at the map would see Iran linking what scholars have considered two ‘arenas’ of Saudi security concerns in the Middle East. Iran with its strong presence in the Gulf, influence in Afghanistan and Iraq, and its alliance with Syria and Hizbullah in Lebanon and Hamas in the occupied

²⁹ Qatar's relations have been sour with Kingdom for over a decade. Al-Jazeera, the Qatar-based Arab satellite channel, has been very critical of the Saudi regime leading the Saudis to establish Al Arabia news channel, which has large audience and sympathises with Saudi policy.

³⁰ Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal announced that because of US strategy “we [Saudi Arabia and US] are handing the whole country [Iraq] over to Iran without reason” (Robert Gibbons 2005).

territories left this country with strong power, not only to disable US strategy in the region but also to weaken Saudi Arabia.

Balancing against this threat became Saudi policy in the Middle East. Although some scholars believe that the “artificial honeymoon is over” (Aarts 2005, 403) between Saudi Arabia and the US, the failure of the latter to isolate Iran, Syria, and their allies have brought the US and Saudi Arabia back to their traditional alliance. Just as the Saudis tried to revitalise their relations with the US in 1957 and to create an Islamic alliance, supported and encouraged by the US, as we saw above, in 2007 the US attempted to create an Arab coalition against the Iranian-Syrian-Hizbullah axis (McElroy 2007). Two cultural elements provided options for the Saudis to activate: Sunnism and Arabism. This time round the Saudis first ventured with the Sunni element, and later, due to the sensitivity of the former, emphasised Arabism.

As we saw above, the Israel-Lebanon war of 2006 saw Saudi Arabia activating the sectarian divide to de-legitimise the Shiite military resistance of Hizbullah. This was followed by remarks from another two states allied to the US: King Abdullah of Jordan who spoke of an emerging ‘Shiite Crescent’ and President Mubarak of Egypt who asked Shiites ‘to be loyal’ to their states. However, the sectarian divide threatened Saudis own Shiite population and other Shiite communities leading them to turn to the safer cultural element of Arabism. Accordingly, US, Saudi Arabia and their allies in the whole region began to speak of a ‘Persian threat’ penetrating the Arab ‘regional system’. Syria along with Hizbullah and Hamas are (at the time of writing) accused of facilitating this penetration. Civil war in the occupied territories and the ongoing conflict in Lebanon are reflections of the current Syrian-Saudi standoff.

Many have considered the current Saudi-Syrian deterioration of relations to be caused by the conflict in Lebanon; however, it would be more appropriate to consider the sour relations a part of the regional struggle between the US and Saudi Arabia and its allies on one hand, and Syria and Iran on the other. At the time of writing, like in the previous century, Saudi Arabia is trying with an international patron (the US) to counterbalance a regional threat (Iran) as it seeks to maintain its security, and hence survival.

Conclusion: Theoretical Implications of the Saudi Case

What does the Saudi case tell us about state survival during late formation? We realise from the analysis above that the two theoretical conditions that explain state survival during late formation—domestic power monopoly and division in regional structure of

power—have been present in causing Saudi state survival. When one (or both) of these conditions was absent, as in the case of the first two Saudi states, we observe Saudi state collapse.

How and why is domestic power monopoly established? We observe in the above case that there is a high level of cultural homogeneity in Saudi Arabia, which has given the agents of monopolisation a strong cultural—religious and tribal—to establish authority. Regime nature in Saudi Arabia reflected the cultural context from which it was born. The regime had tribal ingredients to it that were buttressed by the universal idea of Islam, with its Wahhabi interpretation. Regime formation, in other words, did not go *against* existing socio-cultural structures but through them. Regime nature and formation have, on the other hand, defined possible opposition to the regime, which emanated from tribal forces, Islamic groups, or a mixture of the two. The regime's dealing with these oppositions emanated from its nature—tribal and Islamic—and from its monopoly over means of violence. Timing of regime formation—the monopolisation of violence after World War II—has been crucial in the Saudi case which converged with the emergence of the state system in the Middle East.

The third variable which Saudi Arabia scores high on is the economic resources of a regime. The influx of oil income to Saudi Arabia it was argued throughout this chapter has reinforced Saudi power monopoly over religion and coercion. The oil factor has a strong effect given, as opposed to the Iraq case discussed below, the cultural homogeneity of Saudi Arabia, which does not provide strong basis for opposition political mobilisation. These three factors—cultural homogeneity, regime nature, and economic resources—have contributed to establishing a political structure in a kingdom maintained and monopolised by the Saudis.

What about the second condition of regional division of power? The first variable under this condition is the geographical position of a state. We realise that Saudi Arabia's geographical location and the role it could play in maintaining or revising a status quo has been crucial to understanding not only its state formation but also its survival. The analysis showed the role taken initially by Ibn Saud to weaken the Ottoman Empire and then by Saudi Arabia to maintain the post-Ottoman regional order. Due to its geographical location, Saudi Arabia's socialisation in the state system started early and, as shown above, contributed to its state formation, and later, its survival. As domestic power monopolisation started before the emergence of the state system in the Middle East and as this mechanism was completed with the carving of the region's

borders, the Saudi regime was able to project its power externally to upset any revisions of the regional order.

The third variable—the structure of regional order—contributed to keeping the Saudi state intact. In the theoretical framework presented earlier, I argued that the more a regional structure is divided the more opportunities a late forming has in its quest for survival. In the case of Saudi Arabia, domestic power monopolisation coupled with divisions in regional state system not only contributed to the survival of the Saudi state but also gave it the ability to shape the regional order. As we saw above, in allying itself with *status quo* powers, Saudi Arabia contributed to sustaining the regional system and, as a consequence, its own state. Where the division in regional order contracted, as with the attempt for US hegemony in the 1990s and during the second Iraq war, we saw Saudi Arabia resistant.

The Saudi case, accordingly, satisfies the two conditions proposed as requirements for state survival during late formation. What does this analysis finally tell us about the prospects of Saudi regime and state survival? Economic integration and the fluidity of state ideology with a lack of cultural or material elements with the potential to politicise continue to sustain the Saudi regime at the centre of an increasingly interdependent social field. Business reliance on the state and imported labour shows low prospects from these classes to endanger the regime. Islamic opposition has been influential but the regime was able on several occasions to dilute its power through either incorporation, repression or both. One major threat to the regime's survivability may come from splits from within the monarchy, which in turn can be exploited within Saudi Arabia or by external actors. This prospect might be less likely if a clear succession of power is maintained. The emergence of five circles of power within the monarchy might complicate or disrupt a smooth succession beyond Ibn Saud's sons, who are ageing.

At a regional level, the rise of Iran and with Egypt now attempting to regain its regional position³¹, this would continue to provide opportunities for Saudi Arabia to maintain and activate the external neutralisation. Internationally, the increasing shift towards a multi-polar world with Chinese expansion, Russian resurgence and a European Union (especially France) ready to increase its role in the Middle East would provide the kingdom with increased opportunities to limit its dependence on the United

³¹ Egypt has been trying to increase its influence in 'arenas' that are infiltrated by Iran such as Iraq, the Palestinian territories and Lebanon (*Al-Akhabar* 2008). Especially as the US is loosening its grip in these areas.

States.³² These prospects in regional and international orders may prove crucial for domestic power monopoly in Saudi Arabia and, consequently, state survival there.

What does the above theoretical and historical analysis of state formation in Saudi Arabi tell us about political change in the kingdom? If we account for lateness in state formation and the role of oil in that process, Saudi state formation and future trajectories resemble Elias' description of European state formation. In that trajectory, we would expect to see on the long term increasing political and economic interdependence tied together by the monarchy with power gradually diffusing to other Saudi social forces. Elias describes the process as the following:

The more people are made dependent by the monopoly mechanism, the greater becomes the power of the dependent, not only individually but also collectively, in relation to the one or more monopolists. ...Whether it is a question of land, soldiers or money in any form, the more that is accumulated by an individual, the less easily can it be supervised by this individual, and the more surely he becomes by his very monopoly dependent on increasing numbers of others, the more he becomes dependent on his dependents. ...*The privately owned monopoly in the hands of a single individual or family comes under the control of broader social strata, and transforms itself as the central organ of a state into a public monopoly.*

(2000, 270-1; emphasis added)

To manage the increased flow of oil revenue, to provide jobs for Saudis, to maintain its security, the Saudi regime will have to rely on more and more of its people. In doing so, power relations would shift. The shift in Saudi Arabia is most likely to be slow, and not radical, largely orchestrated by the Saudi regime leading to intended and unintended outcomes.

³² The year 2008 has seen increased economic cooperation between China and Saudi Arabia (see al-Zayani 2008). In the same year Saudi Arabia attempted to increase its ties with Russia, first to influence the latter's relations with Iran and Syria and second to widen its relations with a growing competitor to the US.

Chapter Six

Iraq: State Formation and Deformation

The state is not the reality which stands behind the mask of political practice. It is itself the mask which prevents our seeing political practice as it is. It is, one could almost say, the mind of a mindless world, the purpose of purposeless conditions, the opium of the citizen.

—Phillip Abrams, *Notes on the difficulty of Studying the State*

State Survival in Iraq: The Literature

The nature and causes of Iraqi politics and state formation have attracted a great deal of scholarly attention. Although, few studies, if any, in the literature examine the factors behind the territorial survival of the Iraqi state, many studies focused on the causes behind regime survival, authoritarianism, or political change. As opposed to students of the Saudi case who are beginning to look outside the state to explain regime survival, Iraq's ethnic and sectarian composition and its oil wealth have led several scholars to attribute Iraqi politics to predominantly domestic factors. Further, scholars differ on the appropriate conceptual tools—class, culture, ideology—required to explain Iraqi politics.

Similar to the Saudi case and the Middle East in general, Iraqi politics have been seen in light of political culture and political economy approaches. Culturalist explanations emphasise Iraq's ethnic composition (Kedourie 1992) or the violent nature of its politics (Khalil 1989). Political economy approaches focus on rentier state theory (see Chapter Two) and examine the role of oil revenues in buttressing regime autonomy and strength (Abdullah 2001; Abd al-Jabar 1995; Stork 1982). In addition to oil revenue and the violent means available for successive Iraqi regimes, patrimonialism—the network of patron and client relationships crosscutting Iraqi society—has been crucial to explain state formation in Iraq and state-society relations (Tripp 2000).

Another model focuses on the role of the 'strong' state in destroying civil society in Iraq (see Saad el-Din Ibrahim's introduction in al-Jabar 1995). Still other approaches focus on how successive Iraqi regimes reproduced historical memory to maintain power in the highly diverse Iraqi society (Davis 2004) or through the use of

different discourses (class, Arabism, Islamism or secular) by certain organisations, such as the Baath long before it captured the state (Allawi 1992).

As we can see from the above, most of the studies on Iraq have focused on domestic factors to account for Iraqi politics. Although many scholars account for the role Britain played in creating the Iraqi state, few would extend this analysis to explain state formation and deformation trajectories in Iraq. The domestic-external nexus in the Iraqi case is crucial to understanding the dilemmas this late forming state faces. Shortcomings in this regards have not only limited our understanding of Iraqi politics but also affected how policymaking towards Iraq—as in the removal of the Saddam Hussein regime—have been shaped. Many argued, especially in the build-up to the war on Iraq, that one of Iraq's impediments to political change lie in the nature and violence of its Baathist regime.

This chapter will show that Iraqi state formation shows regularities crosscutting its different regimes and that the Hussein regime differed in its degree of authoritarianism not in the nature of its rule. Based on the two conditions defined for state survival—domestic monopolisation and external neutralisation—and the six accompanying variables explicated earlier, I will argue that problems in achieving the monopoly mechanism at a domestic level have increased with external penetration in Iraq, which in turn increased the security dilemmas of its successive regimes increasing their authoritarian drive and narrowing their power base. The narrower the power base of a regime, the more the state was deformed and the more Iraq's sectarian and ethnic divisions became salient.

Another divide in the literature on Iraq regards the conceptual tools needed to study that case. While, as we saw above, some scholars have examined Iraqi politics by looking at its ethnic and sectarian make-up, others have presented persuasive class analysis (Batatu 1978) on political change there. While class analysis of the Iraqi case has raised several theoretical and empirical questions (Tripp 2000; Slugglett and Slugglett 1991), it was ethno-political analysis that was rejected by many students of Iraqi politics (Davis 2004; Dawood 2003; al-Jabar 2003; Fattah 2003; Slugglett 2001). The collapse of the Baathist regime and the emergence of sectarian-and-ethno politics in Iraq, raised doubts for some on whether ethno-political analysis can be avoided (Stansfield 2007).

Based on the theoretical framework in Chapter Three, section 6.2 will contribute to that debate and argue that the emergence of sectarian and ethnic boundaries in Iraq

has been *gradual*. I will focus on how regime techniques of survival contributed to the politicisation of cultural identities as different political entrepreneurs aimed at activating these identities during the course of their political struggles. By helping us to map Iraqi politics, these cultural boundaries provide a strong basis on which to analyse political dynamics within and between different ethnic and sectarian groups and how these form or deform the Iraqi state. In explaining the conditions of state survival and collapse, this chapter contends that whilst domestic conditions for regime survival are necessary, it is external factors that determine the survival or collapse of the Iraqi regime and territorial state.

6.1. Geographical Position and the Origins of Iraqi State

The state of Iraq is composed of three former Ottoman provinces: Basra in the south, Baghdad in the centre, and Mosul in the north. These provinces came together between 1914 and 1932 to form Iraq. Iraq's geographical location is precursor to explain not only how domestic power was moulded and remoulded over time but also, and more importantly, how this power was projected externally. While, as we saw above, Saudi Arabia emerged under "relative international isolation" (Chaudry 1996, 44), Iraq or Mesopotamia "has been a frontier zone of empires, defined by the rivers that run through it and the desert that surrounds it on the west and south" (Simon and Tejirian 2004, 2). In this regards, Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul resemble Hejaz more than Najd. One exception was the Abbasid Caliphate (750-945 AD), which established Baghdad as its centre giving it the capacity to project power externally (Stansfield 2007, 21).

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries what is now Iraq began to be incorporated into the Ottoman Empire, with Baghdad, Basra and Mosul falling to Ottoman rule in 1534. Charles Tripp succinctly explains the political situation during this time, which also reflects patterns of continuity in Iraqi state formation until our times:

It was here that the Ottoman sultans were extending their own domains during these years and trying to check the ambition of the Safavid shahs of Persia. Imperial and doctrinal rivalries between the Sunni Ottomans and the Shi'i Safavids touched the histories of the peoples of these frontier lands, requiring strategies of accommodation or evasion from their leaders and affecting them in a variety of ways. The political world that resulted was a complex and fragmented one. Centres of power existed in many cases autonomously, interacting under shifting circumstances that gave advantage now to one grouping, now to another, and in which the control of the central Ottoman government in Istanbul gradually diminished. Instead, initiative and power lay with those who

command the forces needed to defeat external and internal challengers alike. (2000, 8)

The three provinces culturally and commercially gravitated in different directions with Mosul looking to Anatolia, Baghdad to the Arab centres in Damascus and Beirut, and Basra to the Persian Gulf (Ibid., 11). Two main Ottoman interests shaped local power structures in these provinces; tax collection and the prevention of Safavid penetration (Stanfield 2007, 24). At the core of the power systems in the three provinces stood the *Mamluk*³³ pashas. The *Mamluks* formed alliances with local networks of power. In the centre and south, major tribal confederations of the Muntafiq, the Khazail, the Zubaid and the Banu Lam and other major tribes such as al-Bu Muhammad and Shammar formed the social base of the *Mamluks*. These tribes “commanded forces that could often prove more than a match for the pashas of Baghdad and Basra”. In the north the local Jalili dynasty formed power autonomy over Mosul and other quasi-independent Kurdish principalities (2000, 9).

The weakening of the Ottoman Empire amidst European expansion to the Middle East, growing resistance in Christian parts of the Balkans, increased European involvement in Mount Lebanon, rise of provincial autonomous powers as in Muhammad Ali Pasha’s Egypt, and, as we saw above, the expansion of the Saudi-Wahhabi power to Hejaz and later to Najaf in Iraq worried Ottoman authorities. The Ottoman ‘defensive modernisation’ saw Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul as important centres of reforms (*Tanzimat*). These geo-political threats led the Ottomans to remould local social structures to suit imperial interests. The reforms involved attempts to extend Ottoman direct rule over peripheral provinces having direct effect on the socio-political structure of Iraq.

Two principal laws shaped the new reforms. The first—Land Law of 1858—reasserted Ottoman state ownership of land and aimed to rationalise agricultural production to increase revenues. The new land tenure granted title deeds to those in possession of land providing them with ownership rights and introducing private property. As a result a new propertied class emerged within the Ottoman regime: “it was now in their interest that the writ of the central state should be in the lands from which they stood to profit.” In addition to their ability to maintain order by controlling their tribes, tribal leaders now became property owners (Ibid., 16-19).

The second law—the Vilayet Law of 1864—aimed to demarcate Ottoman provinces and specified the legal rights and obligations of governing officials with the

³³ The *Mamluks* were Christian boys taken from Georgia and converted to Islam.

populations in their spheres. The fiscal crises that faced Ottoman authorities and the unrest the empire was witnessing in addition to divisions at the core between the Sultan and the Young Ottomans led the latter to pursue a 're-tribalisation' strategy. The new strategy aimed to consign power to tribal leaders given their capacity to establish order and act as adjudicators in tribal deputed. The Young Turks movement brought to an end the universal power of Islam as an ideology guiding the empire and generated ideological responses varying from national identities such as Syrian Nationalism or Lebanese nationalism to universal identities such as Arabism and Islamism.

The systemic developments that made the emergence of the Saudi state possible, shaped the formation of the Iraqi territorial state. The effect left on each emerging state differed, however. Similar to Saudi Arabia, in the provinces of Iraq local demands for autonomy became salient with the emergence of external neutralisation—weakening of Ottoman Empire and the increased British influence. The fate of these demands nevertheless was determined by the competition among European powers, namely by Britain's attempts to carve out a state to protect its interests against its competitors.

As we saw above, British policy towards the Middle East altered during WWI. An outcome of this change saw Britain moving northward to the three Ottoman provinces. Britain's interests "ranged from preventing hostile power from dominating the head of the Persian Gulf and maintaining Baghdad as a key link in the imperial air route to India to the protection of the Persian oil fields" (Dodge 2003, 17). Given Iraq's strategic location, these interests not only carved the boundaries of the current Iraqi state but also shaped local power structures, as we shall see below. This in turn disrupted local attempts to start an indigenous process of state formation, as in the Saudi case. The main player here is Britain, always structured by its competition from other European powers *and* the accommodation and resistance from local ones. According to the analysis here, just as Ibn Saud did not, on his own, 'invent' Saudi Arabia, Britain in its turn didn't 'invent' Iraq. It is the external interactions between European powers operating in an anarchical system that made the Iraq as we now know it possible. Before I show how external forces determined that process, it is important to shed light on the origins and limits of indigenous attempts of state formation.

Systemic developments provided new opportunities for local actors who sought to increase their independence and started a process of adaptation. Similar to Ibn Saud and Sheriff Hussein who sought British support to neutralise Ottoman influence, different social forces representing different cultural and socio-economic interests made

their bids for autonomy. These indigenous claims, which continued to shape political dynamics in Iraq, emanate from the ethnic, sectarian and national elements present in the Iraqi cultural structure: a Kurdish attempt to establish autonomy for the Kurdish people, an ideological attempt by Arabs—both Sunni and Shiite—to form an Arab state, and a Shiite attempt to form an autonomous rule or British protectorate in Basra.

The weakening of Ottoman centralised power led “some Kurds to make a case for Kurdish self-determination, based on a Kurdish linguistic nationalism.” Although the loyalty of many Kurds was oriented towards their clan or religious leaders, “the disintegration of former power centres and the intrusion of Great Britain as the dominant power obliged them to make new calculations about how best to secure the future of their localities” (Tripp 2000, 35-6). In its turn, just as it sought to empower Sheriff Hussein and Ibn Saud in its war with the Ottomans, Britain rallied Kurdish support for the same reasons. The main leader in that rally was Sheikh Mahmoud Barzinji, who had a history of fighting the Turks. During the war, Sheikh Mahmoud negotiated with both the British and Russians “believing that they would support Kurdish autonomy” (Stansfield 2007, 40). Initially, the Kurds welcomed British forces landing in the north, as we shall see below, however British interests did not converge with local ambitions leading to a revolt against the emerging order, against Iraq as a state.

In Basra, the failure of Ottoman reforms including the creation of an institutional framework to represent the cultural plurality in the empire led many to despair. As we saw above, it was as early as 1899 that Britain secured a protectorate for Shaikh Mubarak of Kuwait, and the emerging autonomy of Ibn Saud and others in the Persian Gulf and the Arab Peninsula provided a model for ambitious leaders in Basra to establish a domestic power base for themselves. One of these leaders was Sayyid Talib al-Naqib “who was intent on carving out for himself a virtually unassailable position in Basra” (Tripp 2000, 8). In 1913, he founded the Reform Society of Basra calling for provincial autonomy, for Arab soldiers to defect, and criticised Turkification policies of the Ottoman government. Although, initially agreeing with his requests, the Ottomans reversed their policy amidst local opposition to Sayyid al-Naqib. After the Ottomans ordered his arrest in 1914, al-Naqib asked the British “to make him sheikh or *amir* of Basra under their protection” (Ibid., 26).

Iraqi responses to systemic changes in Baghdad were ambivalent. The founding of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) in Istanbul saw many liberal Arab

intellectuals attracted to a forum through which they can maintain their cultural heritage and voice their political opinions. Initially, political debates in Baghdad focused on reforms within the empire. The CUP coup d'état of 1913 increased the fear of Turkification as the CUP began to show authoritarian tendencies and generated a nationalist sentiment by Arab intellectuals and soldiers in the Ottoman army. This led to the establishment of clubs, newspapers and political movements aimed at preserving and promoting Arab identity. The most important of these movements was the secret *al-Ahd*, which was founded by Arab officers in Istanbul. The movement had branches in the three Ottoman provinces and sought to protect the rights of Arabs within the empire. At this stage members of the movement didn't have a clear political ideology or state project (Ibid., 28-9). When British forces arrived in Baghdad in 1915, members of the movement in the Ottoman army began to defect.

The ethnic, sectarian and ideological responses to systemic changes would further develop when the boundaries of Iraq were drawn and would begin to gravitate towards the emerging regime in Baghdad. However, the point to be made here is that these domestic political claims and ambitions failed to materialise due to the location of Iraq and the high intensity of regional power struggle over that country. In 1914, after the Young Turks coup in Istanbul, Turkey joined the war along with Germany and Austria against Britain, France, and Russia. For Europeans, the old 'Eastern Question' has resurfaced and that Middle East's "post-Ottoman political destinies would be taken in hand by one or more of the European powers" (Fromkin 2004, 136). To be precise it was to be determined by the interaction of European powers. The British were concerned of the German influence on Istanbul with the presence of German advisors there and the construction of Baghdad-Berlin railway: "as the World War I began, Mesopotamia was at the intersection of three declining empires—the Ottoman, the Persian, and the Russian—and was the object of desire of three European empires just reaching their zenith—the British, the French, and the German" (Simon and Tejirian 2004, 9).

Negotiations during the war between France, Britain and Russia had set the framework for which states were to emerge in the region. In the Constantinople Agreement, Russia made a claim to annex Constantinople and the straits of the Bosphorus. As mentioned above, although promises were made to the Arabs under the Sheriff Hussein-McMahon negotiations, secret negotiations were taking place among Britain and France leading to the Sykes-Picot Agreement. In this agreement the British

got Basra and Baghdad and ceded the oil-rich Mosul to France to provide the former “with a shield against Russia. France and Russia would balance one against the other, so that the French Middle East, like the Great Wall of China, would protect British Middle East from attack by the Russian barbarians in the north” (Fromkin 2004, 143). However, the coming to power of the Bolsheviks in Russia and their subsequent withdrawal from WWI led the British to reverse their policy over Mosul and to return it to their sphere of influence—the future state of Iraq. The opportunity rose when France asked for British support against a German rearmament in Europe. In return Britain made claims for Palestine and Mosul (Greun 2004, 118).

The drawing of borders in the Middle East was largely determined by the geopolitical struggles. In the beginning of the war, Britain moved quickly to strengthen its position in the Persian/Arab Gulf by occupying the Fao peninsula and Basra in 1914, Baghdad followed in 1917, and Mosul in 1918. The surrender of the Ottomans in 1918 led to the placing of the Armistice line on the boundary of Mosul (Stansfield 2007, 33-4).

The formal result of this war and the secret agreements accompanying it were announced in the San Remo conference in 1920 where the ‘Mandate for Iraq’ was given to Britain. At least in theory, “the mandate system marked the beginning of the end of a world order organized by European imperialists—by territorial annexation and a domination based notion of cultural and racial superiority” (Dodge 2003, 5). Three formal agreements identified the borders Iraq: Muhammara (1922), the Uqair (1923) and the Baha (1925) identified the border, as we saw above, with Najd; the border with Kuwait was demarcated in 1923 and Treaty of Lusanne (1923) accepting de facto British rule over Mosul in 1925 (Stansfield 2007, 45-6).

6.2. Constituting the Iraqi Social Field

Iraq’s cultural heterogeneity, which is composed of several Islamic sects, ethnic and tribal groups on the one hand and its socio-economic structure on the other leads us to raise the question on how can we map the Iraqi politics to make sense of its complex political reality? Before I describe the Iraqi cultural structure, I will focus in some detail on this question.

In the Saudi case, we realised that under international relative isolation, a tribe was able to monopolise power by defeating other tribes, through war, intermarriage, and by institutionalising a universal idea—Islam. Analysis of the Iraq case has centred on a division of the country into three spheres: Shiites in the South, Sunni in the centre

and Kurds in the north. Several scholars however protest against such divisions. “Largely under the influence of Middle East ‘experts’,” argues Hosham Dawod “a highly simplistic image of Iraqi society has appeared: on the one side, the ‘Sunni Arabs’ supporting the ‘Sunni’ regime of Saddam Hussein, on the other ‘the Shiites’, somehow ‘not quite real Arabs’..in hot opposition, with the Kurds located somewhere else entirely” (2003, 113).

Similarly, Falah A. Jabar observes that “Shi’ism, Shi’is and Shi’ite Islamism figure almost as one and the same thing, as if they were... a homogenous, monolithic sociocultural entity.” Iraqi “reality is far more complex..the tribe, the clan, extended families, urban guilds, status groups, city neighbourhoods and city solidarities all split religious spaces and cut across such totalizing categories as Sunnis, Shi’is or even Kurds” (2003, 33-4). Slugletts further adds that the “notion of the heterogeneity of Iraqi society is another theme that needs further definition and refinement” as “as neither the communities nor the sect constitute homogeneous or monolithic single entities” (quoted in *Ibid.*, 35). Hala Fattah contends that the idea that “Iraq is a new-old nation-state that was “cobbled together” after World War I from different provinces of the Ottoman Empire” is “damaging”. Referring to Iraq’s population according to their sectarian and ethnic belongings led to “keeping the term “Iraqi” in abeyance” (2003, 49; for the debate see Stansfield 2007, Chapter 3).

On the other hand, studying the ‘old social classes’ of Iraq for instance, Hanna Batatu observes the difficulty of using class as a concept accepting “the view that a class need not—and in fact does not—at every point of its historical existence act or feel as a unit...it need not be an organized and self-conscious group” (1978, 7). This is not because class is not a useful social category to study but because it takes time for a social class to develop and consolidate itself as a social force: “The process of the crystallization of a class into a relatively stable, sharply identifiable, and politically conscious social entity, that is, into a “class for itself” is, of course, very complex, and depends on the concrete correlations of circumstances” (*Ibid.*, 8).

Similar to these social categories the state, as argued above, is not born as monolithic social force. Just as social classes take time to crystallise, states in their turn require time to consolidate and this process is not linear as these entities may deform as we shall see in the case of Iraq. Iraq as a state, as this thesis shows, is not a social category, which we can assume to be a coherent entity that behaves in a uniform manner. For that reason, this thesis chooses to use the concept of ‘social fields’ to

describe these spaces on which states form and deform. Accordingly, the utilisation of certain social concepts cannot be divorced from the aim or the problem of particular research. For the purposes of this research, the question is not whether this or that concept is a social category or not, rather it is about the usefulness of certain categories to examine *political* phenomena (state survival). Accordingly, just as this thesis argues that boundaries of states in the Middle East are porous and that the survival of states there is determined by both internal and external factors, I argue here that the second layer or *social sites* to examine in the case of Iraq are the three spheres that divide the country: Shiites, Sunnis, and Kurds (Batatu 1978, 36-43). This will demand the examination of these spheres as social boundaries that form, transform, activate, and deactivate in the course of political struggles (see Chapter Three above).

Like the social field of Iraq as a whole, these social spheres are not social units that behave in a uniform manner. Ottoman Iraq “consisted to no little extent of distinct, self absorbed, feebly interconnected societies” (Batatu 1978, 6). More than a century later, in the post-Saddam era, Stansfield argues that “with a resurrected or rediscovered communal political system dominating Iraqi political life, analyses of Iraq’s political system and social structures that place the emergence and consolidation of a cosmopolitan secular Iraqi nationalism above all other patterns of socio-political organization need to be critically reviewed” (Stansfield 2007, 54).

The period dividing these two distinct epochs is telling to understand the formation and crystallisation of social boundaries. This crystallisation involves attempts to form political domination by the monarchy and post-monarchical regimes—the monopolisation of coercion, universal idea, and economic resources—which generates resistance from oppositional groups. It is these interactions that confine and divide social boundaries (just as an industrialisation process under the dictates of the market increases the ‘antagonism’ between capitalist and worker demarcating their spheres and interests).

In studying state formation, this should not be surprising. Iraq is not peculiar. We shall see that competition takes place within each of the spheres—Shiite, Sunni, and Kurdish—and between them. The absence of state institutions with the ability to incorporate all these different sectarian and ethnic groups meant that regime tactics of survival—attempts to reproduce domination—involved strategies of reproducing certain power balances within these social boundaries to avoid power monopoly within them; a power that could potentially threaten the regime.

In arguing that competition for power takes place within these three spheres, we are thinking of yet other social layers and boundaries that shape and are shaped by political struggles and political entrepreneurs. These could be tribal struggles, struggles among families within these tribes, class conflict, or urban-rural divides. To introduce the complexities of these different social boundaries in the case of Iraq, it is useful to examine the identity of the country's long-term dictator Saddam Hussein. This is important to understand how regime security dilemmas contract the political, which devolves power, and deforms the state. Hussein, for instance, at once belonged to different groups and, as we shall see, power circles ranging from his Albu Khattab family, which belongs to the Beijat clan, which in turn is part of the Albu Nasr tribe, which is one of the Takriti tribes that is also part of the 'Sunni triangle'³⁴ where major tribes such as Dulaim, Shammar, Ubayd or Jubur have strong influence, and which also forms part of the Arab population of Iraq (as opposed to its Kurdish part) and which, at least according to Baathist ideology, is a region (*qutr*) of the Arab world.³⁵

All these social boundaries and, hence relations, were activated at one stage or another in the process of domination and resistance.³⁶ As argued above and for analytical purposes, these structures will be treated as latent. The activation and deactivation of these identities is determined by political struggles. Before we examine regime formation in Iraq and sources of resistance to it, we need to describe these three broad categories that form the three social sites in Iraq. I start with the Shiites.

The Shiites form the majority of the Iraqi population and are geographically reside in all the provinces to the south of Baghdad which are: Kut, Hilla, Karbala, Diwaniya, Mutafiq, Amara and Basra. All these provinces, which are mostly ethnically Arab, fall around or between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. In Basra and Nasiriya there are Sunni minorities. Karbala and Najaf have important symbolic meaning for the Shiites. It was in Karbala where Hussein, son of Ali and grand son of the prophet was killed (and is buried) by Yazid's forces of the Umayyad caliphate in 680 starting a schism between Sunnis and Shiites in Islam and in Najaf where Ali is buried.

Although ruled by Sunni-dominated governments such as the Ottomans (1534-1917), these regions maintained the Shiite character thanks to the sanctuaries in Najaf

³⁴ What came to be known as the 'Sunni Triangle' forms the area inhabited mostly by Sunni Arabs ranging from near Baghdad on the eastern side of the triangle, Ramadi on the west side and Tikrit on the north side.

³⁵ The analysis on Hussein's multiple identities is based on (Jabar 2003b) and (Dawood 2003).

³⁶ The "activation of a boundary consists of its becoming more salient as an organizer of social relations on either side of it, of social relations across it, or of shared representation on either side. Deactivation consists of a decline in that boundary's salience" (Tilly 2003, 144; see Chapter Three).

and Karbala and to the religious schools (*Hawzas*) there that developed Shiism as theological thought and Jaafari School of Law, which wasn't recognised by the Ottoman authorities. These schools played and continue to play an important role in defining the Shiite identity. It is this historical background that sets the frame to understand the emergence of social sites and social boundaries. In the emerging state, in the new social field, the way Shiites will respond to new political realities reflects their multiple identities—Arab, Iraqi, and Shiite—and the multiple authorities within their sect.

The vast majority of Sunnis inhabit the Arab area of the Euphrates above Baghdad and the Tigris between Mosul and Baghdad. As opposed to the Shiites of Iraq, Sunnis have been the politically dominant ruling group regardless of which social class came to represent this dominance (Anderson and Stansfield 2004, 139). Although the Sunnis represent a minority in Iraq, their majority status in the Arab and Muslim worlds have shaped their political perception. The focus on Arab identity, at least as successive regimes in Iraq constructed it, helped buttress the position of the regime by relying on the Sunni base, weakening the Shiites and restraining the Kurds: “the association of Sunnis,” argue Anderson and Stansfield, “with governance and Shi'a with disenfranchisement later became an institutionalised feature of the political psyche of the population” (Ibid., 142).

The Kurds are the second major ethnic group who inhabit the landlocked mountainous regions in the north and northeast of Iraq and are in their majority (75%) non-Arab Sunnis. The population of Kurds in the Middle East is around 25 million and the division of the region into states left this community dispersed in Iraq (5million), Turkey (12million), Iran (6million), Syria (1million) and in former Soviet republics (1million) (Ibid, 159).

Kurdish presence in mountainous regions contributed to maintain their cultural and linguistic identity. Like their Arab counterparts, the major social unit that organised Kurdish social life was the tribe. Under the influence of external forces and modernisation, the two major urban cities of Irbil and Suleimaniya generated political parties who politicized the national aspirations of the Kurds. It is these cultural, geographical and political backgrounds (usually taking place within the social boundary separating the Kurds) that form the relationship of this group with other communities in Iraq. In the nascent Iraqi state, the Kurds, like the Shiites, constitute the group that is always in a state of “revolt” (Gunter 1992).

6.2.1. External Regime formation and Indigenous Resistance

The British occupation of Iraq generated both ambivalent and conscious responses from different sectors of Iraqi people. For instance, while the leading figures and merchants of Basra quietly accommodated British occupation, their counterparts in the mid and lower Euphrates had ambivalent response; some accepted the Ottoman declaration of war against the British but others like Ayatollah Kazim Yazdi declined to endorse it. In Baghdad, while some members of the leading families remained quiet, the *Al-Ahd* movement began to desert from the Ottoman army. This situation intensified when Amir Faisal, son Sherrif Hussein, entered Damascus as part of the allied forces against Ottoman power. In Kurdish territories, the British were initially welcomed, as mentioned above, until British goals diverged from the autonomy-seeking Kurdish elements.

These ambivalent responses were met by the British—like subsequent regimes in Iraq—with either cooptation or violent repression. In 1918, after Britain's occupation of Najaf and Karbala, the Society of Islamic Revival including notables and religious scholars called for defending Islam against occupiers (Ibid., 33-34). The 1920 San Remo resolution to grant Britain mandate power over Iraq resulted in a wide-spread rebellion, which came to be called the 1920 Revolt. Wrongly called *thawra* (revolution) in Arabic, the revolt was an uprising of different sectors of Iraqi society against the newly imposed British political order.

The revolt exemplifies the path the Iraqi will pursue: attempts to construct a political order are opposed from different Iraqi forces leading to a regime repression conditioned by Iraq's geopolitical location. Triggered by the British arrest of Ayatollah al-Shirazi's son, the revolt invited religious and tribal elements and by July most of the mid Euphrates region was in the hands of the rebels (Ibid., 43). The rebellion later spread to other regions of Iraq enrolling the *Al Ahd* (Stansfield 2007, 41) and the Kurds who captured several towns on the Persian border without any coordination with their Arab counterparts. There were “three interrelated cores to the revolt, these being Arab nationalist, a Shi'i *ulama*-led component and disaffected tribal groupings” (Ibid., 42). The revolt reflects not only lack of coordination between the 'cores' but also the blurred boundaries of the spheres. Lasting for four months and costing the lives of 6,000 Iraqis and 500 British and Indian soldiers, the revolt was a precursor of locally perceived resistance to an emerging political order.

The Shiite driven revolt did not only threaten British control in Iraq but also raised fears of Sunni notables in Baghdad, Al Kut and Amara: “They and their extensive landholdings had been recognised by the British authorities and they were clearly unwilling to place these gains in jeopardy” (Tripp 2000, 44). The British eventually suppressed the revolt using the Royal Air Force to bomb rebellious regions bringing it to an end by October 1920.

The short-term effect of the revolt meant that the British had—like their American counterparts decades later—to revise their position in Iraq terminating the military administration and establishing a Council of the State presided by Abd al-Rahman al-Kaylani. The Cairo conference in 1921 set the “three pillars” of the Iraqi state: the monarchy, Anglo-Iraqi treaty, and the Iraqi constitution (Marr 2004). King Faisal was installed as king of Iraq. Lacking an Iraqi constituency, Faisal relied on a group of Sharifians. As opposed to Ibn Saud who had a social base to support his regime, Faisal was largely resisted by Iraqi society. As an Arab, the Kurds were unconvinced by Faisal, and as the Sunni, he wasn’t attractive for many Shiites. Further, Sunni *sayyids* saw him as an outsider who came to meddle in their affairs. The monarchic regime had to base its rule on Arab nationalists and ex-Ottoman army who were predominantly Sunni (Stansfield 2007, 45).

One of the major outcomes of World War I in the Middle East was its reorganisation into territorial states. By 1925 an Iraqi social field was born incorporating the three provinces of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra and structuring political dynamics within it and orientating them towards a new centre in Baghdad. This triggered a process of state formation. In different cycles of domination and resistance, identities were activated and deactivated, institutions constructed and deconstructed and the state formed and deformed. To comprehend these processes, I will first examine the constitution of that field looking at its cultural structure and its material and political structures in light of regime formation, domination and resistance in the following section.

In Iraq, the cultural structure includes multiple ethnic, religious, tribal and sectarian identities. There exist four major ethnic groups: Arabs, Kurds, Assyrians and Turkmen; three religious groups: Muslims, Christians, and Jews; and two major sectarian groups: Shiites and Sunnites. With establishment of the state, 56 percent of the population were Shiites, 36 percent were Sunnites, and 8 percent were non-Muslims.

Approximately 25 percent of the population was Kurdish (Anderson and Stansfield 2004, 143).

Where political monopolisation in Saudi Arabia took place in relative international isolation and where regime formation coincided with the emergence of state boundaries in Iraq, the external engineering of state boundaries and the repression of indigenous attempts for state making saw a regime forming as an *extension* of that engineering. Three dimensions need to be clarified here; first, the emergence of a boundary—a social field, second, British regime formation, and third indigenous accommodation and resistance to the boundary and regime formations. In the new social field, “the Iraqi state became a new centre of gravity, setting up or reinforcing the structures that would shape a distinctive Iraqi politics” (2000, 30). This new centre of gravity began to attract forces to it as it sought to generate power across the field.

The British instalment of Amir Faisal served three main goals. First having participated in the aborted Arab Revolt during the war he enjoyed legitimacy at least in the eyes of the Arabs, second he had good relations with Britain and finally, “he was available following his unceremonious eviction from the abortive Syrian Kingdom by the French” (Anderson and Stansfield 2004, 14). Additionally, given that the appointed king lacked a constituency of his own, he “appeared open to British manipulation” (Dodge 2003, 19).

Like all subsequent regimes in Iraq, in attempting to consolidate its power and to portray an image of a patron state, the monarchy engaged in political struggles that threatened its domination. These struggles reinforced existing structures and laid the foundations for continuous attempts to reconstruct the state by different Iraqi factions. The main player however remained the British. To increase the king’s legitimacy a plebiscite was arranged in 1921 showing the king having the unrealistic support of 96 percent of the Iraqi population.

Although according to the British-drafted constitution, the king had the powers to appoint cabinet members, dismiss parliament, approve laws, and call for elections, in reality the British were the final arbitrators. The 1921 Anglo-Iraqi treaty assigned the British a decisive role in the financial, security, and foreign relations of Iraq (Tripp 2000, 53). In aiming to buttress his power, Faisal was at the crossroads of internal opposition and external restraints emanating from British geopolitical considerations. The two sources which could have augmented Faisal’s powers—anti-British feelings

and Arab Nationalism—contradicted Britain’s interests (Anderson and Stansfield 2004, 17).

British occupation and the Anglo-Iraqi treaty generated strong Iraqi opposition, which became salient in Shiite areas of the south and mid-Euphrates region. The Shiites main worry was that the treaty would legitimate British control and consolidate a regime they formed no part of. In 1923, religious scholars issued *fatwas* against participation in the elections. Other Shiite elements working in political parties such as the Watani (Patriotic) Party and the Nahda (Awakening) Party, accommodated the new order and aimed to pursue strategies that reflect the new Iraq (Tripp 2000, 54-5). These reflected the balance of forces existing within this sphere and what political entrepreneurs perceived as the most viable strategy to pursue given the new political opportunities.

Although King Faisal had his reservations over the treaty, he felt threatened by Shiite religious opposition. The survival strategy of the king involved the arrest and exiling of Ayatollah al-Khalisi³⁷ and also aimed, like all future regimes in Iraq, to *demonopolise* power emanating from the Shiite sphere. This was facilitated by the British re-tribalisation strategy that aimed to ensure the representation of tribal leaders in parliament: the “powerful seduction of the state, with its position, patronage, and resources” contributed to isolating the *Hawza* (Tripp 2000, 57). The British policy however reinforced tribal organisations that maintained arms and weakened state attempts to recruit tribesmen for the military (Davis 2005, 60). Other potential political competitors to the *Hawza* included lay and secular politicians and activists who would later contribute to Arab nationalist and communist movements.

Sunni political activists had reservations over the treaty but “felt alienated by the overt Shi’i discourse emanating from the *mujtahidis* and preferred the establishment of a secular state, with strong Arab nationalist credentials, which could even exist under temporary British control” (Stansfield 2007, 48). Sunni fears were further aggravated when Turkey made claims to Mosul. After a Turkish incursion into Kurdish areas, the British decided to release Sheikh Mahmud Barzinji to contain Turkish influence. It is important to remember that the Kurds enjoyed two years of autonomy (1918-1920) before this was suppressed by British power. To encourage Sheikh Mahmud, the Kurds were promised a provisional government in Kurdish regions. From a British

³⁷ Khalisi’s deportation was made under the pretext of an amendment of a law of immigration, which differentiated between those who had Ottoman nationality before 1924 and others who held Iranian nationality including many Arab Shiites who aimed to escape taxation and conscription in the Ottoman army (Nakash 2006, 86).

perspective, in addition to the oil potential of Mosul, the mountainous regions of northern Iraq provided a topographic defence against a potential Turkish or Russian intrusion (Ibid., 46). From the Iraqi regime's perspective, the loss of Mosul would mean a state with an overwhelming Shiite majority that would threaten the integrity of the existing regime (Tripp 2000, 55). After it became clear that Sheikh Mahmud was preparing for a genuinely independent Kurdistan however, the British using the RAF repressed this possibility and by 1924 Iraqi forces occupied Suleimaniya and Sheikh Mahmud fled to the Persian border.

The combination of domestic monopoly attempted by the regime and regional position of the state kept Iraq intact in the initial period of its formation. The British ability to use coercive power—made possible with an indigenous 5000 strong army of Assyrians and the RAF (Anderson and Stansfield 2004, 16)³⁸—on several occasions curbed any attempts at revisionisms in Iraq. Britain faced, nevertheless, dilemmas that handicap states during late formation. Anderson and Stansfield observe that the “extensive British use of chemical weapons against rebellious Kurdish tribes during the 1920s provided the model for the *Anfal* campaign” (2004, 23). The 1918 rebellion in Najaf, which led to the assassination of a British officer, led to the siege of the city for six weeks, the execution of 11 people and the deportation of 123 to India (Nakash 2006, 75). In 1922, when it became apparent for the British that Faisal was trying to appease anti-British activists, Percy Cox, the British High Commissioner, decided to arrest the nationalists, ban newspapers and political parties, and suspend state institutions in 1922. Dodge observes the British dilemma:

During the war and its aftermath the British saw the nationalist movement as a positive tool to deploy against the Ottoman Empire ... But as the movement grew in power and its demands increasingly constrained the ability of the British to act ... tensions between control and devolutions at the core of the British approach to Iraq...By his actions..the High Commissioner threatened to alienate the very people to whom power was to be devolved and to undermine the institutions that were supposed to assure the viability of Iraqi sovereignty. (2003, 22-23)

This dilemma (regime control versus political incorporation) would face subsequent Iraqi regimes and the US in the post-occupation period and acts as the cornerstone of Iraqi political dynamics. In these dynamics we will first observe an expansion of the political structure that provides new opportunities for different forces to make political claims. Second, these claims are made against a regime which keeps

³⁸ The Assyrians became a part of the Iraq Levies, which was a unit organised within the British army to guard military facilities (Davis 2005, 61).

the structure intact and which begins to form its own strategies of survival. Third, at the core of this regime we observe intra-elite struggles for power leading to the use of coercion as a political tool with the military taking a pivotal role. Fourth, these struggles lead to the contraction of the political structure, resembling the Saudi regime, which alienates different Iraqi forces and exacerbates state deformation.

The main divisions in Iraqi politics centred on state identity, state role in economic development, and the relations with the British. Two contending visions relating to the nature and identity of the Iraqi state shaped political struggles in Iraq. The first vision emphasises Iraq's pan-Arab identity, accentuates Iraq's Arab past predating the Islamic empires and stresses the glories of the Abbasid Empire. The political implications of this view lie in considering Iraq to be but an integrated part of the Arab world—its 'eastern flank'—and form the basis of Arab Nationalist ideologies, which be predominant in republican Iraq. The second vision emphasised Iraq's nationalist characteristics (dating those to the Mesopotamian times) and the modern Iraqi nation based on the current political boundaries, without necessarily rejecting Iraq's Arab past (Davis 2005, 13).

Although both Sunnis and Shiites debated these visions, broadly speaking Sunnis support pan-Arabism, which integrates them to Sunni majority in the Arab world, balancing against their minority status in Iraq. The Shiites initial vision as advocated by Shiite religious scholars in the 1920s was to establish an independent Iraq with an Islamic government. This vision contested with the Hashemite plan for an Arab state including Jordan, Syria and Lebanon (Nakash 2006, 73). That said however, the Shiites, depending on existing political opportunities and constraints, supported political trends fluctuating between these two visions. While some supported (secular) Arab nationalist trends in the aim of assuaging the Sunni-Shiite divide in which they formed a subordinate part³⁹, others were attracted to the Iraqi nationalist vision and backed the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP). In the late 1950s Shiite political parties with a religious agenda begin to emerge.

As for the Kurds, the choice was limited to an Iraqi nationalist vision as this put them on par with their Arab compatriots. The aim of establishing their own state, however, continued to shape the politics of the Kurdish national movement leading, as we shall see shortly, to conflicts with Baghdad. But in choosing between the two visions, the Iraqi vision fitted more with the non-Arab community.

³⁹ The Shiites as will be shown below were among the founders of the Baath party (Nakash 2006, 83).

Unlike Saudi Arabia, whose universal idea of Islam contributed to the monopolisation process there, in Iraq these different political identities have constrained the monopoly mechanism creating security dilemmas not only between different communities but also intra-elite struggles among the Sunni-dominated state. In Iraq, each regime initiates its power by portraying an *image* of an omnipresent state that aims to incorporate and represent all its warring factions. However, as the new regime aims to survive in power it enters into struggles that endanger this image opening the way for bids for power by other actors who come to reconstruct the state using their own vision of history and establishing their networks of patronage. The trend that we need to pay attention to here is the process of monopolising coercion, especially as this a precondition for political survival. Let's examine these dilemmas.

The British-installed regime (and its clients) aimed to augment its power through the acquiring and granting of lands creating a patronage system where “the organs of the state were dominated by men whose prime interest was increasing the yield of their landholdings” (Tripp 2000, 69). The Land Settlement Law of 1932 strengthened the powers of the landlords, who avoided paying taxes. The image of a constitutional state that tolerates political activity, on the other hand, led in the initial period to the expansion of the political structure with the emergence of different political parties, professional associations, and numerous publications reflecting different political trends (Davies 2005, 72-3). One example is the inter-sectarian *Hizb al-Ikha al-Watani* (Brotherhood Patriotic Party), which brought together Yassin Hashimi, who drew his support from the Sunni community and Ja'afar Abu al-Timma, whose main support came from urban Shiites (Tripp 2000, 70) . The party formed an opposition to the government of pro-monarchy and pro-British Nuri al Sa'id, who dominated parliament.

We realise here that when the rules of the game are set in place, the sectarian divide becomes less salient as actors attempt to exploit existing channels to make their political claims. However, these conditions change when *status quo* factions are threatened. As the “independence” of Iraq approached in 1932, political claims intensified. In Kurdish areas the forces of Sheikh Ahmad of Barzan forced the Iraqi army out of the area leading Nuri al-Sa'id to seek the support of the RAF to hunt down the rebels. The Assyrians fearing that their British connection might endanger their survival sought British protection. British assurances, however, did not prevent the campaign led by General Baqr Sidqi, commander of the northern region, which

systemically massacred hundreds of Assyrian villagers (Anderson and Stansfield 2004, 25).

In 1933, King Faisal attempted to form a consensual government including in its ranks members of the *Ikha* Party and Nuri al-Sa'id. By incorporating the *Ikha*, the regime diluted the former's rejection of the Anglo-Iraqi treaty⁴⁰ and by isolating Ja'afar al-Timman the party disintegrated a few years later. This, in the eyes of the Shiite elites, "reinforced the impression of a Sunni-dominated state as members of the Sunni Arab elite accepted office at the expense of their erstwhile allies" (Tripp 2000, 79). The Sunni-dominated regime is reflected by the fact that between 1921 and 1936 only 5 out of 57 ministers came from either the Kurds or Shiites and, until the revolution of 1958, prime ministers and ministers of interior, defence, finance and foreign relations were predominantly Sunnis (Stansfield 2007, 47). Similarly, commanders in the army, such as the 'circle of seven' and the 'golden square', who as we shall see below began to shape politics in Iraq, were mainly Sunnis.

Centralising attempts by the regime such as introducing conscription were met by opposition from both Shiites and Kurds, who refused enrolment in the army. The government of Ali Jawdat aimed to weaken the *Ikha* and Shiite tribal sheikhs in the parliament. This was met with opposition in the mid-Euphrates region leading to the Shiite notables and sheikhs to produce the Mithaq al-Sha'b, a people's charter that expressed Shiite grievance and called for proportional representation and free press and elections (Tripp 2000, 82). The rebellion then spread to southern regions. When the army led by Taha al-Hashimi—brother of Yassin Hashimi—refused to stop the rebellion, the government had no choice but to resign. This story reflects emerging trends in Iraqi politics where intra-elite struggles exploit popular resentment to solve conflicts and also displays the crucial role of the army and its control in shaping Iraqi politics. Yassin al-Hashimi was then asked to form a government "having effectively carried out a coup d'état against his rivals" (Ibid., 83).

In 1935, in the Kurdish areas local feuds developed into a rebellion against conscription, reflecting constraints on the monopoly mechanism. Regime tactics of survival led al-Hashimi in the 1935 elections to incorporate Shiite tribal sheikhs in the parliament and maintained a Shiite block divided between the *Hawza* and tribal elements that would otherwise threaten the regime. This nevertheless did not stop

⁴⁰ The Anglo-Iraqi treaty of 1930 prepared the ground for a legal basis between the ostensibly sovereign country of Iraq and the British. Although the treaty granted the Iraqi government power over its internal security and defence, it maintained British right to use Iraq's facilities in the case of war and to maintain two bases in Habbaniya near Baghdad and Shu'aiba close to Basra (Tripp 2000, 66).

Hashimi reacting ruthlessly towards the rebellions in the Kurdish areas or in southern Shiite areas. Hashimi further strengthened the police and intelligence agencies introducing military training under Arab nationalist leaders and, through his brother Taha, aimed to block the promotion of threatening army chiefs. These measures targeted Hashimi's Sunni competitors in the regime. Fearing an alliance between his competitors in the centre and tribal forces, he suppressed all provincial dissent, closed opposition publications and repressed protests in Baghdad (Ibid., 88).

As we observe here, attempts to centralise power took place at both intra-elite (within the Sunni boundary) and inter-communal levels. Security dilemmas drove Iraqi politics in authoritarian trajectories with violence, reflected in the increasing role of the army becoming part of politics. This phase is important to understand and situate the Baathist regime under Saddam where, ruthless as it was, it differed in degree rather than content. In 1936 Baqr Sidqi carried out the first coup in Iraq (and the Arab world) against the Hashimi brothers and asked the king to install Hikmat Suleiman, who was a member of the *Ikha* party, as prime minister. The instigators of the coup—Baqr Sidqi and Hikmat Suleiman—were of Kurdish and Turkish origins respectively. The government of Suleiman led by an Iraqi nationalist vision included more Shiites and Kurds in its ranks and sought, as we shall see later, greater cooperation with Iran and Turkey as opposed to pan-Arab visions.

In addition to receiving support from leftist movements and minorities, the new government gained the support of the Ahali group, which supported political and social reforms including land redistribution and protection of Iraq's minorities.⁴¹ The coup “reflected the deepening struggle between the two primary definitions of political community, and was exacerbated by the tensions between control of the state by political cliques and the efforts of leftists to enact social and economic forms” (Davis 2005, 65).

Faced with numerous political claims—land reform, democratisation—the new government resorted to repression to maintain power (Tripp 2000, 91) once again signifying the increasing role of the army. The assassination of Sidqi in 1937 brought a Sunni clique of officers (‘circle of seven’) with a pan-Arab vision for Iraq contracting the political arena to a few officers: “the political world had become equated ever more

⁴¹ Jama'at al-Ahali was a group founded by Iraqi students in the American University of Beirut in 1920s. The main political principles of the Ahali group were based on British Fabianism and combined social democratic principles and political independence of Iraq (Sluglett and Sluglett 1991, 122).

narrowly with the restricted circles of officials (and officers) who dominated the state from the capital” (Ibid., 96).

The start of WWI in 1939 and the initial German victories led to a rift in the circle of seven who sought to break with Britain with the formation of the ‘golden square’.⁴² While Abd al-Ilah, the regent, and Nuri al-Said advocated a pro-British stand, the younger officers, with the support of Arab nationalists supported Axis Powers believing that they would be victorious. In 1941 the Golden Square carried a coup removing the regent and Prime Minister Taha al-Hashimi. The British saw the coup as targeting the monarchical system and their interests in Iraq leading Britain to occupy Basra and Baghdad and to reinstall the previous regime. Kurdish and Shiite refusal to resort to resistance facilitated British occupation (Tripp 2000, 100-3).

6.2.2. Revolution and Republican Iraq

As opposed to the one family rule in Saudi Arabia, the Iraqi monarchical regime—given that it lacked an Iraqi constituency—ruled in alliances with the (landowning) politicians tempered domestically by the Iraqi army and externally by the British. The regime was Sunni at its core. The main social forces are composed from ideologically oriented movements—Communists, Arab Nationalists, Kurdish national movements—and broadly speaking Shiite and Kurdish opposition.

The period between 1948 and the 1958 revolution in Iraq formed the last attempt by the British and its allies in Iraq to consolidate their power. This period saw more than 20 cabinets coming to power (Slugglets 1991, 18)⁴³, economic disparities worsening due to the lack of political will and interest of the regime to tackle it, and higher levels of politicisation with different political factions calling for socio-political reforms and independence from Britain. The revolution of 1958 would begin a new era in Iraqi state formation.

The period preceding the 1958 revolution shows the regime’s inability to incorporate different political forces or to produce social reform or to deal with the increased opposition to a genuine national independence from Britain. These issues were politicised and articulated by different political forces and civil society groups.

⁴² The golden square was composed of four colonels led by Salah al-Din al-Sabbagh who advocated a pan-Arab vision more extreme from the regime and which called for Arab ‘ethnic purity’ and ‘cultural authenticity’ (Davis 2005, 68)

⁴³ The period between 1932 and 1958 saw 45 cabinets forming. On average each of these cabinets remained in power for seven months (Batatu 1978, 176).

During this period the National Democratic Party (NDP) and the Independence Party (*Istiqlal*) reflected the main political divide —Iraqist versus pan-Arabist respectively. Both parties called for social and political reforms and independence from Britain, while the *Istiqlal* party emphasised Iraq's pan-Arabism (Tripp 2000, 114). Leaders of the NDP were associated with, and some like Mohammad Hadid and Kamal al-Chdirji were founders of, the *Ahali* group. Pan-Arabist thought and movements perceived the NDP and the Ahali group as 'regionalist' or 'Iraqist' (Slugglett and Slugglett 1991, 125).

Although the 1958 military coup is similar to its predecessors, we call it a revolution because it altered social relations and ended British power in Iraq. It will be argued here that material conditions provided objective factors for political change, the timing of the revolution, however, needs to be understood by taking into account shifts in regional and international structures of power enabling the coup to become a revolution. The 1958 revolution, as we shall see, will invite new political claims emanating from Iraq's cultural and material structures increasing the new regime's security dilemmas before it is defeated by factions in the army. Intra-elite struggles will narrow the political divide further eroding the revolution's initial goals, leading eventually to the deformation of the Iraqi state and alienation of its rulers from the populace. In this section, I will examine this process. In the next, I will consider the external determinants that structured these internal processes.

As a reward for their support to the British in the interwar period, landed tribal sheikhs' power increased in the Iraqi state. This power proved crucial for regime survivability before the 1958 revolution. In examining the underlying causes of the revolution, Batatu makes two arguments. First, he observes a polarisation taking place between the landed classes and peasants in the period between 1920 and 1958. Although we had intra-elite struggles, the growing opposition to the regime unified the ruling elite against revisionist forces. Second, rural conflict between peasants and the landed class was displaced to urban centres leading the regime to try to consolidate the power of the latter. Sluggletts, on the other hand, believe that the timing of the revolution cannot be "deduced" by material conditions preceding it and point out the political and ideological context of the Middle East in 1958 and the role of the middle

classes (Slugglett and Slugglett 1991, 118).⁴⁴ They further argue that democratic deficit in Iraq and regional politics were conducive for regime change there (Ibid., 138-9).

Batatu observes that during this period 72.9 percent of all landholders owned less than 50 dunums, while less than 1 percent of all landholders and *mallaks* controlled 55.1 percent of all privately held land. In 1958, 49 families owned 16.8 percent of all agricultural land (1978, 53-58). Out of a total rural population of 3.8 million in 1957, around 600,000 rural heads of households were landless and 64 percent of landowners held only 3.6 percent of cultivated land (Slugglett and Slugglett 2001, 32). The industrial sector was predominantly concentrated in 23 rich families engaged in finance, industry and trade. In 1958, these families controlled “assets amounting to the equivalent of not less than 56% of the whole private, corporate, commercial and industrial capital of the country—a concentration enhanced by the pattern of marriage alliances” (Batatu 1978, 31-3).

The growth of cities, particularly Baghdad, provided peasants with the freedom of mobility away from agriculture to urban life: “When the cities stood again on their feet and began themselves to provide the needed security..the Sheikh once a protector became an economic burden” (Batatu 1978, 73). Between 1922 and 1947, the population of Baghdad doubled. Although industry accounted for only 8-10 percent of employment in the period preceding the revolution, as most of the economic activity continued to be concentrated in agriculture, a growing labour force of under half a million began to emerge in the transport and services such as the railway, electricity and water companies, and Basra port, while around 100 thousand workers were employed in small industrial enterprises. The oil industry employed around 15 thousands (Slugglett and Slugglett 2001, 36-8).

These socio-economic changes provided objective conditions for political mobilisation. In addition to the licensing of mainstream political parties, the governments of Hamid al-Pachichi and Tewfik al-Suwaidi granted licenses to 16 labour unions, 12 of which were controlled by the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) (Ibid., 38). The ICP was founded in 1934 and briefly supported the *Ahali* group and the government of Hikmat Suleiman in 1936-7, given the latter’s initial aims of social reform. In 1941, after supporting Rashid Ali’s opposition to Britain, the party was suppressed, nevertheless (Slugglets 1991, 126; for a biography of the ICP see Batatu 1978, 465-709). The ICP became one of the most organised political organisations in

⁴⁴ Slugglets point out the omission in Batatu’s analysis of a broad sector between his polarised picture of Iraqi society: the ‘invisible social classes’ (Ibid., 132-133).

Iraq. Thanks to a large percentage of intellectuals inclined to leftist causes (Davis 2005, Chapter 4) the ICP was able to politicise worker's movements using different media outlets, demonstrations, and strikes.⁴⁵

Socio-economic and sectarian rifts made the ICP with its universal Marxist principles attractive to different dissenting forces in Iraq. The effect left by this mobilisation changed the nature of rural rebellion from revolts controlled by Sheikhs to revolts against them. Political claims for reform and change made Socialism, which Batatu observes was not differentiated from Communism in Iraq of the 1950s, a norm that even political parties associated with the Right used to mobilise workers and intellectuals. Batatu gives an example of the *Istiqlal* party who "spoke and grumbled in Marxist way" and how Salih Jabr, Iraq's first Shiite prime minister, who was backed by landowners, named his party the Socialist Party of the Nation (Batatu 1978, 466). As we shall see below, the ICP power would contribute to shape Shiite political Islam.

Another emerging political trend was the Baath Party found in 1952. Combining Arab Nationalism with Socialist ideals⁴⁶, Baath built on an existing intellectual framework to promote its Arab nationalist goals. The Baath presented a more radical form of Arab nationalism from that of the *Istiqlal* party while articulating ideas initially developed by Sati al-Husri (a Syrian Arab Nationalist)⁴⁷ and in civil society groups, such as the Muthana Club. The 1952 Free Officer's revolution in Egypt and its Arab nationalist orientation provided a strong impetus to the Pan-Arabist movement in Iraq.

The period preceding the 1958 revolution led to the expansion of the political arena. As Zubaida observes for the case of Iraq, "the political field itself plays a crucial part in the formation of political forces and socio-economic interests" (Zubaida 1991, 206). Facing such dissenting forces, the regime used both cooptation and coercion in its strategies for survival. Here we need to note that inter-elite cleavages provide opportunities for dissenting forces to capitalise on to reach power. Yet, in their turn these cleavages intensify the security dilemmas of the ruling elite causing intra-elite struggles.

The inability of the regime to cope with pressures emanating from both the material and cultural structures on the one hand and the inability of different political forces to enact reforms set the basis for the army, whose role had receded after 1945, to

⁴⁵ Examples include *Sawt al-Kifah* (Voice of Struggle), *Ittihad al-Ummal* (Workers' Union) or *Jamiyat Tahrir al-Fallahin* (Society for the Liberation of the Peasantry).

⁴⁶ Hasan Alawi observes how the Baath party long before it came to power used socialist discourse to counter ICP claims (1992, 13).

⁴⁷ Al-Husri played a pivotal role in influencing school text books in both Iraq and other countries.

step in to impose these changes. The main statesman in this period continued to be Nuri al-Said who competed with Abd-Ilah the regent and the young King Faisal II. Under both horizontal and vertical oppositions, attempts to monopolise power continued unabated. The rise in oil revenue (30 percent of Iraq's income in 1951), which was seen as a potential tool for economic development and as an alternative for radical socio-economic reform, seduced Nuri al-Sa'id who, with the support of Salih Jabr and tribal leaders, sought to make his Constitutional Union Party the only legal political organisation in Iraq (Tripp 2000, 127-138). Mounting opposition to Nuri al-Said by those among the regime and others outside it, made his developmental plans impossible. Within the regime, opposition began to grow from Taha al-Hashimi who united forces against Nuri al-Sa'id and later from Salih Jabr. Jabr's growing influence began to elicit signs of resentment from the Sunni elite. This resentment, argues Tripp, emerged "whenever a Shi'i held a senior ministerial post and were much less prominently or consistently raised when Sunni Arabs held the same posts" (Ibid., 128).

In his aim to increase his influence, Jabr tried to mobilise forces within his Shiite constituency leading Nuri al-Sa'id to support another Shiite, Fadhil al-Jamaly to form a government. We realise here attempts by political entrepreneurs to activate Shiite identity amidst intra-elite struggles. Nuri, for instance, was increasingly worried about the rising resentment among urban and educated Shiites who were attracted to both forces in the regime and more radical parties such as the ICP. The al-Jamaly government represented the highest proportions of Shiites yet to be included in an Iraq government. In one way this was an important symbolic act of incorporating the Shiites in the state's institutions, in another way the reforms that al-Jamaly's government proposed were constrained by interests associated with landed sheikhs on one hand, and by Sunni solidarity against the increasing role of a Shiite prime minister. In the eyes of the opposition, the reforms proposed by al-Jamaly were insufficient. The narrative here aims to show how sectarian contours begin to emerge and how political struggles activate and deactivate these boundaries.

Under both horizontal and vertical pressures the regime resorted to repression to maintain power. For instance the labour strikes calling for higher wages in the railways and the port—both under British control—in 1945 and 1947 were met violently by the regime (Sluggletts 2001, 39). In 1947, Jabr arrested Yusuf Salman Yusuf, leader of the ICP and other leftist parties were banned. Yusuf and other members of the ICP were executed in 1949 under the government of Nuri al-Sa'id. In 1948, an Anglo-Iraqi

treaty, aiming to prolong British influence for a further twenty years, was met by mass protest, called *al-Wathba* or 'leap', leading another Shiite Prime Minister Mohammad al-Sadr, who was chosen by the regent to sensitise sectarian grievances and to weaken Nuri, to discard the treaty. The protests led to the death of 300 to 400 people and reflected the power of the ICP in mobilising the masses and the retreat of mainstream parties such as the NDP. In 1954, Nuri dissolved parliament and all political parties including his CUP. Political contraction reached its peak during this period uniting all opposition groups such as the *Istiqlal*, NDP, ICP, and the Ba'ath against the regime. Ideological divides separating these movements were temporarily put on hold as they all aimed at removing the regime.

The ideas these movements in civil society represented had to a large extent penetrated the army. On July 14 in 1958, the army exploiting a new Middle East regional configuration of power, carried out a coup d'état bringing an end to the monarchy and starting a new phase in republican Iraq. The new phase, as we shall see, is not new, rather, it is a continuation of the previous era.

6.2.3. Political Contraction and State Deformation: The Qassim Regime

It is to be recalled here that political means to change the *status quo* have been limited given "the government's monopoly of the means of coercion, and the fact that it was impossible to bring in a government with fundamentally different (that is, anti-British) policies through the ballot box." The spread of nationalist and Communist ideas within the army, the demonstration effect of the Free Officers revolution in Egypt and the union between Egypt and Syria in 1958 encouraged the younger generation of Iraqi officers who came from poorer social backgrounds to carry out the military coup of 1958 (Sluggletts 1991, 131).

Although predominantly Arab and Sunni and sharing resentment of the existing regime, these officers had no common political principles or notions of the type of system that would replace the monarchy.⁴⁸ Ideological and political divisions among them became salient a few months after the coup. The principle division defining Iraqi political struggle and discourse relating to the state identity and role in regional dynamics came to the fore once again. While the emerging leader (1958-1963) Abd al-

⁴⁸ For the social background of the 1958 military coup leaders, see (Batatu 1978, 809-814).

Karim Qassim favoured an Iraqi nationalist strategy, his Arab Nationalist and Baathist colleagues, particularly Abd al-Salam Arif, favoured a pan-Arabist orientation.⁴⁹

The main rift occurred a few months after the coup on the question of whether Iraq should unite or federate with the United Arab Republic (UAR). This created a major dilemma for the nascent regime, which would frame the political struggles during the Qassim period. Security dilemmas facing the regime would, as with the monarchy, accumulate oppositional forces against it leading to its overthrow in 1963. Nasserite appeal to Arab masses in general and Iraqi Arab Sunnis in particular contributed to polarising Iraqi politics. While the NDP and the ICP supported Qassim's Iraqist orientation, the Baathist and Arab Nationalists formed the main polar opposition to the Qassim regime. The ICP, although sympathetic to Arabism, feared that union with UAR might bring its organisation to an end in accordance with the Egyptian anti-Communist laws. Michel Aflac's⁵⁰ visit to Iraq to encourage it to join the UAR raised fears for Qassim who "had no particular desire to play second fiddle to Nasser" (Batatu 1978, 828). The ICP further called for "Federal Union and Soviet Friendship".

Arif's visits to Syria and his support for union led Qassim to arrest and sentence him to death only to pardon him in 1959. An opposition made up of Arab nationalists, Muslim Brothers, and Shiite scholars began to unite against Qassim accusing his regime of leading a 'communist conspiracy'. Qassim however, although relying on the ICP as his 'natural' ally given the political weight of his party, wanted to check the power of the communists to increase his regime's autonomy. He, with the exception of a few appointments, refused to enrol the communists in government or to legalise the party. Ironically, the ICP was legalised under the Baath in the 1970s. In attempting to counterbalance the appeal of both communism and Arabism, Qassim established the Ministry of Guidance, starting the first systemic attempt to re-write Iraq's history focusing on pre-Arab and Islamic civilisations and focusing on Iraq's national heritage (Davis 2005, 110-111).

Qassim's economic strategy did not aim to confront the upper classes. The land reform initiated in October 1958 defined a high ceiling on individual landholdings of 618 acres for irrigated lands and 1,236 acres in rainfall areas, while confiscated land was redistributed to landless peasants in small plots. In the shanty towns that developed around Baghdad due to peasant migration, Qassim build *Madinat al-Thawra* (The

⁴⁹ The coup proclamations presents interesting indications of these rifts (Batatu 1978, 802-805).

⁵⁰ Aflac is the ideologue and co-founder of Baathist Arab Nationalism. In 1958, he was the secretary general of the Baath Party.

Revolution City) with low-cost housing for its dwellers. For the middle classes housing associations were established to provide low-interest loans for the buying of property (Sluggletts 2001, 76).⁵¹ Qassim initiated a five-year economic plan in the period of which investment in the public sector almost doubled in the period 1957-1960.

The main problem for the regime remained its political opposition, mainly those emanating from officers in the army with pan-Arab persuasions. This was made clear in the failed coups of Arif and Rashid Ali in 1959. Qassim's main support came from the ICP, which had an interest in regime survival. In trying to maintain his autonomy, Qassim exploited the bloody clashes between Arab Nationalists and Communists in Mosul and Kirkuk in 1959 to curb the power of the latter. Although the ICP had no strategic interest in overthrowing the regime, Baathists and Arab nationalists intended to overturn the tide to their side by attempting to seize power. The opportunity arose on 8 February 1963, when a group of Baathists and nationalist officers, of whom Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr was the most prominent, carried out a coup ending the Qassim regime. Political change once more was to come from above and specifically from the army. This we have seen from the earlier stages of Iraqi state formation where the locus of power was shifting to those who held coercive power.

Like its predecessors, the Qassimite regime brought opportunities and despair for different political factions in Iraq, who all shared the interest of overthrowing the monarchy. The ICP's aim of pushing for democratic reforms stumbled in the political polarisation against Arab nationalists and by the regime's aims to curb its power. As for Baathists and nationalists, the Qassim regime not only aborted their aims of achieving Arab unity, regardless if that was a real option, but also weakened their own grip on power in his attempts to become the 'Sole leader'.

The 1958 revolution and the military coup of 1963 are a continuation of processes initiated earlier. By shifting power to the military and through the intensification of inter-elite conflicts two processes emerge. First, inter-elite conflicts augment the aim of monopolising coercion, which leads to the narrowing of the circle of those who control coercion and subsequently the political management of the country. Second, the contraction of the political arena activates social boundaries existing in the Iraqi cultural structure, which in turn alienates the regime from society.

For instance, although Qassim aimed to accommodate the Kurds in his regime and the Kurds saw the 1958 revolution as an opportunity to advance their interest for

⁵¹ This city was later to be called 'Saddam City' under Saddam rule and 'Sadr City' under the post-Saddam regime.

recognition and autonomy, by 1963 Kurds turned against him. Initially, the regime formed close relations with the Mulla Mustapha Barzani, who was exiled under the monarchy, and Ibrahim Ahmad, leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). The KDP constituted a fragile alliance between Kurdish tribes of whom Mulla Mustapha Barzani was the figurehead and urbanite intelligentsia from Suleimaniya and Kirkuk and other major cities led by Ibrahim Ahmad and, later, Jalal Talabani. As in the rest of Iraq, Kurdish tribal leaders gained ground due to support from the British in a policy to indirectly rule Kurdistan. The Soviet revolution and the intellectual political ideas—Nationalism and Socialism—of the period saw opposition emerge within the Kurdish social boundary (Anderson and Stansfield 2004, 164-5).

Although, the new constitution recognised the Kurds as ‘partners in the Iraqi homeland’ and that their ‘national rights are recognised within the state’, the Free Officers had no clear solution for the Kurdish question (Sluggletts 2001, 80-81). The Kurds supported Qassim’s ‘Iraqist’ orientation against Arab unity. However, differences became clear when Barzani presented Qassim with Kurdish demands for autonomy in 1961.⁵² Under Arab Nationalist opposition, Qassim could not deliver his promises for Kurds. Like other regimes in Iraq, Qassim sought to divide Kurdish efforts by supporting certain tribes, as in the 1961 clashes which continued intermittently until 1975, between Barzan tribes and the KDP. Intra-elite divisions provided Barzan and Ahmad with opportunities to exploit and form a politically predictable but ideologically strange alliance with the Arab nationalist opposition. This strategy was the opposite of the one pursued by the Left and ICP in particular. Although Qassim had clamped down on the ICP and legalised another ‘fictitious’ Communist party, the ICP continued to pursue a policy of ‘accommodation’ with Qassim (Slugglets 2001, 81).

Just as the new regime formed a new opportunity structure for the Kurds, most Shiites regarded the Qassimite regime as Iraqist aiming to remould the Iraqi state. Shiite scholars perceive Qassim to be a modest leader with no intention of building his own network of patronage, but had the support of the Army, of which the Shiites constituted a majority and of the Shiite poor in the *Thawra* City (Nakash 2006, 89-90). However, this base of support is not reflective of the whole Shiite sect (Zubaida 1991, 204). Qassim’s land reforms, for instance, generated different responses from within the Shiite sect, as Jabar explains: “Different propertied and landed Shi’ite groups opposed

⁵² The petition demanded that Kurdish become an official language, the armed forces stationed in Kurdish regions to be Kurdish, oil revenues from the Kurdish region was to be invested there, and more Kurdish representation in central ministries in Baghdad (Gunter 1992, 12).

land reforms in 1959 and the nationalisation and regulation of trade in 1964 and 1970 on communal grounds, as a drive to weaken the Shi'is, while in the nationalist or Marxist jargon, the policies figure in the form of *etatisme* or non-capitalist progressive measures” (Jabar 2003, 68-9).

The spread of communist ideas and growth of the ICP,⁵³ however, not only threatened Shiite propertied leaders, but also provided challenges to the Islamic *Hawza*, where new trends began to emerge with a political agenda that would rally support within the Shiites and activate the social boundary of the Shiite sects in relation to others in Iraq. This became clear in the emergence of the *Dawa* Party (The Call) in the late fifties: “junior *u'lama* and Najafi merchants focused their energies on defining the self, perspectives and discourse, and on propagating their new ideas.” The new party, which aimed to found an Islamic state, aimed at its early stage “to create an ideology matching Marxism” (Jabar 2003, 78). These aims, as is clear, would challenge not only the Qassim regime and its Communist base of support, but also subsequent ‘secular’ Baathist regimes activating further social boundaries separating different entities in Iraq.

The coup of 1963 brought to power as president Abd al-Salam Arif, who was an Arab nationalist, and vice president Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr, who was a member of the Military Bureau of the Baath party. Just after the coup, the National Council of the Revolutionary Command (NCRC) was formed. Similar to the 1958 coup, disagreements and rivalries regarding Iraqi regional roles quickly came to the fore between Nasserites who wanted unity with Egypt and Baathists who raised doubts given the failure of the UAR. This situation was further intensified as the regime was negotiating a settlement with Kurdish rebels in the north. As these disagreements were unfolding, the new regime was settling its old scores with the ICP. Through the Baathist National Guard a brutal campaign was carried out against the ICP and its sympathisers leading to the killing of 3,000 followers (Tripp 2000, 171). The emergence of parallel coercion-wielding organisations started earlier with the People’s Resistance under the Qassim and with ICP having its own militia (Sluggletts 2001, 62). Fearing his own regime’s security, Arif clamped down on the National Guard.

Political realities in both Iraq and the Middle East, as we shall see below, showed Arab unity ambitions far more complicated to achieve. Regime security

⁵³ Scholars differ on the extent to which Shiites figured in the communist movement in Iraq, while Nakash (2006, 88) believes the majority of Iraqi communists were Shiites, Batatu (1978) and Zubaida (1991, 204) argue that in the 1950s this wasn’t the case.

dilemmas amidst internal and external conflicts led Arif, who was unconvinced of the power of ideological loyalties to sustain his regime, to “monopolise power sharing it only with those associates whom he trusted or thought worth placating”. He formed a Republican Guard led by Colonel Said Slaibi, a member of his al-Jumaila tribe (Tripp 2000, 176). This initiated a process of political contraction.

Arif built his own network of patronage and aimed to dismantle the Baath, clearing its cadres from the army and asking al-Bakr to retire. As a Nasserite, Arif aimed to emulate the Egyptian experience, nationalising the major industrial firms, banks and insurance companies in 1964 and founding a party on the lines of Nasser’s Arab Socialist Union. However, Iraqi realities, such as its reliance on oil, religious (both Sunni and Shiite) opposition against Arif’s socialist decrees, and the Kurdish insurgency in the north, revealed the limits of emulating Egypt (Ibid., 179). The failure of socialist decrees and the negative effect left on Iraqi-Kurdish relations because of the pan-Arab unity plans of Arif, led him to change course moving to an economically conservative policy domestically and ‘Iraq First’ policy externally.

As a regime’s power begins to erode, it resorts to social powers existing in the social structure that act as stabilising intermediaries between the regime and society. Like the monarchy, Arif sought to activate the power of tribal sheikhs in the countryside, religious establishments, and entrepreneurial elements in towns. This form of incorporation became possible with the increased income from oil. Externally, similar to the regimes of Syria and Egypt, Arif moved away from a pan-Arab policy towards a statist or ‘realist’ orientation driven by the logic of regime survival.

In 1966, Arif died in a helicopter crash. He was succeeded to power by his brother Abd al-Rahman Arif. The younger Arif regime (1966-8) was weak and was eventually overthrown on 17 July 1968 by three Baathist officers. Under Baath rule, Hassan al-Bakr became president.

6.2.4. Political Contraction and State Deformation: The Saddam Regime

The fall of the monarchy shifted power to revisionists: Iraqi nationalists, communists, Arab nationalists and Baathists. Qassim’s overthrow shifted power towards Arab nationalists and Baathists. Under al-Bakr and then Saddam, the shift initially moves to Baathists and then develops to become a family rule, as in the case of Saudi Arabia.

Signs of these processes, as I argued above, had been developing since 1920. Under Arif, state institutions (particularly the security agencies) began to be constructed on patrimonial and tribal a base, which reflects the intensity of the security dilemma at the centre and the growing opposition from peripheral forces such as ICP, Kurds, and Shiites.

Under al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein, this trend will intensify. Here the state, which in theory or by definition should be the arena that brings together different social powers in a particular social field, begins to be captured by one faction and to be used to dominate over others. This process did not start abruptly but was moulded in stages starting in 1968, which constituted the second rise of Baath, and 1979 when Saddam Hussein ousted Hassan al-Bakr. This process, argues Abd al-Jabar, has led to the 'Baathification' of the state and the 'Tikritization' of Baath (1995, 59).

We observe here a move towards the centre of Figure 4.2 describing state formation/deformation above, in where a dominant power within a social field is able to monopolise coercion, the interpretation of a universal idea, and the socio-economic factors necessary to do so. The main objective of the new regime of 1968 was to neutralise the army, which has hitherto played a determining political role. This formed the first phase of Baathification of the state by transforming military elites into civilians. Another strategy involved the creation of parallel coercive agencies which in turn neutralised the army.

Al-Bakr aimed to increase civilian elements in Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), which became the highest decision-making body in 1968 (Baram 1989, 450-55).⁵⁴ The first transformation of the RCC, which was exclusively composed of army officers, took place in 1969 with the purging of non-Baathist allies Ibrahim Dawood and Abd al-Razack Nayef from the RCC (Sluggletts 2001, 114). Further, this period saw the integration of the Regional Leadership, which follows the RCC in order of political importance, with the RCC. Saddam Hussein, who was installed by his relative al-Bakr as Deputy Secretary General of RL in 1969, became in 1969 Deputy Chairman of RCC (Baram 1989, 450-55).⁵⁵

⁵⁴ The RCC was the 'supreme institution in the state'. Its chairman is also the president of the republic and chief of the armed forces (Baram 1989, 448).

⁵⁵ For a detailed analysis of these changes that took place in a series of Baath Party RL conferences between 1968-79 see (Baram 1989, 450-55).

A second strategy was to install Baathist elements in the military⁵⁶ in the aim of creating an ‘ideological army’ and thereby increasing their members from a few hundred in 1968 to thousands by 1981 (Batatu 1978, 1078). The Military Academy became restricted to Baath party members, which was seen as the only possible path to maintain the “unity of the armed forces” (Khalil 1989, 27). To neutralise the army and diffuse coercive power the General Security (overlooking internal political activities), Police Force, Military Intelligence, Intelligence (anti-espionage in and outside Iraq) and Special Security were established as parallel agencies. These agencies are linked to departments in the Baath Party—Military Bureau, National Security Bureau—or the state—Presidency, Army, Ministry of the Interior. Additionally the ‘Popular Army’ was formed expanding from 50,000 in the 1970s to half a million in 1982 (Abd al-Jabar 1995, 72-3).

The second process involved the Tikritisation of the party. Batatu observes that this trend started in 1963 and is due to the “tenuousness” of ideological ties. Hassan al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein⁵⁷ control of the Baath since 1964 attracted many Tikritis to the party. Out of the five members of the RCC during 1968-9, 3 were Tikritis, 6 out of 15 in 1969-70, and 4 out of 9 in 1973. Tikritis also held the portfolios of defence, governorship of Baghdad, Habbaniya air base, Baghdad garrison etc.. “It would not be going too far” argues Batatu, “to say that the Tikritis rule through the Baath party, rather than the Baath through the Tikritis” (Ibid., 1084).

The more the regime felt threatened the higher the political contraction became. After executing, purging or removing most of his opponents, the Baathist regime was centred on Saddam’s family (al-Khalil 1989, 292-6). This trend, although increased by the 1986 (Baram 1989, 457) intensified after the 1991 Gulf War, isolating the regime both internally and externally. For example, Hussein’s cousin Ali Hassan al-Majid held the Ministry of Defence, his son-in-law held the Ministry of Military Production, his half brother Watban Ibrahim held the Ministry of the Interior, his son Qusay Saddam Hussein held National Security Bureau, which overlooks over all security agencies, his second son-in-law held the Security Agency (Abd al-Jabar 1995, 85).

⁵⁶ The army in Iraq has seen continual growth since the time when King Faisal complained about its weakness. This expansion followed a faster rate during Baath rule. In 1977, while the civil servants composed 21 percent of the labour force, the armed forces composed 11.7 percent in 1978. During the Iraq-Iran war the percentage rose to 24 percent (Abd al-Jabar 1995, 72).

⁵⁷ Hussein (as mentioned earlier) and al-Bakr belong to the al-Begat section of the Albu Nasir tribe. Additionally, Saddam is the foster son, nephew, and son-in-law of Khairallah Tulfah who is the second cousin of al-Bakr and governor of Baghdad and, later, took other major military positions (Batatu 1978, 1084).

To understand why the regime aimed at concentrating power, it is important to situate it in its context, the Iraqi social field. While as we saw in Saudi Arabia, intra-elite conflicts were limited to those in the family, specifically in the 1950s as the ruling family divided on how to deal with the Nasserite threat. Challenges to the Saudi regime, whether from Islamists (Sunni or Shiite), were dealt with either through coercion or incorporation, as we saw above. This was made possible given the nature of the Saudi cultural structure, Saudi monopolisation of coercive force, oil revenue, and, above all, geopolitical position of the Saudi state. In Iraq, the regime faced more challenging threats. In addition to intra-elite struggles, which Saddam Hussein solved by eliminating his enemies—perceived or real—the regime faced peripheral threats emanating from Shiite and Kurdish social boundaries and the ICP.

As mentioned above, these boundaries did not produce unitary political response because competition between different political forces within them not only limited this possibility but also made it possible for the regime to ally itself with one faction against the other and hence de-monopolising the social boundary. This formed incentives for local powers to seek allies outside the Iraqi social field to balance against their domestic competitors. In this way, the Iraqi state was deforming. Internal dynamics became part of the regional configuration of power politics and, hence, Iraqi state survival needs to be situated within these struggles. First, I will examine how the Hussein regime behaved towards these threats and then move to examine Iraqi state behaviour in its regional context.

Similar to several episodes in the history of Iraqi state formation, domestic forces exploited opportunities in the regional power structure to improve their domestic standing vis-à-vis the regime. In its initial phases of power consolidation, the Baathist regime like its predecessors supported limited forms of Kurdish autonomy. After years of Kurdish insurgency, in 1970, an agreement was signed recognising Kurdish national identity, language, incorporation in central government, and predominant control over regional administration (Tripp 2000, 200). The inability of the regime to devolve power in Kurdish areas, however, brought the March 1970 agreement to an end. The 1972 Iraqi-Soviet treaty contributed to the breakdown of the March 1970 agreement with increased support by the US and Iran to the Kurdish insurgency (Gunter 1992, 25-31). After a full-fledged war between the regime and Kurdish insurgents supported by Iran in 1974, Iraq and Iran signed the 1975 Algiers Agreement. According to the agreement, Iraq accepted Iran's claim that the Thawleg is the boundary separating the two countries

in Shat al-Arab and that Iran would relinquish support of the Kurdish insurgency. This agreement dealt a blow to Kurdish rebellion, leading Barzani, the KDP leadership, and many of their followers to move to Iran. Further, the KDP divided into several factions with a major rift taking place when Jalal Talabani formed his own Popular Union of Kurdistan (PUK) (Ibid., 34; Anderson and Stansfield 2004, 168).

The Algiers Agreement weakened the Kurdish rebellion until the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, which provided new opportunities for the KDP. The Baathist regime on the other hand supported the PUK.⁵⁸ We see here attempts by the Iraq regime to monopolise power in the Kurdish social boundary to divert KDP energies from the centre. This process is very much similar to dynamics taking place at regional level. Iran's support of the KDP and, as we shall see below, for the Shiites, aimed to monopolise Baathist power in the Iraqi social field as a whole. The deformation of the Iraqi state—given the internal insecurity dilemmas and political contraction—made it further vulnerable to external penetration and regional power dynamics. As the Iraq-Iran War (1980-88) intensified, Iran's strategy was to bridge the rift among different Iraqi Kurdish factions to enable them to direct their efforts against the regime and, hence, to weaken the regime's efforts towards itself.

Iranian efforts to bridge Kurdish unity materialised with the formation of the Kurdish Front in 1987 including different Kurdish factions aiming to overthrow the Baathist regime and the creation of a federal democratic Iraq (Gunter 1992, 39-40). The front—led primarily by the KDP and PUK—was able to carve for itself an autonomous region where their social support was greatest. While the KDP, with about 12,000 peshmargas, controlled the region along the Turkish border from Syria in the west to Rawanduz on the east, the PUK, with about 10,000 soldiers, controlled the southern region in areas between Kirkuk and Sulaymania (Ibid., 40).

We realise here a shift to the left in Figure 4.3 above, as coercion in the Iraqi social field is dispersing with the emergence of state-like organisations—a process of state deformation—and as the Iraqi social field produces different responses to systemic forces. This deformation process weakens the state, increasing external penetration and augments the regime's insecurity increasing its authoritarianism. The Baathist regime's answer to Kurdish unity and increased Iranian (also Libyan and Syrian) intervention generated the *Anfal* Campaign aiming to repress Kurdish insurgency. In 1987, Saddam Hussein made Ali Hassan al-Majid, who hitherto was the head of the state security

⁵⁸ The Iraqi regime extended its patronage to different tribal leaders and aimed to incorporate Kurds into the growing Iraqi bureaucracy. (Tripp 2000, 229 and 234)

service, his viceroy in the northern region. Pursuing a scorched land policy and using chemical weapons, the Iraqi army cracked down on Kurdish resistance wherever this existed, killing inhabitants and destroying villages. In one case, more than 4000 people were killed in *Halabja* after Iranians captured the town in March 1988 (Anderson and Stansfield 2004, 169-70). The campaign led to the flight of around 60,000 Kurdish refugees across to the Turkish border and to the relocation of Kurds—a policy which started earlier—to the central and southern provinces and to replace these by Arab settlers in certain oil-rich towns such as Kirkuk (Gunter 1992,45-48). After the Iran-Iraq ceasefire in July 1988, Hussein brought the whole Kurdish region under his control. By the end of the campaign, 80 percent of villages had been destroyed and around 60,000 people lost their lives (Tripp 2000, 245).

Similar to the Kurdish threat, another developing rival of the regime emanated from the Shiite social boundary. The relationship between the Baath regime and Shiite political movements developed from protest to violent confrontation and centred on several areas of contention. Baathist secular orientation conflicted with Shiite religious establishment and the ideologies of the main Shiite political parties. Security dilemmas at the centre weakened Shiite representation at the state level increasing their alienation. Finally, these domestic areas of conflict were shaped by regional political changes, namely the tense relations between Iran and Iraq (Jabr 2003, 201).

The failure of Shiite political representation in national parties in the earlier period and the ideological conflict with Baath and ICP formed a strong basis for the emergence of Shiite political Islam. The *Dawa* was the first political organisation expressing this shift. The *Dawa*, following the theories of Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Bakr al-Sadr, aimed to articulate political claims and to specify the particular phases on which an Islamic state would eventually be founded. As in any religious discourse, there are disagreements among Shiite scholars on the role religion should play in politics, let alone the political strategy to be undertaken in particular circumstances. On a general spectrum, Khomeini's *wilayat al-Fakih* (rule of the jurispudent) represents a political model giving the jurispudent authoritarian powers in an Islamic state. On the other end of the spectrum, Mohammad Mehdi Shamsdine and Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah represent 'liberal' political notions, largely influenced by Lebanon's multi-sectarian political life. In Iraq, al-Sadr represented the middle way in Shiite political theory, arguing for the separation of the right to govern from the juristic role of the jurispudent (Ibid., 20).

Before political ideas materialised into organised political activity, conflict between the regime and Shiite religious schools (and community in general) erupted in the late 1960s, reflecting trends emerging as early as 1924. To put pressure on Iran, the Baathist regime decided to deport Iranian nationals in Iraq in 1980 (around half a million according to national figures) in addition to the confiscation of funds aimed at establishing a university in Kufa, deportation of Arabs of Iranian origin, restrictions on Shiite religious schools (such as the abolishment of military exception to religious students) and the nationalisation of foreign trade leading to the frustration of Shiite notables and merchants. These measures led to mass protest leading Ayatollah al-Hakim to raise a petition calling for freedom of speech, a halt on property confiscation and for permitting any Muslim to reside in holy cities (Ibid., 205).

While Hakim's demands were balanced, *Dawa* was more confrontational in its strategy. With Hakim's death in 1970, political allegiance shifted to al-Sadr given Grand Ayatollah Abu Qassim al-Kho'i's apolitical approach. The growing influences of *Dawa* led the regime to arrest and execute hundreds of its members in 1974. In 1977, the *Dawa* exploited *Ashura* (commemoration of the death of Hassan and Hussein) to organise "perhaps the first urban-based mass political demonstration" (Ibid., 208) which took the security services by surprise. The resulting riots in Najaf and Karbala led to the death and arrest of thousands and to desertions from the army. Trying to cope with Shiite political Islam, the regime used Islamic rhetoric to neutralise Shiite Islamic challenge and to extend its network of patronage to members of the Shiite community (Tripp 2000, 216-7). A different strategy was to incorporate Shiite members, whose presence in the RL of the Baath Party in 1977 increased (Baram 1989, 453).

The 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran aggravated the relations between the regime and Shiite political parties. Encouraged by the events in Iran, *Dawa* began a violent campaign against Baathist symbols and members leading the regime in its turn to intensify its repressive campaign against the movement's members, placing its leader al-Sadr under house arrest. Protests spread in Najaf, Kufa, Karbala, and *Madinat al-Thawra* in Baghdad. *Dawa* was joined later by the Islamic Action Organisation (IAO) (for origins of the IAO see Jabr 2003, 216-244) and *Jund al-Imam* (Soldiers of the Imam), who resorted to violent means to overthrow the regime. In 1980, the regime

made membership in *Dawa* punishable by death, executed al-Sadr and his sister, and deported more than 40,000 ‘Iranian Shiites’ (Tripp 2000, 229-30).⁵⁹

After the outbreak of the Iraq-Iran war in 1980, most of the Shiite political movement moved its headquarters and resources to Iran. Iran, similar to its relations with the Kurds, tried to unite different Iraqi Shiite forces under different organisations—Assembly of ulama for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, The Revolutionary Army for the Liberation of Iraq etc.—without much success. In 1982, Mohammad Baqir al-Hakim established the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution Iraq (SAIRI), an umbrella organisation for all Islamic movements in Iraq: “the Iranian effort to unseat the Iraqi regime was in dire need of an all-representative Iraqi body of which Iraqi Shi’ite militant Islam fell short.” Under Iranian sponsorship, training and guidance, Badr Army was established and included Iraqi deportees to Iran and prisoners of war (2003, 235-55).

The regime used a counter-strategy from that attempted by Iran and tried to create a wedge between Iranian and Shiite Iraqis on the one hand and divisions within Shiites on the other. Using its propaganda machine, the regime stressed Iraq’s Arab identity, its Mesopotamian history, and the regime’s Islamic and Shiite symbols and rituals to distinguish Iraqi Shiites from those of Iran.⁶⁰ In Shiite religious schools, the regime extended its patronage network among certain scholars, while expelling scholars of Iranian origin. Further, all religious centres—appointments, sermons, shrines and mosques—were brought under government control (Tripp 2000, 234).

The shifting of the war from a defensive strategy by Iran to an offensive one against Iraq alienated Shiite movements aligned with it, particularly as the bulk of the Iraqi army conscripts were Shiites, with a growing number of Shiites being promoted to high positions. The opportunity provided by the Islamic Revolution for both the Kurds and Shiites did not materialise with a defeat of the Baath. The survival of the regime in the end of the war led the Kurds to repair relations with the regime to maintain their survival (abd al-Jabar1995, 185). Two main regional developments would provide new opportunities for domestic opposition to overthrow the regime, the first followed Iraq’s

⁵⁹ The execution of al-Sadr had no historical precedent in the history of regime-Shiite relationships in Iraq (Alawi 1993)

⁶⁰ The regime called the war ‘Qadisiyyat Saddam’, referring to the Arab victory against the Persians in A.D.636. Representing the war as a cultural struggle between Arabs and Persians, the regime distinguished between ‘good’ Shiites, who were seen as followers of Ali, and ‘bad’ Shiites who were considered ‘sectarian’ and ‘extremist’. (Nakash 2006, 90-91).

defeat after its invasion of Kuwait and second following the US-led coalition's invasion of Iraq in 2003.

For reasons that will be elaborated on below, the Iraqi regime invaded Kuwait on 2 August 1990 triggering a war, which saw the US leading an international coalition to liberate Kuwait from Baathist grip. The war ended on 27 February 1991 with the regime's defeat and humiliation. Both Kurds and Shiites saw this, once again, as an opportunity to rise up and get rid of the regime. For the regime, "it was less the loss of Kuwait that mattered than what else might be lost in the losing of it" (Tripp 2000, 255). Securing the internal political order by the strengthening of the security agencies became a priority for regime survival.

This proved crucial with the uprisings in the southern and northern parts of Iraq. In the south, a few days after the ceasefire, Iraqi opposition groups captured and killed Baathist members, their families and supporters. The uprising in the south was spontaneous, involving Iraqi soldiers deserting from the army and mass protests. Amidst the chaos, local leadership emerged in different towns associated with Baathist leaders, clandestine Islamic organisations such as *Dawa* and thousands of the Badr Brigades sent from Iran. While in the south "it was clear that there was no overall leadership or direction of the rebellion" (Tripp 2000, 256), in the north Kurdish movements showed a politically conscious and systemic form of revolt involving the neutralisation of the Salah al-Din Brigades—a pro-regime Kurdish army—combined with popular demonstrations carrying a specific slogan: 'Democracy for Iraq, Autonomy for Kurdistan'. The Shiite movement, particularly the Islamists, raised the banner of 'Islamic Rule' (Jabr 2003, 270).

Once again the regime was swift in its response. In Shiite cities, the Republican Guard repressed the uprising resurgence causing massive destruction and deaths in a matter of two weeks.⁶¹ In the north, both Sulaymania and Kirkuk were recaptured by the regime raids causing the loss of lives of thousands and the refuge of hundreds of thousands to the Iranian and Turkish border. The limits of the US operation to the liberation of Kuwait meant that external conditions for regime survival remained intact particularly with the international coalition having no clear plan for a post-Hussein regime and Turkish and Saudi opposition to his removal.

The second option for the international coalition was to weaken the regime while keeping territorial Iraq intact. In 1991, the UN Security Council passed resolution

⁶¹ Sluggletts (2001, 289) puts the figure of people killed at 300,000 killed as a result of the regimes operations. Jabr (1995, 168) provides a conservative estimate of 20,000 killed.

688, which established a ‘no-fly zone’ north of the 36th parallel enforced by the US and Britain. In 1992, a similar no-fly zone was imposed south of 32th parallel. Further, other UN resolutions imposed economic sanctions on Iraq, freezing Iraqi financial assets, banning import and export of goods—with the exception of food stuffs and medical supplies—until Iraq complied with definite conditions, as we shall see below.

The arrangement of no-fly zones permitted the emergence of *de facto* Kurdish autonomous rule leading to the creation of the Kurdistan Regional Government led by the KDP and PUK. The region the KDP controlled came from the Kurmanji speaking north-west of Iraq, while the PUK came mostly from the Surani-speaking region of north-east. The bitter political divisions between the two Kurdish factions invited external intervention from the regime in Baghdad, Iran, and the US (which aimed to unify the Kurdish Iraqi movement to weaken the regime) (Sluggletts 2001, 296-8).

Iraq as a state reached high levels of deformation with the emergence of a *de facto* rule in the north, regime weakening in the centre, and external isolation of the country as a whole challenging the nominal perception of Iraq as a ‘sovereign’ state. For the regime, the defeat in Kuwait, the economic losses associated with it, the sanctions imposed after it, and the effect all this left on its security apparatuses meant that it had to resort to new strategies of survival. Of these the regime chose to revive (1) the tribal social base of society to revive the decadent party structure; (2) its ideological orientation; (3) its network of patronage to buy off opponents and divide enemies (Jabr 2002).

The regime aimed to reconsolidate its tribal base relying on a broad alliance of Sunni clans and particularly the Beijat. The traditional struggle within the Beijat, which until 1979 had centred on local power, took a national one with power struggles within Hussein’s own family involving his sons (Uday and Qusai), his paternal cousins (Majids), and his half-brothers (Ibrahims) (Baram 1998, 11). In 1995, the Majidi brothers defected to Jordan (for details see *Ibid.*, 8-9). By 2001, Qusai became the ‘presidential caretaker’ and supervised the Republican Guard.

The “retribalisation rapidly spread nationwide” after Hussein apologised for earlier land reforms and promised reconciliation. This process—named by Jabr ‘social tribalism’—revealed regime weakness but also the cultural elements a regime can employ as it seeks survival (Jabr 2002). The regime further turned to Islam: “Wahabism” penetrated Iraq’s borders “while the security services turned a blind eye. This ideological newcomer was seen as a desirable alternative to Shi’ite militancy”.

The above factors explain regime maintenance but the determining factor for regime survival in Baghdad involved the presence of external *status quo* powers unwilling to remove the regime but using “the instruments of status quo—sanctions, overflights and explicit support for Kuwaiti and Saudi security—to keep in place its policies of containment and deterrence” (Tripp 2007, 270). This will come to an end with the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. Before we analyse this phase, I will first examine the external conditions of Iraqi state survival.

6.3. External Factors of State Survival and Collapse

The above examination has so far focused on internal dynamics of state formation in Iraq. We observe that attempts to monopolise power in Iraq, as opposed to the Saudi case, have been difficult due to the cultural structure of the Iraqi social field. This section will examine more closely the interaction of domestic and international factors and how this interaction determined prospects for state survival and collapse in Iraq. It will show that Iraqi state survival and collapse is a function of the country’s geopolitical position. Domestic strategies of survival are not sufficient to understand why Iraq remains intact or collapses as a state.

The factors needed to explain Iraqi international behaviour have to do with Iraq’s geographical position, timing of its socialisation in the state system and the regional order. The process of exogenous state (and regime) formation in Iraq have placed limits on the Iraqi predominantly Arab-Sunni regime to revise the system. In examining Iraqi international behaviour, we observe patterns cutting across several regimes regardless of their identity. Like Saudi Arabia, Iraqi regimes’ first circle of security is the domestic arena. The main enemies are internal actors who, from the perception of different regimes, can be used by external players to endanger their survival. Therefore, the main pillar in examining Iraqi foreign policy is regime survival. These structural constraints will face all subsequent regimes in Iraq.

The idea that Iraqi foreign policy shifted in the 1970s with the emergence of “stronger state institutions” to “one aimed at securing and enhancing national sovereignty” and conforming to Neorealist theory (Mufti 1996, 9) is misleading. Regime consolidation in Iraq, as I argued above, has led to state deformation, where foreign policy reflected regime interest and was one of *multiple* foreign policies emanating from the “multiple character of the Iraqi state” (Tripp 2002, 167). This pattern started in the initial phase of state formation and continues until now without major changes.

The second pattern observed is that as different regimes seek survival and regardless of their identity (be it Arabist or Iraqist) they do choose policies that *eventually* aim to maintain the *status quo* by choosing an ‘Iraq First’ policy. By ‘Iraq’ we read ‘regime first’ policy. This pattern, which is similar to Saudi Arabia, is shaped by discursive factors of Arabism, Islamism, Iraqism, Kurdism etc..These identities do not determine the pattern identified here but provides a cultural pretext to justify them. As Mufti argues “only two pan-Arab unity projects ever got beyond the *talking* stage: the UAR from 1958 to 1961..and the latest Yemeni experiment initiated in 1990” (1996, 8; emphasis added).

6.3.1. Foreign Policy in Pre-Cold Period

Studying Iraqi foreign policy in essence means examining the foreign policies of different factions within Iraq. While King Saud, as we saw above, pursued a *status quo* foreign policy aiming to consolidate the territories he conquered in 1902-1932 and accepting the limits imposed by the regional system, King Faisal of Iraq faced a different dilemma. Having lost Mecca to the Saudis and seen his ambition of a unified Arab state eroding, Faisal pursued a revisionist pan-Arab policy to unite Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine and if possible regain Hejaz. Two factors however constrained these ambitions. Although Faisal saw a pan-Arab state as a solution to his inferior position in a predominantly Shiite and Kurdish Iraq (Mufti 1996, 30), this contradicted with his domestic aims of state building and with the geopolitical position of Iraq. Second, his pan-Arabism faced hurdles from *status quo* powers in the region, especially Britain, who saw such schemes as destabilising.

The external engineering of the Iraqi state and regime saw Britain repressing indigenous attempts of state formation, as during Sheikh Mahmoud’s attempts to establish Kurdish autonomy or during the 1920 Revolt. Britain also restrained the abilities of King Faisal who voiced resentment against the restrictive Anglo-Iraqi treaty proposed in 1922 culminated in 1930. British-French coordination in the Middle East placed limits on revisionist regional plans (Ibid., 30).

After the coup of Baqr Sidqi of 1936, and given that the regime represented the non-Arab-Sunni face of Iraq, oriented more towards Iran and Turkey. In 1937, two decades before joining the Baghdad Pact, Iraq signed the Saadabad Pact with Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan aiming to contain Soviet influence in their region (Tripp 2000, 91). Under the government of Nuri al-Said, however, the idea of the Fertile Crescent emerged publicizing al-Said’s drive to restore Palestine (Ibid., 98). This was facilitated

by the authority of pan-Arab officers and King Ghazi's sympathy to Arab causes and criticism of British policy in the Middle East. In 1939, King Ghazi deployed troops and attempted to unify with oil-rich British protectorate of Kuwait. British threats and Saudi troop deployment kept the king at bay (Mufti 1996, 35).

Ghazi's move was seen by the British as a German attempt to destabilise their presence in Iraq. Polarisation in international politics during WWII provided new opportunities for local actors. In Iraq this led to divisions in the ruling elite regarding the direction the country should follow. While Abd al-Ilah and Nuri al-Said were hesitant to turn against the British, Prime Minister Rashid Ali al-Kilani supported by the Arab nationalist colonels sought alignment with the Germans. In April 1941, the colonels staged a coup and reinstated al-Kilani leading the British to re-occupy Iraq in May restoring Abd al-Ilah and al-Said rule (Tripp 2000, 101-105; Mufti 1996, 35-6).

British victory in WWII sustained its place the Middle East regional order, although this began to weaken with the emergence of the Soviet Union and the United States. Iraqi foreign policy (and indeed domestic politics) during this period reflected this international interregnum. In the period 1941-58 we observe Iraqi foreign policy trumpeting pan-Arabism on a regional level but, under domestic and regional constraints, pursuing a Iraqist policy aiming to secure regime survival. In 1942, al-Said tried to unify with Transjordan under the Fertile Crescent plan but this clashed with Transjordan's King Abdallah's Greater Syria scheme. In both cases this led to the polarisation of Arab politics with Saudi Arabia allying with Egypt and Syria to prevent any Hashemite unity projects.

The monarchy's search for Arab unity may be seen as a way to assuage its domestic weakness (Mufti 1996, 7-9) because weak regimes aim to neutralise domestic enemies by attempting to 'unite' with external allies (see also David 1991, 233-256). In the case of Iraq, however, we observe the reverse of this strategy. Both the monarchy and republican regimes faced structural constraints leading them to abstain from engaging—beyond rhetoric—in pan-Arab projects. Al-Said's suspicion about the possibility of union made him a partner to the establishment of the Arab League, which virtually institutionalised state sovereignty in the Arab world. Further, his (unrealistic) proposal for the Arab-Israeli conflict and which all parties rejected provided him with the pretext to withdraw Iraqi troops from Palestine in 1948.

The emerging divide during the Cold War saw al-Said moving closer to Western countries, without necessarily abandoning Iraq's relations with other Arab countries. As

opposed to the dynastic pan-Arab ambitions, which he believed had “limited utility”, he saw Arab Nationalism as “potentially divisive”:

He knew that pan-Arabism complicated central control of the Kurdish region. Equally, he was aware that many Shi'a regarded Arab nationalism and Arab unity schemes as attempts by the dominant Arab Sunni minority in Iraq to itself to a greater Arab Sunni hinterland...Nuri could see the peculiarly debilitating effect of pan-Arabism on Iraqi political society. (Tripp 2000.140)

As we shall see below, when Arab nationalists came to power they didn't divert from al-Said's behaviour. As the Cold War was looming and the power of the ICP increasing, al-Said got closer to the western powers, Saudi Arabia and countries of the 'northern belt' (Turkey, Iran, Pakistan) culminating in the signing of the Baghdad Pact in 1958. The pact aimed to limit Soviet southward penetration, ensure British support (and ending the Anglo-Iraqi treaty of 1930), and enlisting the US as a major international patron. This led to a major confrontation between Nasser and Nuri al-Said with the former seeing the Soviets as a potential ally to promote Arab causes and the latter perceiving the Soviets as threatening to his regime (Ibid., 140-1).

6.3.2. Iraq Foreign Policy during the Cold War

The Cold War—the bi-polar world structured on the interactions of the Soviet Union and the US—provided opportunities for Iraq, as well as to other states in the system, to advance their interests. The ideological division underpinning the Cold War did not directly affect Iraq (Tripp 1997, 186-7). As we saw above, the Middle East political order (1920-45), maintained by Britain and France, prevented regime change and determined state survival in Iraq. The Cold War provided regimes and their enemies with opportunities to advance their political claims. For Saudi Arabia, whose monopolisation process was completed *before* the emergence of the Cold War, the Cold War gave it opportunities to bolster its domestic authority and, hereby, to contribute to maintaining regional order. In Iraq, the absence of power monopolisation or political institutionalisation intensified the process of state building creating both inter-elite struggles and, eventually, state deformation. The socialisation of Iraq in the bi-polar international structure, therefore, made it difficult to talk about a consistent Iraqi foreign policy.

Once again the weight of history, particularly the external engineering of the Iraqi state formation, would leave its effect on the choices taken by successive Iraqi regimes. The 1958 revolution, made possible with Britain's inability to save its allies in Iraq, left Qassim in a strategic dilemma. His 'Iraq First' policy in post-monarchical Iraq

left him isolated in the region. He could not maintain strong relations with his eastern neighbours—Turkey and Iran—as this would have meant subordination to the British. In 1959, he abrogated the Baghdad Pact and restored relations with the Soviet Union (Tripp 2000, 164). Westward, the emergence of the UAR and the growing influence of Nasser after the Suez war threatened Qassim’s regime, who, as we saw above, was facing a growing opposition from Arab nationalists.

Qassim’s drive for domestic power monopolisation was countered by *status quo* states such as the US, Iran, and Israel who saw in the Kurdish insurgency a potential ally to weaken the regime, contain Soviet influence, and to divert its attention away from the Arab-Israeli conflict (Gunter 1992, 26-31; Rubin, 1982, 110-2). Further, Nasser’s subversion tactics and the alleged support he offered for a coup against Qassim soured relations between the UAR and Iraq, a confrontation which augmented different perception of the US and Britain on whether to contain or accommodate Nasser (Mufti 1996, 131). Here, we don’t only observe multiple foreign policies emanating from the Iraqi social field, but also attempts by external actors to de-monopolise power internally, thus shaping processes of state formation and deformation.

The dilemma Qassim faced was further aggravated by his decision to incorporate Kuwait in 1961 after the abrogation of its 1899 treaty with Britain. This move, practically, united all Gulf and Arab states against him. At Kuwait’s request, Saudi and British troops came to the rescue of the emirate. In September, these troops were replaced by Arab peacekeeping troops from Jordan, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, UAR, and Tunisia (Niblock 1982, 132-133). Given Iraq’s western and eastern isolation, Qassim’s move southward was seen as a potential move to improve Iraq’s influence in the region, to control the Kuwaiti islands of Warba and Bubian, which blocked the Um Qasr, and to divert the Iraqis’ attention from domestic issues (Tripp 2000, 165; Mufti 1996, 139).

Under Arifs, who fought Qassim for his ‘isolationist’ (or ‘regionalist’) policy and called for immediate union with the UAR, Iraq, once again, pursued policies dictated by regime survival. The conflict between Arif and the Nasserites and the Kurdish insurgency in the mid 1960s saw the latter move “increasingly towards an ‘Iraq first’ position, tutored in its requirements by the experience of governing a country where the pan-Arab idea could seriously alarm significant sections of the population” (Tripp 2000, 182). We recall from the earlier section that within Iraq Arif also adopted a strategy built on tribal backing overriding ideology and the party. The ‘Iraq first’ policy

manifested itself in the Gulf region with Iraq recognising Kuwait's increasing cooperation with Iran because "the coherence of the Iraqi state stood in danger should Iran extend support to the Kurdish insurgents" (Niblock 1982, 138). This policy was also extended to other gulf sheikhdoms and Saudi Arabia.

This pragmatist policy continued under Hassan al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein. Regime foreign policy was determined by its position in the domestic balance of power and by changes taking place at a regional level. The Baathist regime under al-Bakr and Hussein cultivated relations with the ICP and the Kurds internally, buying itself time during the initial stages of its formation and facilitating the 1972 Iraqi-Soviet treaty. The treaty aimed to counter-balance the US support for Iran in the Persian Gulf after British withdrawal in 1971, to facilitate Iraq's nationalisation of the Iraq Petroleum Company (Tripp 1997, 203-204), and to gain Soviet military support needed to counter the Kurdish insurgency (Tripp 2000, 211).

The treaty temporarily alleviated the regime's fear of isolation; however, it came with a cost as it generated additional support for the regime's domestic enemies, especially the Kurds, as mentioned above. This led Hussein to denounce the Soviet Union for failing to stop Iran's support of the Kurds and to provide the Iraqi regime with sufficient weapons to defeat the Kurdish insurgency. Further, the rise in Iraq's oil revenue, increased trade relations with the West and Japan, and the availability of arms from outside the Soviet Union all increased the regime's autonomy in the international sphere (Tripp 1997, 206). The main threat to the regime emanated from the Kurdish insurgency and Iran. This led Baghdad to seek a regional security agreement with Iran culminating in the Algiers Agreement of 1975 (Niblock 1982, 142). Although Iraq had no diplomatic relations with the US, under Hussein relations improved as Soviet-Iraq relations deteriorated and as a growing need for oil markets emerged (Ahmad 1984, 161).

Strategically, the regime had an interest to being 'non-aligned' with either of the two superpowers. Cooperating with the Soviet's generated reactions from Iran and the US. The regime tried to assuage this by improving relations with Iran, neutralising the Kurds and permitting Iraq to send an armoured division to help Syria in the 1973 war. Disagreements about the ceasefire declared by Syria provided Iraq with the pretext to withdraw its troops from Syria (Tripp 2000, 210). By 1979, thanks to oil revenue, the regime had consolidated itself internally ensured its eastern border with Iran and was ready to project its power in the Arab world and the Middle East in general. Egypt's

withdrawal from the Arab-Israeli conflict—and Arab affairs— and Syria’s isolation contributed to Iraq’s bid for influence. In the Gulf region, Iraq improved its relations with Saudi Arabia (Ehteshami and Nonneman 1991, 38; Niblock 1982, 144) until a change took place within Iran.

The Islamic Revolution in Iran constituted a domestic regime change that generated a new regional configuration of power. The revolution changed Iran’s foreign policy choices providing new opportunities for both states, such as Syria who perceived Iran as a potential ally in the absence of Egypt, and claimants for power within states, such as the Kurds and Shiites in Iraq (as we saw above) or the Shiites in other countries like Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain or Kuwait. Although in theory the Islamic Revolution in Iran should have provided Iraq with additional autonomy, particularly as it defined the US and Israel as enemies and refused to align itself with either east or west, the threat it imposed on Iraq’s delicate balance of power (see above) saw the regime aiming to contain and defeat the revolution in Iran.

At a regional level, the Iranian revolution “heightened the need for the construction of pro-Iraqi *axis*, to include all anti-Iranian forces” (Ehteshami and Nonneman 1991, 39; emphasis original). External conditions also were conducive for such an act. Soviet invasion of Afghanistan saw the Carter administration trying to form bridges with Iraq to contain further soviet expansion but also to lure the oil-rich and militarily strong Iraq, especially after the fall of the Shah in Iran (Rubin 1982, 115).

Hussein’s plan of a short war to defeat the revolution failed with Iran’s defiance and counteroffensive in 1981. Iraqi state formation and deformation processes were at the centre of events before and during the war. As we saw above Iran extended its support to Shiite and Kurdish organisations aiming to de-monopolise Hussein’s rule. This, however, was countered by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and, occasionally, other Gulf monarchies who feared that regime collapse in Iraq would under Iranian influence threaten Iraq’s (and their) territorial integrity.

The Iraqi regime—driven by Saddam Hussein—was one organisation among other organisations competing for power in Iraq. In addition to the oil revenues accumulated before the war (38billiion), which the war had consumed, regime survival during the war was bolstered by external assistance amounting to billions of dollars and ‘war relief’ crude oil supplied by Saudi Arabia (see above), Kuwait and others (Ehteshami and Nonneman 1991, 44-48). The war, which came to an end in 1988, cost

Iraq more than 130 billion dollars in addition to debts incurred to other (mostly Gulf) states amounting to 65-86 billion dollars (abd al-Jabar 1995, 148).

6.3.3. Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Period

The emergence of the US as the only superpower limited Iraq's foreign policy options.. Given its geographical location at the heart of the Middle East, it was not surprising that the signs of a new era—'a new world order'—emerged first in Iraq. It was in 1990, the year that witnessed a transition to a new phase in international politics, when Hussein ventured to invade Kuwait.

Disagreements with Kuwait over oil policy, borders and 'war relief' oil, which was terminated by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in 1988 (Ehteshami and Nonneman 1991, 64-73) paved the way for Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. Like Qassim before him, Hussein felt regionally and domestically isolated. Sour relations with Iran and Syria and tension with the Gulf monarchies, led Saddam Hussein to move southward seeking international recognition, money, a role in the Gulf, and an exit to divert the energies of his internal enemies.

Miscalculations of invading Kuwait had several reverse reactions: Soviet Union, Europe, and Arab states condemned the invasion, Israel remained neutral and Arab public opinion had no practical effect (abd al-Jabbar 1995, 161; Ehteshami and Nonneman 1991, 77). During the war, the regime attempted to get closer to Iran neutralising a potential threat from its eastern flank and agreeing on Iran's stated conditions for peace—shared sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab, release of war prisoners, and Iraqi troop withdrawal from Iran (Ehteshami and Nonneman 1991, 81). Due to external factors, Iraqi defeat in Kuwait fell short of toppling the regime and led to Iraqi isolation.

6.4. Military Occupation and State Collapse: The Internal-External Nexus

Iraq remained a hurdle for the main political players in the Middle East. Lifting sanctions might re-strengthen the regime while keeping sanctions proved horrendous for Iraqis without affecting regime change. This continued until the US under George W. Bush decided to reorder the Middle East. To be sure, the international structure of the post-cold war world did not *determine* US invasion of Iraq, but did provide the *enabling* conditions for such an act. Undeterred internationally, the US chose "ideological

unilateralism” to pursue its strategy in the Middle East (Zunes 2006, 26-7). For Iraq, the condition of External Neutralisation ceased to exist.

Reordering the Middle East, which means the subduing of enemies and friends in the region and disciplining rivals outside it, saw Iraq an attractive target. The country, as this case has shown, was weak and vulnerable to external penetration. The US invasion was made under the pretext of Iraq’s possession of WMD’s, its relations with al-Qaida, or as a ‘threat’ to world order. All these justifications proved to be false (Ibid.). It was, on the contrary, Iraq’s weakness, potential wealth, and geographical location that made it prey to external occupation. The irony of state formation in the Middle East is that it is easy to invade countries there due to their inherent weakness—a theme explored in this thesis—but this same weakness generates conditions for others to intervene to disable the invader’s initial strategy. This is what the US discovered in Iraq.

In March 2003, 160,000 troops led by the US occupied Iraq and toppled Hussein’s regime. By April 2003, Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul fell under allied occupation. The fast pace of regime collapse should not, although it did for some observers, be a surprise. The accumulation of opposition to the regime started since its inception in 1968. Changing international conditions provided new opportunities for local players who constructed strategies in the form of adaptation to new opportunity structure. Regime collapse needs to be understood here as a collapse of an institution—the Baathist, Tikriti, and Saddamite network of power—that kept Iraq intact largely through coercion and incorporation of certain Iraqi elements.

This collapse—external occupation—forms what I discussed above as an Exogenous Shock in a social field creating a new Political Opportunity Structure and which activates Endogenous Responses. The removal of the Baathist regime shifts the Iraqi social field leftwards on Figure 4.2 above to a ‘No State’ category of cases. What emerged in such a situation are numerous state-like organisations trying to make political claims for a new order. This led, under circumstances of instability and looting of public institutions after the collapse of the regime, to the devolution of power and the dispersion of coercion. This power devolution was not haphazard however but devolved according to sectarian and ethnic social boundaries existing in the Iraqi social field.

With regime collapse and the absence of a clear state building design accompanied by a regional political plan, Iraq slid into a full-fledged civil war. Politicians, observers, and students of Iraq have debated the extent to which Iraq is or is not in civil war (Tripp 2007, 303; Mazloum 2006). I say ‘full fledged’ civil war here,

because, given what has been presented so far, Iraq *was* in a civil war since, at least, 1968. This ranged from selected assassinations by the regime—say of *Dawa* or Communist parties or its own Baathist opposition—to full fledged repression of, such as Kurdish insurgents during the *Anfal* Campaign or the 1991 uprisings. What we had was one organisation—the Hussein regime—monopolising more power *relative* to other organisations in society and having the ‘image’ of legitimate state. Regime collapse created a power vacuum, which different forces came to fill by negotiating—through dialogue and bloody confrontation—the possibilities of institutional building.

To understand Iraqi state collapse and the current political chaos there requires first an identification of the major players, their interests, and their international behaviour. The main player that made possible the change in Iraq is the US and, to a lesser extent its, allies. The US had an interest to install a democratic regime that is friendly and would not threaten its neighbours *but* would form a launch pad on which US strategy in the Middle East would be based. This, it was conceived, would weaken the power of both adversaries such as Syria and Iran and friends such as Saudi Arabia. For this to work, the US had to engineer a *stable* regime. Other main players include the Shiites and Kurds, who act as revisionist powers and the Sunnis who fear a revision in Iraqi balance of power might weaken their historical stronghold on power if not disintegrate the Iraqi state.

Here we observe (1) processes of power monopolisation led by the US and its allies begin to take shape. Sunni insurgents initiate a strategy of de-monopolisation; (2) power monopolisation takes place *within* different social boundaries among the Shiites or Sunnis and between them and the Kurds. Struggles centre on the nature of the state and relationship with the occupier; and (3) emerging public institutions—far from having an independent life of their own and as the previous Baathist regime—begin to reflect the new balance of power as each force dominates public office. Once again, the three social boundaries provide us with strong analytical tools to understand the current conflict in Iraq.

In designing a new political system the US relied on its Shiite allies such as SCIRI, *Dawa*, Sadr Movement and politicians with weaker social base like the secular Ayad Allawi or Ahmad Chalabi and the KDP and PUK from the Kurds. Although most opposition to US occupation came from the Sunnis, The Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) (an outgrowth of the Iraqi Muslim Brotherhood) accepted regime change and tried to work within the new system. The presence of foreign troops in Iraq, increased Iranian

influence there and the possibility of establishing a federal state, which could strip the oil-poor Sunni provinces from any income provided impetus for resistance among the Sunnis. These factors laid the framework for the emergence of the Iraqi insurgency.

To manage the transition the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) was established giving its governor L. Paul Bremer, executive, judicial, and legislative until June 2004 (Tripp 2007, 282). As head of the CPA, Bremer issued two disastrous orders. First, he dissolved the Baath prohibiting its high-level members from participating in government. Second, he dissolved the Iraqi army and the security apparatuses of the previous regime leaving more than 350 000 people unemployed and potentially being ready to join the insurgency (Stansfield 2007, 167-8; Tripp 2007, 282-3).

Just as the British eighty years earlier faced the dilemma of establishing their interests whilst installing an *Iraqi* political system, the US faced a similar dilemma: “whilst claiming to bring the benefits of democratic governance to the Iraqis” argues Tripp “the United States was nevertheless reluctant to give up control of the process to the Iraqis themselves” (2007, 283). This is the dilemma of late state formation. In July 2003, Ayatollah Ali Hussein al-Sistani the highest cleric in the Shiite *hawza*, who became a very influential actor in post-Baathist Iraq (Rahimi 2007), issued a *fatwa* imposing the need to resort to general elections before any constitution would be drafted. Increase in violent resistance took place against coalition forces and anyone collaborating with them. In August, the UN headquarters were bombed followed by the assassination of the SCIRI leader Baqir al-Hakim. In 2005 the CPA was replaced by the transitional Iraqi government and was tasked with the organisation of elections.

The saliency of ethnic and sectarian social boundaries increased as political entrepreneurs began to make claims on the political process. During the drafting of the ‘fundamental law’ (transitional constitution), as the Kurds advanced their claim for a federal and democratic state and the Shiite parties for an Iraqi law based on *Sharia*, Tripp observes that “these moves by well-defined and self-confident ethnic and sectarian organisations [even] pushed the Sunni Arabs of Iraq into an attempt to create a united front” (2007, 286).

Under the authority of Ayad Allawi, the Iraqi government with its new paramilitary units such as the Special Police Commandos led by his loyal and supported by coalition forces, entered into violent confrontation with both the Sunni insurgency in Fallujah and the Mahdi Army (the armed wing of the Sadr Movement) in Najaf. The

Fallujah campaign, which aimed to ‘cleanse’ the city from (‘foreign’) insurgents, saw more than 70 percent of its population fleeing and more than 5,000 dead leading the IIP to withdraw from government and aggravated the Sunni-Shiite divide (Ibid., 294). As a result the majority of Sunnis boycotted the 2005 elections while out of 55 members tasked to draft a new constitution only two were Arab Sunnis.

The election results reflected the new power balance in Iraq and institutionalised Iraq’s diversity. Out of 275 seats, the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA), a Shiite based coalition of Islamist parties led by SCIRI and Dawa, won 140 seats, followed by Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan (75 seats) led by PUK and KDP, and the Iyad Allawi’s secular Iraqi list (40 seats). The new parliament in effect saw the Sunni community (representing some 20 percent of Iraqi population) unrepresented.

Similar to the Baathification of the Iraqi state earlier a similar process took place in post-Baathist Iraq. Public positions came to represent the Iraqi diversity and the underlying power balance: The presidency was given to Talabani with two Arab (Sunni and Shiite) vice presidents, the house speaker to a Sunni Arab, and the premiership to Shiite Arab. Iraqi politics began to resemble that of Lebanon. The executive branch was headed by Ibrahim Jaafari of the *Dawa* party and had a majority of Shiites. The SCIRI controlled the interior ministry, the Kurds under Hoshiar Zeebari took the exterior ministry, and the defence ministry was given to a former (Sunni) Baathist officer who promised to crush the insurgency. Lacking a social base of his own, the defence minister “oversaw the colonisation of the ministry and the armed forces by Kurdish and Shi’i officers” (Ibid., 297). Ministries “became partisan fiefdoms, farmed out to powerful factions, made more powerful by their ability to command militias that were used to terrorise political enemies and whole neighbourhoods or communities seen as hostile to their sponsors” (Ibid., 277).

This state of affairs left most of the Sunnis in opposition to the new regime. Although some factions decided to participate in the second elections held in December 2005 earning the third place, others supported insurgency such as Harith al-Darrah of the Council of Muslim Scholars, groups linked to the deposed regime including ex-military officers, or radical Islamic parties such as the Partisans of the Sunna Army, Islamic Army in Iraq and al-Qaida (Stansfield 2007, 180).

In February 2006 militants blew a sacred Shiite shrine in the predominantly Arab Sunni town of Samara. In retaliation Sunni mosques were attacked throughout the country ignoring calls for calm by Sunni and Shiite clerics. This spurred further

violence, particularly in mixed cities such as Baghdad, Baakuba, and Kirkuk. Due to its importance, Baghdad saw demographic transfers and sectarian assassinations as the capital divided into sectarian neighbourhoods. By the end of 2006, it was estimated that around 2 million Iraqis became internal refugees and more flee outside Iraq, particularly to Syria and Jordan. During 2006, Iraq saw more than 100 civilians being killed every day (Tripp 2007, 308).

Systematic resistance against coalition forces, particularly the US, reached to over 4,000 deaths by March 2008. The increase in suicide bombers during Shiite religious ceremonies and the killing of civilians led the government of Nuri al-Maliki, another *Dawa* member, to respond with further violence exacerbating both the sectarian conflict and the existing instability. As an Iraqi observer puts it: “The commandos of the interior and the forces of the National Guards are (security) reserve guarantees for organisations able (and ready) to enter the war in any moment not to prevent it, but, as the composition of ministries is now based on sectarian distribution, to be part of it!” (Mazloun 2006).

The collapse of the Iraqi state and the emergence of state-like organisations aiming to monopolise power and attempts by others to derail these processes saw Iraq fall into Hobbesian anarchy: “The Iraqi government”, according to one study became “one of several ‘state-like’ actors” (Stansfield 2007b). As the government tried to centralise and monopolise coercion its adversaries raised doubts on its legitimacy. The al-Maliki government not only faced violent opposition from Sunni insurgents but also from the Shiite Mahdi Army. Asked to dissolve its military branch, the Sadr Movement replied that this would be possible when the SCIRI dissolves its own Badr Brigade (Azzaman 2008). In support for the Iraqi government, coalition forces were employed to bomb cities where Mahdi Army was present, particularly in the Revolution City, which was relabelled ‘Sadr City’, where the US planned to build a separating wall to limit the attacks targeting its troops originating in the city (Alakhbar 2007).

Like the general political landscape in Iraq, different Shiite groups—Mahdi Army, Badr Brigade, Fadhillah Party (a militant group based in Basra)— fought over territory, military control (Rahimi 2007, 14) while negotiating the nature of the federal system, distribution of power in government and control over Basra. For example, the SCIRI, which changed its name to the Supreme Islamic Council in Iraq (SICI), differs from Fadhillah party on how regions would be divided in a federal state and with al-Sadr Movement on the principle of federalism. The Sunnis in their turn are against

federalism and see this as the bedrock for the disintegration of Iraq (*Alhayat* 2007). Nuri al-Maliki of the Dawa shares this view and believes that federalism should form the basis for unity not disintegration.

In the on-going struggles taking place in Iraq, the Kurdish region remains the most stable and autonomous. The PUK and KDP have designed and dominated over state-like institutions in their region. While Mazoud Barazani presides of the Kurdish region (removing the Iraqi flag from all public buildings replacing it with a Kurdish flag (*AlNahar* 2006)) Talabani represents the Kurds at a national level. Since the regime collapsed, Kurdish parties displayed a strong sense of political prudence —thanks to a long (and bloody) history placing them at the crossroads of the Iraqi and the Middle Eastern state system—in achieving their aims without generating opposition (a potential Sunni-Shiite alliance) to their plans in Iraq or by seeking a full-fledged independence and hence disrupting the existing state system.

In attempting to answer the question as to ‘why do Iraqi Kurds abstain from expressing their desire for independence?’, the Kurdish Iraqi Nizar Agari observes that the Kurds have so far abstained from this struggle not because of the “love to be part of Iraq” but because of the ‘red-line’ imposed at a regional level and the role of the central government in Baghdad (2007). The current division among Shiites and between them and the Sunni have diverted any effort to curb Kurdish power in Iraq. Kurdish leaders understand the new balance of power in Iraq *and* in the region, which can provide them with numerous opportunities to maintain their autonomy.⁶² Memory figures high in the strategies of the Kurdish parties, while the geopolitical position of Iraq continues to save it as a territorial entity.

The inability of the current government to execute its policy in ensuring law and order had, like the Baathist regime before it, to rely on mediators. In Sunni provinces where it was deemed the al-Qaida had stronghold, the regime backed tribal forces such as those of the Al Sahwa Council of Anbar (*AL-Arabia* 2007) and Dulaim tribes, who oppose al-Qaida and are suspicious of the Iranian influence in Iraq.

Developments taking place in Iraq cannot be separated from regional dynamics in the Middle East. US occupation of Iraq threatened regime interests in Syria and Iran and raised fears for, as we saw above, Saudi Arabia and Turkey increasing their intervention in Iraq (Stansfield 2007b, 8; Tripp 2007, 311-12). The rise of Al Sahwa

⁶² Talabani for instance refused to ratify the execution of Saddam Hussein keeping the Kurdish relations with the wider Sunni community at a calm level. Further, the Kurdish leadership avoided confrontation with Turkey when the latter decided to pursue PKK forces in northern Iraq.

movement in the Sunni sphere is in one way an exit for Saudi Arabia's strategic dilemma in Iraq (see above). Syria saw American occupation of Iraq as threatening to its "regime's very survival" (Hinnebusch 2006, 129). For Iran, US presence in Iraq is both a source of concern and opportunity. Iraq forms one arena of conflict between the two with Lebanon, Afghanistan, and the Palestinian territories forming other arenas. Iran's concern involves a US stable presence that might threaten its regime while the opportunity lies in Iran's ability to weaken US presence there either by affecting the policy of its allies in government or by supporting the insurgency.

Amidst these regional divisions Iraq generates multiple foreign policies. The Kurds continue to support the US aiming to consolidate their autonomy and attempting to preserve relations with Iran, Syria, and Turkey, including Israel. These views contradict with Shiites—especially al-Sadr Movement—who are critical of both the US and Israel (Mindalawi 2007). The government of al-Maliki takes a centrist approach trying to balance forces between US and Iranian strategies. As opposed to the Kurds, the Shiites are divided on the main issues leading sometimes to bloody confrontations as those between the government forces and the *Mahdi* Army. This conflict took a regional dimension when Iran decided to halt its talks with Iraq in protest, while Iraqi Nouri al-Maliki sought Iran's help to ensure stability in Shiite regions (Meyer 2008) and to fight the insurgency.

Like the Shiites, the Sunnis are divided on the main political goals of post-Baathist Iraq. While some support the insurgency refusing to deal with US and accusing the current government of being the 'agent' of the US and Iran, others have sought to accommodate themselves in the new political structure in Iraq. US strategy—supported by friendly Arab regimes—aimed to incorporate the Sunnis to neutralise al-Qaida and other militant Islamist groups by arming the tribes in major Sunni regions such as the Anbar and to counter Iranian influence in Iraq.⁶³

Conclusion: Theoretical Implications of the Iraqi Case

What theoretical insights on state survival can the Iraqi case offer us? To answer this question I will conclude this chapter by examining the effect of each variable on Iraqi state survival.

As far as the first condition—domestic power monopoly—is concerned, we realise that Iraq's cultural heterogeneity has constrained the monopoly mechanism. This

⁶³ Condoleezza Rice believes that any US withdrawal will lead to increase Iranian influence there and that Iraq should become stable the US can, with its allies, confront Iran (*Al Hayat* 2007).

heterogeneity provided a basis on which political entrepreneurs can activate cultural identities for political objectives. This in turn challenged the narratives different regime's advanced to survive politically. As an externally engineered state, regime formation in Iraq brought to power a weak monarch with no social base. As opposed to the Saudi case, the monopoly mechanism in Iraq started *after* the emergence of state boundaries. As an externally engineered state, Iraqi regime did not rise from Iraqi society but was in its turn externally installed by the British. This provided the basis on which indigenous attempts at state formation were carried. Given the cultural heterogeneity of Iraq, political struggles took a vertical (e.g. regime versus Kurdish insurgency) and, as a late forming state, these conflicts had intra-elite dimension also. These struggles formed the basis for the emergence of a violent authoritarian regime.

What about the economic resources of the regime? If the above analysis is right, we can conclude by suggesting that the availability economic resources would weaken a (authoritarian) state that is culturally heterogeneous and not strengthening it. In the case of Iraq, the timing of the introduction of oil as a factor is important. Attempts at political monopolisation in Iraq started *before* oil was introduced to the Iraqi political scene. The above narrative defined patterns that cut across different regimes regardless of their identities or the resources they possessed. While oil in the case of Saudi Arabia came to reinforce existing power structures, in Iraq it contributed to the intensification of existing divides. Simply put, oil augmented authoritarian drives, which started earlier, contracting the political structure to unprecedented levels as in the case of Saddam Hussein's regime in the 1990s.

What does this tell us about the second condition—division of regional politics—for state survival? Iraq's geopolitical position has not only shaped its domestic development but, as shown above, has caused its formation as a territorial state. Iraq's international behaviour is shaped by domestic impediments of monopoly formation. While Saudi Arabia's domestic monopoly helped it project power abroad to prevent any revisionism in the regional order, Iraq's multiple foreign policies emanates from domestic attempts to establish power monopoly and resistance to this mechanism. Given Iraq's cultural heterogeneity, this caused revisionist factions to form alliances with external powers to balance against the regime internally. As Figure 4.3 above suggests, this increased the regime's authoritarianism while deforming the state and increasing Iraq's external vulnerability.

The vulnerability of the Iraqi state and the regional order interact in ways that determine the possibilities of state and regime survival in Iraq. In the initial phase of state formation when Britain and France regulated the regional system, domestic attempts for regime change—as the attempt during WWII—were aborted. The emergence of external neutralisation after the rise of Soviet and American influence in the Middle East enabled regime change in 1958. Given Iraq's cultural heterogeneity and the low political incorporation there, the new regional structure provided opportunities for the regime's adversaries also. That regional order amplified the domestic security dilemmas.

While in the Saudi case, a divided regional order contributed to reinforcing the domestic power monopoly, in Iraq a divided regional order intensified the civil conflict—first in the form of authoritarian repression and then in full-fledged civil war—taking place there. When the cold war came to an end (eliminating the external neutralisation), Iraq became totally vulnerable to regime change, which took place in 2003 by direct US invasion. By 2003 Iraq lacked both conditions (domestic power monopoly and external neutralisation) needed for state survival.

The major implication of examining post-Baathist Iraq is that state collapse in Iraq has increased this country's vulnerability to systemic forces. The multiplicity of political actors—coercion-wielding organisations—in Iraq and their multiple responses to regional developments make Iraq's stability, like that Lebanon of (Saouli 2006), very dependent on regional developments. The inability of the US to isolate Iran either through the breaking of the Iran-Syria-Hizbullah axis (the Lebanon-Israel 2006 war provided a potential for this) or to confront Iran directly may see the US accepting the *status quo*. This might lead to stability in Iraq. Should the US-Iran confrontation intensify, Iraq might slide into instability once again.

To decrease Iraq's vulnerability to systemic forces, active Iraqi factions (representing its cultural multiplicity) need to be incorporated in the state. Political incorporation would contribute to monopolising and institutionalising coercion and to orientate different political forces towards Baghdad. These would lay the foundations for an Iraqi unitary foreign policy that represents its multiple characters. It is more likely that under a conducive regional order, Iraq would institutionalise its domestic cultural diversity in public state institutions. The diffusion of power in the post-Baathist era would make it unlikely that Iraq would retreat to authoritarianism. The crystallisation of sectarian and ethnic social boundaries and the division in regional

order would work to defeat any attempts to establish a domestic hegemony in Iraq. Accordingly, stability in Iraq would fluctuate between order and instability as some warring factions attempt to institutionalise power and other resisting these attempts.

There remains one question that this chapter has not answered: why, as a culturally heterogeneous country that was externally engineered and is strategically located in an oil-rich region, does Iraq continue to survive as a territorial entity? Although Iraq has a different internal composition, it shares with Saudi Arabia the dependent variable of state territorial survival. This question will take us to the conclusion of this thesis, where I will argue that state survival during late formation is a function not only of domestic factors but of regional systems in which states are embedded.

Conclusion

A theory arranges phenomena so that they are seen as mutually dependent; it connects disparate facts; it shows how changes in some of the phenomena necessarily entail changes in others.

—Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*

This Thesis

The main problem this thesis sought to examine was under what condition states stay intact during late formation. This examination was applied to the case of the Middle East in general and the cases of Saudi Arabia and Iraq in particular. Specifying these conditions demanded first the treatment of the state as a ‘process’. Accordingly, the state was not taken as a given but the core of this research was to examine the conditions under which states form, deform, and survive. Second, this thesis presented a critical review of the two main approaches to studying the state in the context of the Middle East: The Political Economy and Political Culture approaches. I argued that this literature raises both conceptual and theoretical problems to the study of the state in the Middle East.

I argued that state weakness and authoritarian persistence in the Middle East is not due to the political culture of the Middle East or Islam’s inability to absorb the notion of the state. In fact, I showed that Arab and Islamic scholars have theoretically debated the course of which political order can be established in the region with the state being part of the debate. However, it was also argued that the state is not a mere ‘idea’ but a process involving political struggles and that linking the state to notions of ‘liberty’ or ‘democracy’—as is the case in the Western democracies—is not useful to understanding state formation in the Middle East. Finally, I argued that political culture is far too vague a concept to encompass political dynamics in the Middle East or the developing world in general.

The political economy approach has advanced our understanding of the Middle East by examining material structures, social forces and their politicisation to explain state formation and resilience in the region. I showed, however, that this approach (like its predecessor) relied on domestic factors to explain state survival and by limiting itself to these factors had problems explaining variation in the outcomes of different cases in the Middle East. Further, in the case of Rentier State Theory, the role of oil was over-

stretched to explain authoritarian persistence or the rise of Islamism. These explanations, for instance, have insufficient empirical backing as the cases of Saudi Arabia and Iraq have shown. Both Islamism and authoritarian regimes existed before oil became pivotal in the political dynamics of some states in the Middle East.

In Chapter Two, I examined general theories on state survival looking at both international—normative and realist approaches—and domestic factors—cultural and organisational perspectives. Although each of these works presents us with useful ways to examine state survival, I argued that these works need to be bridged to understand the complexities of state formation and survival in the Middle East. In Chapter Three, I proposed a Historical Structuralism model that aims to situate political phenomenon within cultural and material structures. By doing this I provided a specific definition of culture, treating it as a context that makes understanding political behaviour comprehensible. Further, the model examined the interrelations between cultural, material and political structures highlighting the role of political entrepreneurs in activating and de-activating these structures. These interactions, I argued, take place within social fields, which form the arenas where politics takes place and where distinctive histories are created shaping individual political behaviour.

This model provides a map of the political world paving the way to examine state ontology during late formation in Chapter Four. Two generic conditions characterise the ontology of the state in the developing world; first this state came late to a pre-existing state system and second this state is at the early stages of formation. The chapter then went on to examine the different stages a state passes through as it is forming. By specifying the conditions of state formation in the Middle East, this thesis resisted arguments that either treats the state in the region as ‘colonial fabrication’ or others that treat it as a genuine indigenous entity. I argued that the extension of the international anarchic system originating in Europe explains the drawing of state borders in the Middle East. This however required that indigenous powers establish strategies of ‘adaptation’ to external changes making the external strategies possible. What emerged in the Middle East were social fields where states develop and where political struggles are fought. These struggles centre on three main areas of state formation involving the monopolisation of coercion, of a political idea, and resources. These struggles are shaped by a social field’s cultural and material structures

The degree to which a social field is culturally homogeneous, the initial conditions (possibilities) of regime formation and the availability of economic resources

determine the nature and extent of the monopoly mechanism. The degree of domestic power monopolisation determines the way a social field responds to systemic forces. The higher the monopolisation process the more a social field will respond unitarily to systemic forces and vice-a-versa. Understanding state behaviour in the Middle East requires its situation in the process of state formation and deformation. As Figure 4.4. shows above, the higher the degree of state formation—a movement to the right of the continuum—the more a state will behave in a unitary manner and the less will be the external penetration in that state. As states deform, they begin to respond in multiple ways to systemic forces increasing external penetration in that state.

Security predicaments impose a dilemma on the late forming state. While political incorporation—the process of institutionalisation—strengthens a state's immunity against external penetration, it weakens dominating regimes who strive to maintain power. In the face of internal and external threats dominating regimes will endeavour to consolidate their power by furthering the monopolisation process. This forms the basis on which domestic opposition will resort to external powers to improve its domestic standing and to balance against the dominating regime.

I argued that all Arab states are weak when it comes to political incorporation. Between political incorporation and political survival, dominating regimes during late formation choose survival. This not only weakens the territorial integrity of their states but also erodes their political agenda and identity. Regime's strive for survival in different contexts—social fields—and hence under different circumstances. The more culturally heterogeneous a social field is—as the Iraqi case indicates—the more acute the dilemma is. The more culturally homogeneous a social field is, the less the critical the dilemma is, as the Saudi case reveals. Further, the examination of the cases reveals that while economic resources (oil income) have reinforced regime power in the Saudi case and lessened the late formation dilemma; in the Iraqi case oil income asserted the dilemma and constrained the monopolisation process.

This thesis aimed to theorise about state formation and survival in the Middle East. In doing so, it showed the diversity and variation of state formation trajectories in the region and the complexities of using cultural or political economy approaches to study the state. By specifying generic processes of state formation and factors that account for variation, this thesis laid the foundation for a comparative study of states in the Middle East going beyond overarching perspectives that do not account for differences within the population of cases or others that provide descriptive narratives in

one-case studies. By bridging theory and history, this thesis aimed to situate the Middle East in larger theoretical debates in Political Science and Sociology and to form the basis on which knowledge on the region can be accumulated, developed or refuted.

A Bounded Theory of State Survival in the Middle East

In addition to laying these foundations, this thesis aimed to explain the conditions of state survival in the Middle East. I argued that two conditions account for state survival during late formation: domestic monopolisation of power and external neutralisation (division in regional structure of power). These I argued are the theoretical conditions that need to be present for a state to stay intact. The extent to which each of these conditions is present varies among different cases, which sets the basis for comparison. The degree of a state's cultural homogeneity, its economic resources, its regime formation, timing of socialisation in the state system, geographical position and regional order all account for variation in state formation and behaviour outcomes.

The above two conditions reinforce each other as domestic power monopoly contributes to a division in regional configuration of power and in its turn a divided regional structure buttresses domestic power monopoly. How do these conditions help us explain state survival both as a regime of power and a territorial entity? Domestic monopolisation of power is a necessary condition but not a sufficient one to explain regime survival during late formation. As shown above, theories of state survival in the Middle East have focused on the domestic, cultural and socio-economic characteristics of state to account for their survival. After examining the initial conditions of state formation in the Middle East, the ontology of that state, and the conditions of its survival, I conclude this thesis with the following argument: State survival in the Middle East is a function of the anarchic nature of the international (and by extension the regional) state system more than the domestic characteristics of individual states.

The inherent insecurity in the international state system causes great powers, in attempts to preserve their independence, to expand their power to strategic areas of which the Middle East is one. The ontology of the late forming state—as described in Chapter Four—makes that expansion possible. When expanding states attempt to augment their spheres of influence some contribute to indigenous monopolisation processes, while other competitors contribute to opposite (de-monopolising) processes. Competition in the international system puts pressure on late forming states to monopolise power domestically. This could reinforce existing power monopolies (e.g. Saudi Arabia) or provide opportunities for regime change causing instability or civil

wars (e.g. Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, or Syria before 1970). Where monopolies are reinforced this forms the basis on which power can be projected back to the system contributing to its division. Saudi foreign behaviour provides an illustration of this mechanism. By allying itself to certain external forces, the Saudi regime balanced against any potential hegemony in its region while reinforcing its domestic hegemony. This balancing act reproduces the anarchy in the international system. Where instability or civil wars occurred, regional *status quo* and revisionist powers aimed to balance one another *within* a particular territory (e.g. Yemen in the 1960s, Iraq or Lebanon). This act of balancing aims to orientate a particular state in one direction (*status quo* or revisionist) by supporting one faction against another.

In both cases we observe that the anarchic nature of the international state system contributes to the survival of the *territorial* state. The geo-political position of a state during late formation determines the extent to which the international state system would condition its internal development. The more strategic⁶⁴ a state is during late formation, the less will its internal characteristics determine its survival. Because any change taking place within a state would affect the balance of power in the system, great powers in strategic areas would intervene through domestic forces to shape the ways and directions a state pursues in its foreign behaviour. The cases of Saudi Arabia and Iraq reveal that the geo-political position of these states determined their survivability as territorial entities regardless of their domestic composition. Through external support—financial or military—regimes were maintained in certain periods contributing to the territorial integrity of the state. British support, for example, for Ibn Saud was crucial for the emergence of the Saudi social field in the initial period, while the British subsidy during WWII and later US financial support was crucial for the monarchy's survival before oil income became pivotal.

On the other hand, British geo-political interests did not converge either with Kurdish or Shiite demands for autonomy in the initial stages of state formation leading to the emergence of the Iraqi state as we now know it. Although Iraq's internal composition is culturally heterogeneous and political claims are made for separation or division, the territorial entity there continues to survive. Although we should expect Iraq's fragmented society to contribute to its territorial division, it is this fragmentation however that keeps the Iraqi state intact. As the division of Iraq would threaten the state

⁶⁴ In the Middle East the two most strategic areas are the Gulf where oil is abundant and the 'Near East' where the Arab-Israeli conflict is taking place. The two areas have and continue to be pivotal for great powers.

system in the Middle East by, for instance, the Kurds providing a model for their compatriots in Turkey, Syria or Iran or the Shiites for minorities in Saudi Arabia or Kuwait, regional states will balance within Iraq against any such schemes. As we saw in the Iraq case, Kurdish experience with that state system has curbed their drive for total separation especially as they try to maintain their latest achievements in establishing autonomy. The Iran-Iraq war provides another example, as Iran was supporting opposition to the regime in Iraq, Arab states like Saudi Arabia and Jordan fearing Iranian expansion supported the Baathist regime. In keeping it intact, the Iraqi territorial state was maintained.

What about regime survival or change? One of the shortcomings of the literature on state survival in the Middle East was its conflation between state as a territorial entity and states as a regime of power (see Chapter One). While the international state system contributes to preserving the state as a territorial entity, changes within that system contribute to regime change in the late forming state. Once again, the literature on the state in the Middle East emphasises domestic factors to account for regime survival. This thesis contributed to that debate in two ways. First, by explicating the variables that account for state survival in the Middle East (Chapter Four), I showed that domestic factors—level of cultural homogeneity, regime nature, and economic resources available—are necessary but not sufficient to explain regime survival. To understand regime survival, we need to situate the late forming state in its regional and international arenas of power.

To account for this effect three variables—geographical position of a state, timing of socialisation in the state system, and regional order—were proposed. The structure of the international and regional systems provides both opportunities and constraints for domestic forces as they attempt to monopolise power within their states. When a change takes place in the configuration of the international system—as the emergence of new powers, e.g. US and the Soviet Union in 1945—new opportunities arise for revisionists (opposition within certain states) seeking to alter the power balance in their states. These form external enabling conditions for regime change or instability in the form of civil wars where regime change fails to take place.

The effect of these systemic changes on domestic structures of power depends on the level of monopolisation established before these changes take place and the nature of the social field. In the case of Saudi Arabia, we observe that systemic changes have benefited the monarchy by increasing its leverage against first the British and, with

the rise of Nasser and the Soviet Union, the kingdom became more pivotal for the US and the West in general. In Iraq, given the external engineering of the state and regime there and the rise of internal opposition as we saw above, change in international configuration of power provided new opportunities for revisionists to alter the domestic power balance. Attempts for regime change failed during WWII, while in 1958 with the increase in Nasserite and Soviet influence in the Middle East, change became possible.

Iraq's domestic fragmentation and geopolitical position made it very vulnerable to systemic effects. This not only created dilemmas regarding foreign behaviour but also caused civil war first between Baathists and Communists after the 1963 coup and later between the Baathist regime and the Kurds on one hand and the regime and Shiite movement on the other hand. The Islamic Revolution in Iran and the opportunities it provided for domestic opposition in Iraq amplified Iraqi domestic struggles. Once again, the maintenance of the regional balance of power contributed to keeping the Iraqi regime intact against its internal enemies and Iranian incursion. Change in the regional balance of power in 1990, led first to the contraction of the Iraqi regime and paved the way for invasion in 2003.

Oil income and the cultural composition of a state are crucial to inform us of the conditions for establishing the monopoly mechanism, regime strength or the level to which a state is vulnerable to systemic effects. These, however, are not sufficient to explain regime survivability or collapse. Does this mean that there is a causal relationship between the international system and state survival or collapse in the Middle East? However, does it mean that the state in the Middle East will continue to be shaped by changes in the international system? One main argument presented in section 3.4. above regards the history and memory of political entrepreneurs engaged in struggles within social fields. States develop by increasing political incorporation, which sets the basis for the emergence of a strong state.

The convergence of early state formation within the anarchic nature of the international system made the state in the Middle East highly vulnerable to the latter. However, political struggles taking place in the form of monopoly formation within states and the limits placed by the international system on these struggles will see political entrepreneurs attempting to avoid pitfalls of the past to secure their survival. This will vary from one case to the other. The more fragmented (Iraq, Sudan, Lebanon, Syria) a state is—after a long history of political struggles—the higher the need would be to design institutions to incorporate different factions to form the basis for stability.

In cases like Saudi Arabia (and other Gulf states), as discussed above, political incorporation will be slower and will be determined by the extent to which new socio-economic forces emerge and are able to politicise. Theoretically, the higher the political incorporation the less a state will be vulnerable to systemic changes. Political incorporation here does not only mean including different factions in state institutions but it also means incorporating their foreign orientations, hence rationalising and unifying a states foreign behaviour.

Widening the Scope: Theory, Method, and Further Research

In this thesis, I aimed to bridge theory and history to account for the complexities of Middle East politics. I argued for the need to establish ‘middle-range theories’ that bridge generic frameworks and history to establish a ‘bounded theory’. The generic framework provides us with the intellectual background to facilitate the reading of history in empirical cases. State formation processes, this thesis hoped to show, provide us with a strong ground to theorise Middle East politics. Further, studying state formation helps us bridge the gap between different fields within Political Science. By being clear about our understanding of the state as a concept and as a process, by situating the state in the Middle East in time and place, and by accounting for variation in the cases, this thesis provides a framework on which further research can be established.

Research can be advanced in two ways. First, research can be developed by widening the scope of the theory supplied here to examine other cases. Potential cases could include Jordan (monarchy but poor), Lebanon (culturally heterogeneous with no oil income), Syria (culturally heterogeneous, not oil-rich, and stable) or Yemen (tribal, with no oil income). The examination would involve searching into the factors that keep these domestically diverse states intact in some periods and fragmented in others. Some research questions are in order. Why although culturally heterogeneous is Syria stable? On the other hand, how can we explain state survival in Jordan, while the state there lacks the economic resources needed for that outcome? If it is about it domestic sectarian divisions, why is Lebanon stable in one period and fragmented in another? On the other hand, how do we explain the civil war that took place between Hamas and Fateh (both Sunni Muslim) in the occupied territories? If the theory presented here is

right, these questions should take us to the regional balance of power and the inherent security in it and how factions in the late forming states respond to that structure as they struggle for power domestically.

A second way to advance this research is to examine other dimensions of the multi-dimensional state formation process. For example, why was the civil war taking place in Iraq in 1963 ideological in nature and the current one sectarian? How are political identities formed and under what conditions? How does the discourse of political entrepreneurs shape these social boundaries and what effect does this have on state formation? Does culture override material structures? Is Syria's regime's ideology a mere façade disguising sectarian tension or is Arab nationalism a strong identity in Syria? How and when would state institutions become independent entities in the state formation process? Under what conditions would Saudi power diffuse to other social forces and how would this affect state institution there? The above research challenged the clear-cut relationship between oil-income and state strength in fragmented Iraq. If the above observations on Iraq are right, what can we expect the oil-income to produce in the case of Sudan? Further, how does the geopolitical position of a state affect its prospects for democratic transition?

The Middle East provides an important intellectual repertoire to study the state and state formation, to provide fruitful theoretical frameworks that can be extended to other area studies (Central Asia, Africa, Southeast Asia), and to develop appropriate methodological tools that are transferrable to other social science fields. Studying state formation comparatively by examining the history of the region through precise theoretical frameworks would form strong foundation to achieve this intellectual agenda. Disaggregating 'political culture' as a sociological concept while avoiding a reductionist political economy approaches would constitute a good start in that direction. Dilemmas of late state formation are far more complicated to be reduced to one factor or one level of analysis as this thesis has shown. By arguing that the determining factor of state survival in the Middle East is found in the structure of the international system, this thesis has both answered some questions and raised many more. Middle East Studies have so far suffered from too much polemic and too little political analysis or science. This formula must be reversed, not only for the benefit of intellectual inquiry but also for the good of the peoples of the region.

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