

# **Sectarianism and Political Order in Iraq and Lebanon**

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## **Abstract**

Although Iraq and Lebanon are deeply divided societies, they have followed varying political trajectories. Whilst Lebanon has accommodated sectarianism within a consociational democracy since its inception, until 2003 Iraq had an authoritarian regime that ostensibly repressed sectarianism. However, after 2003, Iraqi politics began to converge with the consociationalism of Lebanon. Taking a longitudinal approach, this study explains this puzzle by focusing on one factor: sectarianism. It asks how and why sectarianism has shaped the political trajectories and regime types in the two cases and, conversely, how sectarianism has been shaped by these trajectories and regimes.

## **Introduction**

The political trajectories of Iraq and Lebanon evoke interesting scholarly puzzles. Both cases can be categorized as ‘deeply divided societies’, but the twentieth century has pulled them in opposite directions on the authoritarianism/democracy continuum, with a power-sharing, ‘consociational’ model in Lebanon and an authoritarian, ‘control’ regime in Iraq (Lustick 1979).<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, since the fall of the Ba‘thist regime of Saddam Hussein in 2003, Iraqi politics has begun to resemble the consociational politics of Lebanon.

In this study I take a longitudinal approach to explain the roots and trajectories that led the Iraqi and Lebanese political regimes to first diverge and then converge. I do this by primarily focusing on the factor of sectarianism. My central concern is why and in what ways sectarianism has shaped the political trajectories and regime types in the two cases and, conversely, how sectarianism has itself been shaped by these trajectories and regimes.

To address this puzzle, I first offer a framework to analyze sectarianism. I argue that we need to locate sectarianism in its specific socio-political context and in relation to other factors (class, ethnicity, war) that shape political life. The aim is to examine how

and to what extent politicized sectarianism becomes a resource that shapes political dynamics, specifically the formation and deformation of political regimes.

Second, I demonstrate how varying processes of state formation have set Iraq and Lebanon on *divergent* trajectories that generated different political regimes. The drawing of national borders in Iraq and Lebanon formed new socio-political contexts for sectarian communities to interact and to negotiate varying political visions. I show that whilst Lebanon, following precedents in the nineteenth century, transformed sectarianism into an *historical institution* that established the basis for a consociational democracy which perpetuated sectarian expression, different regimes in Iraq, in attempting to advance their own concept of national community and to legitimize their own power, sought to repress sectarianism and pursued alternative authoritarian political models.

I then examine the conditions that led to convergence between the two political regimes. I illustrate that, unlike in Lebanon, where sectarian boundaries were drawn early on, in Iraq sectarianization was a gradual process, set in motion first when successive regimes activated kin and sectarian ties from above to secure their power and then by resistance to regime dominance and the mobilization of various political sectarian forces from below, such as the Shia *Dawa*.

Finally, I present an analysis of sectarianism in post-2003 Iraq and show how it shaped the contentious state (re-)building process. I also highlight the emergence of a consociational order in Iraq, which I compare to the system in Lebanon.

### **Sectarianism: A Framework for Analysis**

The fall of the Ba‘thist regime in Iraq (2003) and the Arab uprisings (2011–2017) have exposed sectarian tensions in the divided societies of the Arab world, particularly in Iraq, Syria, Bahrain, and Yemen. While both events exacerbated sectarian divides in Lebanon, they did not impact directly on the country’s political order – the arrangement that ties, regulates, and structures the relations between political actors, including the government.

These developments have ignited scholarly debates on the causes, consequences, place, and function of ‘sectarianism’ in various states in the region (Haddad 2017; Hashemi and Postel 2017; Marechal and Zemni 2012). However, despite the expansive literature, the concept and phenomenon of sectarianism remains a controversial one.

Fanar Haddad (2017:381), who painstakingly examined numerous studies on sectarianism, found that we have no clear definitions of sectarianism and recommended that the concept should be ‘permanently discarded’. Similarly, Ussama Makdisi has observed that sectarianism is an ‘inherently elastic and ambiguous’ concept (2017:4). These findings, which resonate with Brubaker and Cooper’s (2000) call to abandon the equally controversial and overused concept of ‘identity’, rightly call in their turn for some much-needed scholarly restraint in the use of the concept of sectarianism.

However, is ‘sectarianism’ any different to other equally elastic concepts such as class, ethnicity, or nationalism? If the answer is ‘no’, then instead of abandoning the concept, we should exercise scholarly caution in its application, first by clearly defining what sectarianism is, and second by grounding its examination in specific contexts and time periods.

What, then, is sectarianism? By invoking this concept we are, consciously or not, making two inter-related assumptions. First, we assume the presence of *interacting* sectarian communities within a state (e.g. Bahrain) or region (e.g. the Middle East). A sectarian community is an identity group that shares common traits – religious beliefs, traditions, memories, or perceptions – which set it apart from other communities. Identities are ‘social arrangements’ that can only be understood in relation to others (Tilly 2006:8–9; 209). Second, we also assume that certain actors – whether individuals or organizations – within these sectarian communities pass these traits between generations through discourse, symbols, or performances. In doing so, these actors reproduce identities and mark identity boundaries. A social identity, sectarian or otherwise, thus ‘mediates between social *context* and the *action* of human subjects’ (Reicher 2004:933–38, emphasis added).

Drawing on the above, sectarianism is a social actor’s (individual or group) feeling of belonging, devotion, and allegiance to a sectarian community within a social context. The strongly-felt belonging leads a social actor to exalt their community above others. This definition does not tell us much about the political implications of sectarianism, however. Hence it is useful to differentiate between a social category – a sectarian community – and its *potential* political function.

However, when sectarianism becomes intricately tied to political questions—such as national identity, statehood, or political representation—then sectarian communities become *contexts* of and *vehicles* to political mobilization (such as Northern Ireland, Iraq,

or Lebanon). We can demarcate this as specifically political sectarianism: the mobilization of sectarian communities – their emotions, memories, beliefs, aspirations, and fears – for political goals. Identities are politicized when actors ‘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’ (Tilly 2006:216). Political actors may seek to either *revise* or *preserve* existing political configurations, depending on their place in a political order (Saouli 2012:8–27).

Like other social categories (tribes, classes, nations), sectarian communities are not politically monolithic actors: they may equally be divided along class, region, or ideological lines. But there is another reason why sectarian communities are not monolithic entities; namely, members of sectarian communities generally hold multiple identities. This fact has made the examination and demarcation of sectarianism difficult.

An Iraqi Shia, for example, holds more than one identity, being simultaneously Shia, Muslim, Arab, and Iraqi. Each of these identities has the potential to be politicized. Moreover, one identity (of being Shia, say) may inform how other identities (of being Iraqi or Arab) can be imagined (Haddad 2011; Nakash 2006).<sup>2</sup> Just as individuals have to negotiate between these identities, so too do societies. State-making in the Middle East and the inclusion of different (religious, ethnic, sectarian) groups within countries’ boundaries provided the context for negotiating these identity cleavages (Saouli 2012; 2015a; 2015b; 2017). Sectarian belonging and relations are thus continuously (re-)negotiated, and sectarianism is a socially and politically constructed reality.

Because it is socially constructed, sectarianism is thus open for political *manipulation*. This point highlights another important dimension of identity politics: identities are not categories that one simply adopts and identifies with; they are also categories that can be imposed on one by others (Brubaker and Cooper 2000:15). Given the negative connotations of ‘sectarianism’, the S-word has been used by political actors in the Arab world to delegitimize enemies, whether the ruling regime or oppositional movements (Makdisi 2017:5–7; Saouli 2017).

By examining sectarianism in the cases of Iraq and Lebanon we will see how it is both constructed and deconstructed in processes of state-formation and deformation; or, put differently, how politics enables or constrains sectarianism, and *vice versa*.

## **Divergence: State formation and Sectarianism**

Assessing the impact of sectarianism on regime trajectories and types in Iraq and Lebanon takes us back to the founding of the two states. Both states emerged with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the division of the region by Britain and France into different spheres of influence in 1916, with Britain controlling Iraq and France controlling Lebanon. The drawing of national boundaries did not resonate with the region's heterogeneous (social, ethnic, religious, sectarian) make-up, but it did enable colonial and later indigenous state- and nation-building processes (Saouli 2012:29–48). The political regimes that emerged in each of the two cases were a direct extension of colonial attempts to institutionalize control.

### *Iraq*

Modern Iraq is composed of three historically distinct Ottoman provinces: Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul. It is one of the most heterogeneous societies in the region and arguably the most difficult to govern. Ethnically, Iraq is divided into Arab, Kurdish, Turkomen, and Assyrian components; religiously, between Muslims and Christians; and on a (Muslim) sectarian basis, into Sunnis and Shias. Of the many communities three are numerically significant: Arab Muslim Shias (55–60%), Arab Muslim Sunnis (20–25%), and Kurds (18–20%). Tribal, class, and urban/rural cleavages have also shaped Iraqi social and political dynamics. Sectarianism forms just one, albeit key, social cleavage; hence its impact must be measured in relation to other cleavages as well.

For historical reasons, Arab Sunnis dominated the Iraqi state without a break until 2003. Occupying the area of the Euphrates to the north and the Tigris between Mosul and Baghdad, Arab Sunnis historically played leading roles under the rule of the Ottomans with whom they shared the official religion (Sunni Islam). Culturally and economically, Baghdad and its Arab Sunnis gravitated towards Damascus and Beirut. When the state of Iraq was formed between 1914 and 1926, Arab Sunnis were well placed to play a dominant role. In 1921, Britain installed Faisal – the son of Sharif Hussein – as king of Iraq and he arrived with 300 former Sunni Ottoman Iraqi officers who would become the core of the monarchical regime (Al-Qarawee 2012:65).

The Arab Shias of Iraq, on the other hand, who occupy most of the southern areas and have a strong presence in Baghdad, have, for doctrinal and political reasons, historically been distant from the political centre, and under the Ottoman *Millet* system

they enjoyed relative autonomy. The founding of Iraq therefore offered both opportunities and threats for the Shias. On the one hand, the new state transformed them into a majority, offering unprecedented possibilities for political rule (and indeed some, such as Sayyid Talib al-Naqib, attempted to carve out their own state prior to 1920). However, the new regime, with its attempts to homogenize society, threatened to disrupt the Shias' religious political autonomy or to dilute their majority status should Iraq be incorporated into a Pan-Arab state. Therefore, in 1920, during the Iraqi revolt against the British occupation, and again in 1923, the *Hawza*, the Shia religious establishment, issued *fatwas* (religious edicts) against political participation in the British-controlled monarchy (Al-Qarawee 2012:64–65; Saouli 2012:111). Despite King Faisal's attempts to integrate Shia representatives into state institutions, the British efforts to contain the *Hawza* led it to support the urban Sunni elites and some Shia tribal chiefs instead. Nonetheless, these Sunni elites, who formed Faisal's main entourage, 'feared and distrusted the Shia and were inclined to exclude them' (Zubaida 2002:211).

The ruling Sunni elite's control contributed to the 'sectarianization' of the Iraqi state (Al-Alawi 1990:157–97). For example, most of the prime ministers in the monarchical era (1921–1958) were former Ottoman and Sharifian officers. The first Shia to be Prime Minister, Salih Jabr, came to power in 1947; of the 59 governments formed under the monarchy, only five were formed by Shias; and the Shias' share in ministerial appointments was only 27% (Mako 2015:146).

Moreover, fear of Shia infiltration of the Iraqi army's officer corps and the community's initial rejection of the conscription law restricted Shia representation in the higher echelons of this crucial institution. The Iraqi army, which was initially conceived as a local force to repress anti-British and centrifugal forces, formed the backbone of successive Iraqi regimes. The army's senior officers, observes Hassan al-Alawi, 'came from the ruling sect and the majority of the rank and file soldiers from the ruled sect [the Shias]' (Al-Alawi 1990:186).

Faced with these restrictions, various Shia segments expressed political dissent. In the 1920s, Shias began to work through political channels to address the issue of communal representation within the state. Political parties such as the *Watani* (Patriotic) and *al-Nahda* (Awakening) parties played a key role in highlighting Shia grievances (Al-Qarawee 2012:71; Saouli 2012:111). In 1932, the Executive Committee of the Shia of Iraq

submitted a petition to the League of Nations demanding, among other things, fairer representation within the state (Mako 2015:165).

Nevertheless, between Shia demands on the one side and the authoritarianism of the ruling regime on the other stood a normative framework that constrained Shia expression of communal grievances. The ruling Sunni elite held a Pan-Arab nationalist vision for Iraq that offered avenues for Shia representation in the state, albeit restricted ones. This vision debilitated Shia attempts to articulate and advance *communal* interests. Espoused by most Iraqi Sunnis and by many of its Shias, Arab Nationalism hoped to unite the Arabs under one state. Against the Pan-Arab vision stood 'Iraqism', which emphasized Iraq's history and national independence. Iraqism also appealed to many Shias, Kurds, and others who feared the dissolution of Iraq within an Arab state (Saouli 2012:110).

These two national imaginations have inspired Iraqi political behaviour since 1920 and constrained the explicit expression of sectarian communal identities (Nakash 2006:73). For the most part, Pan-Arabism has triumphed and formed the normative framework – the norms and institutions that identify standards of 'legitimate' political discourse and action – that successive Iraqi regimes have used to legitimize their power and suppress rivals (Al-Qarawee 2012:98). It was therefore the secular and nationalist Pan-Arabism that tied the Sunni ruling elite together rather than Sunni Islamism or communalism (the first ever Iraqi Minister of Finance was in fact Jewish [Al-Alawi 1990]).

Hoping to transcend sectarian, religious, tribal, and national cleavages, the monarchical and then republican regimes of Iraq used Pan-Arabism as a nation-building tool. Pan-Arabism permeated society, particularly the educational sector, which was used to inculcate successive Iraqi generations with Arab Nationalism (Al-Qarawee 2012:81). Pan-Arabism juxtaposed itself against 'sectarian' (Shia) and 'ethnic' (Kurdish) identities. For example, a law was passed in 1954 which prohibited the formation of 'political association on either racial or sectarian basis' (Mako 2015:150).

But ironically, by seeking to repress sectarianism, the Pan-Arab Sunni elite was actually creating sectarian boundaries by using Pan-Arabism to legitimize *its* power and to exclude others, thus offering the 'Other' a reason to mobilize. In the process, two contrasting interpretations of sectarianism emerged:

For Shias who were complaining about [the] state's policy, sectarianism was the basis on which their numerical majority was prevented from acquiring a

proportional representation in [the] state's positions and public jobs. While for Sunni politicians, sectarianism was a practice that gives a value for sectarian identity in the selection of staff for public appointments. (Al-Qarawee 2012:72)

Hence the ruling elite's interpretation repressed any potential Shia expression of communal interest as many Shias refused to invoke sectarianism in the fear that they would be socially or politically targeted. 'It is strange', notes Al-Alawi, that 'secular nationalists have considered activism against sectarian exclusion as a form of sectarian behaviour' (Al-Alawi 1990:259-269).

Pan-Arabism thus had a *disciplining* effect on political actors in Iraq: both the rulers and the ruled publicly denied sectarianism, despite its unquestionable presence (Al-Alawi 1990:259-69). Moreover, the attraction of many Shia intellectuals to either Arab Nationalist – several founders of the Ba'ath Party were Shias – or leftist movements, which promoted ethnic (Arab) and class allegiances over sectarian identities, contributed to sectarian discourse and activism being restrained (Jabar 2003:130-31).

On the other hand, state-building attempts drove Iraq towards authoritarianism. Hypothetically, a parliamentary consociational system could have offered the framework to contain and negotiate socio-political differences in the divided and nascent state of Iraq. However, this would have challenged the Pan-Arab vision of the regime, eroded the power of its (predominantly Sunni) rulers, and, given the calls for independence, threatened British interests. Instead, the effect of British colonization, intra-regime rivalries, ideological polarization, ethnic tensions, and socio-economic grievances was to fuel opposition from various segments of Iraqi society such as the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), Kurdish movements, Arab Nationalists, and the *Hawza*. Despite the constitutional recognition of Iraq's religious, ethnic, and political diversity, the monarchy enjoyed overarching executive powers (Mako 2015:138). To maintain power, the regime resorted to violent repression, gradually relocating political power to the coercion-wielding army. In 1936, Iraq (and the Arab world) had its first military coup, which was to be followed by a succession of others (1937, 1941, 1958, 1963, 1968, 1979) that set Iraq on an authoritarian trajectory that would exacerbate sectarian divisions (Saouli 2012:109-113).

### *Lebanon*



Unlike Iraq, Lebanon's state formation contributed to the emergence of consociationalism. Not being repressed as in Iraq, here sectarianism came to form an *historical institution* that has with time become a 'socially-constructed objective reality' (Luckmann and Berger 1991). Lebanon's consociationalism has two origins: first, episodes of peasant uprisings and communal strife in Mount Lebanon from 1820 to 1860; and second, the partition of the region between the British and the French.

Under Ottoman rule, Mount Lebanon, the precursor to the modern state, enjoyed relative autonomy. It had a feudal social system which was composed of notable families who were kept in check by one ruler, an emir (first of the Maanid and then of the Shihabi families), who was directly responsible to the Ottoman Sultan. The emir adjudicated over local feuds and collected taxes for the Ottomans. The majority of the population – either Druze (an offshoot of Shia Islam) or Maronite (a Catholic sect) – coexisted peacefully and most conflicts merely involved 'factions and feuding families' (Khalaf 2004:81).

However, the period from 1820 to 1860 disrupted this feudal order. Resistance to Ottoman taxes and conscription, meddling by the European states in the Levant, and Ottoman attempts to modernize Mount Lebanon's economy and society led to successive peasant revolts which gradually transformed into sectarian strife. Although initially targeted at landlords, the peasant revolts transformed into a sectarian conflict when the Druze landlords mobilized Druze peasants against what they labelled the 'Maronite' revolt (the Maronite church played a key role in instigating the revolt). In addition, European meddling, particularly through British and French support for their local allies, exacerbated the conflict (Khalaf 2004:73–101).

These episodes set Lebanon on a specific political trajectory. First, they led to the activation of sectarian boundaries and a lasting 'culture of sectarianism', which became manifest in the discourse and institutions of religious representation and power-sharing (Makdisi 2000:6). Second, as a result of domestic divides, first Mount Lebanon and then the state of Lebanon became prone to external penetration (Saouli 2006). Between 1840 and 1990, domestic conflicts would be resolved by sectarian power-sharing formulae sponsored by external patrons. For example, after the (Christian) peasant uprising, which turned into a bloody intercommunal conflict in 1860 (around 12,000 Christians lost their lives), the Ottomans and European powers designed the *mutassarifiya* (plenipotentiary) regime, which established an administrative council whose members included four Maronites, three Druze, two Greek Orthodox, one Greek Catholic, one Sunni, and one Shia.

A non-Lebanese Christian appointed by the Ottoman Sultan presided over the council (Salloukh *et al.* 2015:14).

With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War, modern Lebanon was established in 1920 when the French annexed to the Christian enclave of Mount Lebanon the southern and northern territories and the Beqaa valley with their predominantly Muslim populations (Sunni as well as Shia). According to the 1932 census, the Maronites constituted the single largest minority (28.0%), followed by the Sunnis (22.4%), and Shias (19.6%). The majority (51.3%) of the Lebanese were Christians (Saouli 2006:706).

The biggest challenge facing the Maronites and their French patrons was to maintain a dominant position in the state without alienating the Muslims. The latter, after resisting the idea of a Greater Lebanon, including boycotting elections in 1922 and 1925, began to seek representation and influence in the emerging regime. The Maronites' attempts to protect their communal interests created the (sectarian) framework for the resistance of Muslims to an accommodation with the new state (El-Solh 2000). When Lebanon became independent in 1943, an unwritten agreement among influential Maronite and Sunni leaders, called the National Pact, established the basis of a consociational democracy, reserving the office of President for the Maronites, the House Speaker for Shias, and the Prime Minister for the Sunnis. Other sectarian communities (Lebanon has 17) were given minor posts in the state. Reflecting the demographic balance at the time, the agreement created a 6 to 5 ratio of Christians to Muslims in state positions.

The National Pact reinforced sectarianism as an historical institution and, like Pan-Arabism in Iraq, transformed it into a normative framework. If Iraq's Pan-Arabism condemned sectarianism, Lebanon's framework placed it at the heart of all facets of political life: political perceptions, visions, mobilizations, and strategies; the media; the judicial system; education; business networks; security; and foreign policy (Salloukh *et al.* 2015). The norm of 'sectarian equality' became the social standard that defined interactions among communal groups and their relation to and representation in the state. Publicly at least, social actors reproduced sectarian norms by emphasizing the importance of Lebanon's religious freedom, pluralism, and 'fair' communal representation in the state, whilst at the same time acknowledging sectarianism as an evil that should be overcome.

These norms prevented the emergence of a hegemonic ideology to homogenize the divided society. Consociationalism offers Lebanese communities a sense of belonging to the state yet also autonomy from it. By belonging, religious communities are able to preserve their influence in the state and thus create a balance against potential hegemons since all strategic positions in the state are apportioned according to sectarian affiliation. Furthermore, by belonging, religious communities also preserve their religious autonomy, which is enshrined in the Lebanese Constitutions of 1926 and 1990.<sup>3</sup> By law, religious communities have their own councils, courts, and charities that deal with personal status (marriage, divorce, inheritance, etc.) and social affairs.<sup>4</sup> Paradoxically, therefore, belonging serves to promote autonomy.

However, as with Iraq, this normative framework can mask the actual power relations. Political leaders have used sectarianism to reproduce their power within their own sects and at a national level. Invoking sectarian fears is a survival technique used by Lebanese politicians to deflect public attention away from corruption or failure to develop viable social and economic policies. As Mahdi Amel has shown, the construction of sectarianism in Lebanon disguises other social cleavages (such as class) and masks actual political control (Amel 1986:86–89). Notwithstanding the norm of ‘sectarian equality’, in reality there has always been one community that is ‘more equal’ than others: the Maronites until 1975; Muslims from 1990 to 2005; and Shias since 2008 (Saouli 2006; 2011).

Also as in Iraq, the making of Lebanon generated two varying visions of the national identity. The first, ‘Lebanism’ – initially espoused by many Christians and some Muslims – perceived Lebanon as an independent sovereign state rooted in Phoenician history. The second, ‘Arabism’, emphasized Lebanon’s Arab past, language, culture, and historical belonging to Greater Syria. These visions, as I will elaborate below, inspired Lebanon’s internal political struggles and its behaviour abroad (El-Solh 2000; Salloukh *et al.* 2015:15–16; Saouli 2014:109). As early as 1920, whilst many Maronites welcomed the creation of Lebanon by France, many Muslims resisted it both politically and militarily (Kourani 2012:130–31).

Thus, historical factors as well as processes of state formation set Iraq and Lebanon on diverging trajectories that generated two opposite forms of political regime: authoritarianism in Iraq and consociationalism in Lebanon. Each regime went on to

produce a different normative framework that either restricted (Iraq) or institutionalized (Lebanon) sectarianism.

### **Regime Type and Sectarianism**

Over time, however, the deepening of and resistance to authoritarianism in Iraq would gradually activate sectarian boundaries, paving the way for the emergence of consociationalism in the post-2003 period. A series of political shocks in Lebanon between 1943 and 1990, on the other hand, have deepened that country's sectarian consociational system.

#### *Iraq*

The post-colonial regimes in Iraq rested on the revolts of the middle class and the deprived masses against the old oligarchy. The middle class expressed itself through radical ideologies such as Arab Nationalism, Socialism, and Communism that aimed to mobilize the masses against the monarchy and colonialism in Iraq. The military became an important vehicle for the realization of these ideologies, for state building and, consequently, for regime survival. In Iraq, the gradual infiltration of the army into political life culminated in the revolutionary coup of 1958 which toppled the monarchy and brought to power a coalition of Arab Nationalist, Ba'athist, and Iraqi Nationalist forces. But the 1958 Iraqi Revolution, which came as a result of increasing economic disparities, regime repression, political polarization, and British decline, sparked a further succession of military coups in 1963, 1968, and 1979.

Each military coup resulted in a new regime that tried to shape cross-sectarian ruling coalitions. However, despite the varying ideological visions of these regimes, none disrupted the sectarian make-up of the ruling elite, which remained predominantly Sunni until 2003. In the period from 1958 to 1990, for example, only one government was formed by a Shia (Al-Alawi 1990:198–201). Moreover, in their various ways and whether intentionally or not, these regimes provoked a reaction from *different* segments within the Shia community. Although the regime of Abd al-Karim Qassem (1958–1963), which promoted Iraqi nationalism, was more inclusive and aimed to alleviate Shia poverty, his land reforms managed to provoke the Shia landed class (Saouli 2012:117). His introduction of the personal status law in 1959 aroused opposition from the *Hawza* and

gave rise to Islamism as an alternative to dominant 'atheist' models (Al-Qarawee 2012:101).

In 1963, Qassem was toppled by a coalition of Arab Nationalists. This regime change transformed Pan-Arabism, which had varying cultural and political interpretations, into a state ideology that reinforced the suppression of sectarianism. But intra-regime rivalries, regime repression from above, and political mobilization from below would, intentionally or otherwise, activate sectarian boundaries. In 1968, the Ba'ath (Revival) Party came to power through a military coup and imposed its own variant of Arab Nationalism. It dominated all facets of society and government, especially coercive state organs. It excluded all perceived or real enemies and suppressed alternative ideologies and visions. This Arab Nationalist vision hoped to homogenize Iraqi society and to eliminate ethnic, sectarian, tribal, and class cleavages, and the significant number of Shia in the party membership supported this project.

Ironically, however, Ba'athist authoritarianism contributed to the activation of social cleavages. Intra-regime rivalries, now waged within the Ba'ath, eroded the unifying power of ideology and shattered trust among the Ba'athist rulers. To maintain power, the Ba'athists deepened the trend which had begun earlier under the Arab Nationalist regime of Abd al-Salam Arif (1963–1968) and began to rely on kinship ties to buttress their own power. Saddam Hussein, who gradually took over control of the Ba'ath regime between 1968 and 1979, installed members of his own family, tribe, and town (Tikrit) in strategic positions within the party and state (Al-Qarawee 2012:91–117; Saouli 2012:118–23). His authoritarianism excluded political and ideological rivals from the Sunni community and sharpened rifts with other communities, particularly Shia Islamists, who began to organize in the late 1950s.

Political repression, the weakening of the Shia landed class and the *Hawza*, and the proliferation of secular ideologies (Arab Nationalism, Iraqism, and Communism) combined to provoke a young generation of Shia political activists (Jabar 2003:63–75). In 1958, the Islamic *Dawa* (Call) Party (IDP) was founded by a group of Shia small merchants and religious scholars, including the leading intellectual figure Ayatollah Muhammad Baqr al-Sadr. *Dawa* aimed to curb the expansion of secular movements, particularly the influential Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), in the Shia community, and promoted Islamism as an alternative political model for Iraq (Jabar 2003:78). The IDP's Islamism challenged the Ba'athist ideology, but the real threat was *Dawa*'s potential to mobilize Iraq's Shias.

In theory, the IDP is not a communal sectarian movement. It calls for an Islamist revival and unity among Muslims, and through al-Sadr it aimed to articulate an Islamic theory of the state. But in practice, the IDP's emergence and development cannot be stripped of its Shia and Iraqi roots. The IDP rebelled against what it perceived as a politically passive *Hawza* at a time (in the 1960s) when the political and economic exclusion of the Shia was on the rise. Al-Sadr's re-articulation of Islamism has roots in Shia Islamist doctrine and perceptions of history. Thus the breeding ground for the growth of IDP was the Shia community in Iraq which this group tried to appropriate (Al-Qarawee 2012:102–105).

The identity and rise of the IDP inevitably clashed with the Ba'ath, which by the 1970s was developing into a totalitarian regime intent on homogenizing Iraqi society. The regime's capacity to dominate increased thanks to oil revenues and the centralization of coercive power in the Ba'ath, enabling it to repress and contain all forms of Shia political, intellectual, and religious activism. For example, in 1977, Shia activists challenged the regime's prohibition of religious ceremonies and participated in *Ashura* (the Shia annual commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein), which turned into a mass political protest, leading the regime to intensify its campaign of repression (Jabar 2003:200–205). Dawa's resistance to regime dominance and its articulation of a Shia Islamist ideology, on the other hand, reinforced the regime's narrative, which ostensibly aimed to suppress religious and sectarian expressions of identity. Politically, to contain the IDP and sow division in the Shia community, the regime extended its patronage network to the Shia community and increased Shia representation within the Ba'athist regional leadership (Saouli 2012:122).

The 1979 Islamic Revolution, which brought the Shia imam Ayatollah Khomeini to power in Iran, exacerbated confrontation between Shias and the regime in Iraq. Inspired and galvanized by the Islamic Revolution, Dawa intensified its campaign against regime symbols and members, leading the regime to intensify its repression. Hoping to curb the spread of the Islamic Revolution to Iraq, Saddam Hussein invaded Iran in 1980, triggering the long Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988). At home, he executed al-Sadr and his sister, made membership of Dawa punishable by death, and deported more than 40,000 'Iranian Shias' (Tripp 2007:229–30).

Hoping to dilute Khomeini's revolutionary Islamism and to demobilize Shia Islamist political activism, the Ba'athist regime constructed the war as one between Arabs

and Persians, distinguishing between 'good Shias', who were followers of Imam Ali, and 'bad Shias', who were 'sectarian' and 'extreme' (Nakash 2006:90–91). But this did not stop the irreversible alienation of many Shias from the ruling regime, who consequently began to develop a communal perception of marginalization in a Sunni-controlled state, with aspirations of their 'right' to rule (Amarilyo 2015:78; Jabar 2003; Nakash 2006). With the outbreak of the Iraq-Iran war, many Shia movements, including Dawa, moved to Syria and Iran, despite the fact that the majority of the Iraqi army remained Shia.

The end of the war in 1988 did not ease tensions between Shias and the regime. In 1991, Shias in the southern provinces (and Kurds in the north) exploited Saddam Hussein's failed attempt to occupy Kuwait and spontaneously rose against the regime. The rebels managed to control nine predominantly Shia provinces, but the *Hawza* remained politically cautious and many Shia state employees did not join the uprising, fearing retribution: whilst many Sunnis opposed the regime, many more feared becoming targets of revenge should it collapse.

Nonetheless, the uprisings in 1991 unmistakably revealed a divided country with three constituents (Sunni, Shia, and Kurd) and 'the sectarian line of division was more evident than any time ever' (Al-Qarawee 2012:127). However, the reluctance of the US and its regional allies (Saudi Arabia and Turkey) to remove Saddam Hussein from power enabled the regime to suppress the uprising, leading to the death and displacement of thousands (Saouli 2012:122–23). The repression of the 1991 uprising and the regime's portrayal of the rebels as Iranian 'agents' deepened Shia grievances and strengthened their political consciousness.

### *Lebanon*

Whilst sectarianism, among other factors, was gradually shaking apart the political order of Iraq, during this same period it was playing a key role in both instigating *and* containing successive political shocks in Lebanon. These shocks had two inter-connected origins: the first was related to the country's bifurcated identity and its responses to external challenges, while the second resulted from the drive to revise or maintain the political and constitutional balance of power. The rise of Arab Nationalist thought and influence in the 1950s in Lebanon – promoted through Nasser's Cairo, particularly among the majority of Muslims – offered an opportunity for Lebanon's Muslims to seek political reform and equal representation in the regime. Fear of losing its grip on power and the

potential dissolution of Lebanon as a result of the 1958 union between Egypt and Syria led the Western-allied Maronite regime to seek American assistance, which resulted in the brief civil war of that year (Saouli 2006:709).

The 1958 conflict was the precursor to the bloody and much longer internationalized civil war of 1975–1990. Initially, starting in 1969, the political rift centred on the presence of armed Palestinian militias in Lebanon. The Palestinians, who viewed Lebanon as a geopolitical springboard to liberate Palestine, were supported by many Muslims, Arab Nationalists, and leftist groups and opposed by the majority of the Christian political forces. But once again, the war – which divided Lebanon into Muslim and Christian parts – provided an opportunity for Muslims to improve their representation in the system and to threaten Christian dominance (El-Khazen 2000).

By 1975, Lebanon's Muslims had become the majority.<sup>5</sup> The socio-political mobilization of the Shias presented a challenge to the Muslim/Christian balance and to the Sunni/Maronite political pact. Musa al-Sadr, a Shia religious leader and social reformer, led the struggle for the country's Shia community. Unlike Dawa in Iraq, however, he did not seek to establish an Islamic state. Rather, by summoning the norm of 'sectarian equality' through *Amal* (Hope) – The Movement of the Deprived, Sadr sought to increase Shia representation in the state and to alleviate the community's socio-economic marginalization. Sadr's movement challenged the Shia community's feudal leaders and secular parties (such as the Lebanese Communist Party) which had hitherto influenced the community, eventually giving rise to two dominant parties: Amal and Hizbullah (which grew out of the former) (Abisaab 2014; Saouli 2018; Siklawi 2014).

These socio-political transformations found their constitutional translation in 1989 when a Saudi Arabia-led effort brokered the Taif Accord (formally known as the National Reconciliation Accord) to end the war in Lebanon. Under Taif, the new constitution shifted executive power from the Maronite President to the Council of Ministers, presided over by a Sunni Muslim Prime Minister. It also divided Lebanon's parliamentary seats (and other state positions) equally between Muslims and Christians. Taif also offered a resolution to Lebanon's identity question. It recognized Lebanon as a 'final' sovereign state, thereby assuaging Christian fears of Lebanon's dissolution into an Arab state, while also emphasizing the country's 'Arab belonging' and eliminating its former 'dual' identity (Jiha 1998). Mainstream Christian forces (namely, Michel Aoun, Amin Gmeyal and the Lebanese Forces), however, rejected the rearrangement of power



and refused to participate politically in a Syrian-controlled Lebanon. Consequently, this weakened Christian influence in the system and gave rise to a Muslim-dominated regime based around the *troika* of Sunni Rafic Hariri, Shia Nabih Berri, and Druze Waleed Jumblat.

Under the new political order, Lebanese elites enforced their control by installing loyalists in key positions through the informal system of *muhasasa* (sectarian apportionment of state positions), whilst establishing networks of patronage within their sectarian communities. The new authority now centred on leaders of the three main (Muslim) communities under the *troika* arrangement. This gave rise to corruption, favouritism, and an absence of accountability, whilst consolidating the sectarian divides. Under Syrian tutelage, the Lebanese sectarian leaders designed electoral laws that reproduced their power (Saloukh *et al.* 2015).

After a period of stability between 1990 and 2005, Lebanon faced another political shock when its former Prime Minister, Rafic Hariri, was killed in Beirut. Hariri's assassination came after the US invasion of Iraq and an increase in American pressure on Syria to withdraw from Lebanon, which polarized Lebanese politics between supporters of Syria and its critics – mainly Christian parties and the Sunni-led Future Movement. Accused of killing Hariri, Syria withdrew its forces in 2005. Contrary to the wishes of the US and its Lebanese allies, however, the Syrian withdrawal gave Syria's armed ally, Hizbullah, the opportunity to play a greater role in the country, partly in order to sustain strategic depth in its war with Israel.

Hizbullah managed to rally the Shia community behind it and to establish a network of political alliances that gave the Shias unprecedented power in the country (Saouli 2018). This generated fear among other sectarian communities, particularly the Sunnis. The rise of Hizbullah and the geopolitical rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran exacerbated sectarian tensions in Lebanon. By 2006, the Shia/Sunni rift had become more pronounced, adding another sectarian cleavage to Lebanon's historical Christian/Muslim divide (Saouli 2006). But these changes in the political configurations did not alter Lebanon's consociational order, which even its most powerful Islamist movement, Hizbullah, has surrendered to.

### **Iraq's Convergence towards Consociationalism**

In many respects, Iraq's political system in the post-2003 period converged towards Lebanon's consociational democracy. I here focus on Iraq whilst comparing it to Lebanon.

It took the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 to change its authoritarian regime, which inaugurated a new phase of Iraqi state-building. This phase offered a new context to (re-)negotiate sectarian (and ethnic) ties. As ever, the negotiations centred on vital political questions: Iraq's national identity, political system, electoral laws, natural resources, and, ultimately, political power. In the absence of an authoritarian power, negotiating these ties involved constitutional, political, and violent means that highlighted the salience of sectarianism. Sectarian tensions in post-2003 Iraq fluctuated between contained political rivalry and bloody confrontations.

The new constitution, ratified in 2005, defined Iraq as a federal parliamentary democracy, secured Kurdish regional autonomy, and promoted the norm of democracy. Moving beyond Pan-Arabism, it stressed that 'Iraq is a country of multiple nationalities, religions, and sects' (Anon 2005). Unlike Lebanon's 'corporate' consociational system, which 'accommodates groups according to ascriptive criteria', Iraq's 'liberal consociational' system is based on 'democratic preferences rather than on predetermined ethnic or communal categories' (McGarry and O'Leary 2007:687). But in practice, and to realize power-sharing norms, the dominant positions of the state came to be filled by Iraq's main communities: the Presidency for the Kurds, Prime Minister for the Shias, and House Speaker for the Sunnis (Mako 2015:260–80; Al-Qarawee:207–209). Inevitably, the shift to consociationalism gave rise to forms of sectarian representation, discourse, and rivalry similar to those in Lebanon.

Nonetheless, the consolidation of the new political order still faced several major hurdles. First, Shia state-building attempts, which were informed by Shia communal memories of marginalization and repression and aimed to empower the Shia identity in the post-2003 era, generated a 'sense of Sunni alienation, a sense of loss, and a sense of victimhood' (Haddad 2015:5). Like Lebanon's Maronites in the post-war era, many Iraqi Sunnis felt they had lost control over 'their' country. Whilst both Sunnis and Shias shared an Iraqi identity, in 'the dispute of narratives', each community imagined Iraq through its own lens: whilst the Shias hoped to achieve inter-communal integration, with the Shia community playing a dominant role, Sunni nationalists wanted a return to an imagined Iraq where sectarianism did not determine socio-political interactions (Al-Qarawee 2012:230).

To empower Shia identity and increase their political fortunes, Shia political forces such as the IDP (Dawa), the Supreme Islamic Council, and the Sadr Movement mobilized the Shia community and competed for dominance over the major government ministries (Saouli 2012:128–33). Like their Lebanese counterparts, they established patronage networks to buttress their power within the Shia community. The elections (such as those in January 2005 and in December 2010) generated Shia majorities in the parliament, guaranteeing them the premiership. However, by thus controlling the state and advancing their political visions, they aggravated Sunni fears. In addition, the American ‘De-ba‘thification’ policy and the dismantling of the army and security forces, which left more than 350,000 Iraqis (many of whom were Sunni) unemployed, reinforced Sunni fears of marginalization and created the conditions for radicalization.

However, beyond their instant sense of rejection, and maybe because of it, Sunnis gradually began to construct a communal consciousness in the new Iraq. For example, the majority of the Sunni community voted for the Iraqi Accord Front (led by the Sunni Iraqi Islamic Party [IIP] and tribal forces), which highlighted ‘Sunni marginalization’ in the 2005 elections (Al-Qarawee 2012:221). When the new Iraqi constitution was negotiated, Shia and Kurdish forces articulated clear political demands, pushing ‘the Sunni Arabs of Iraq into an attempt to create a united front’ (Tripp 2007:286).

Sunni opposition to the new regime nonetheless aggravated Shia fears and suspicions about the desire of ‘Sunnis’ to derail the state-building process (Saouli 2015a:324–26). Some Sunni factions, such as the IIP, joined the elections, but others chose to boycott it. Capitalizing on the Sunni/Shia cleavage and on the US occupation of Iraq, Salafists and groups affiliated to al-Qaida, which rejected any reconciliation with the dominant Shia groups, began to establish a base in Iraq. The period from 2004 to 2007 heightened sectarian tensions and violence in the country, resembling Lebanon’s civil war. Attacks against Shia pilgrims, army recruits, and Shia shrines aggravated sectarian confrontation. Likewise, attacks on the al-Askari mosque, a Shia shrine, in 2006 and 2007 led to retaliation by the Shia armed groups Moqtada Sadr’s Mahdi Army and the Islamist Badr Brigade against Sunni mosques and neighbourhoods in Baghdad. Clashes in mixed towns or neighbourhoods in Baghdad led to sectarian cleansing (Al-Qarawee 2012:183).

Geopolitical rivalries between the US and its regional opponents also exacerbated the sectarian and political divides in Iraq. The American occupation generated resistance from within and outside Iraq (Saouli 2012:132–34). Domestically, many Sunni groups

and some Shia factions chose armed resistance against the US, which resonated with Iranian and Syrian attempts to destabilize US-occupied Iraq. Suicide bombings against the Iraqi army and police, polling stations, and US and coalition forces meant that the state-rebuilding process was frequently stalled. However, with the withdrawal of American forces in 2011, US allies in the region (Saudi Arabia, Turkey, UAE, and Qatar) had an interest in curtailing both Shia dominance in Iraq and Iranian expansion in the region (Saouli 2014), which led them to support Sunni factions in Iraq.

These domestic and external dynamics certainly aggravated the sectarian tensions in Iraq, but they did not affect the nascent consociational order in the country. Iraqi consociationalism began to generate patterns and discourses similar to Lebanon's. The need to represent all communities in the state gave rise to the discourse of 'national unity' governments, which encouraged *mahasasa*; and *mahasasa* reinforced the clientelistic networks of major parties. The dominance of the main communal groups, on the other hand, diminished the possibilities for the emergence of a credible opposition to hold the government to account (Al-Qarawee 2012:224). In both Iraq and Lebanon, this pattern, compounded by security and geopolitical problems, weakened the state institutions.

However, unlike Lebanon, from 2008 to 2010 Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki of the IDP attempted to contain sectarian discourse and behaviour by promoting inter-communal Iraqi nationalism. He hoped to centralize power in the state by curbing the influence of armed groups, whether Sunni or Shia. But al-Maliki faced a classic dilemma in the process of Iraqi state-building: attempts to centralize power generated resistance from different forces, and so to overcome this resistance, he began to rely on his own kin and loyalists, installing them in main state positions; this, however, further aggravated the resistance to domination (Saouli 2012). Fearing a return to authoritarianism, key actors in the Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish communities resisted al-Maliki's centralizing attempts and complained about 'exclusion'. Although in this short period sectarianism was reduced, rising domestic opposition, both from within and without the Shia community, led al-Maliki to retreat to his own power base among the Shias (Al-Qarawee 2012:228-33).

Al-Maliki's retreat was also shaped by regional factors. The Syrian war (since late 2011) aggravated Sunni/Shia rivalry in both Iraq and Lebanon. Al-Maliki's support of Bashar al-Assad's regime against his predominantly Sunni opponents reinforced Iraqi

Sunnis' grievances and narratives (Saouli 2015a:324–26). Galvanized by the Arab uprisings, many Sunnis resorted to political protest against the government, calling for fairer treatment and greater representation in the state (Haddad 2015).

In 2014, 'Islamic State' (IS), successor to the 'Islamic State of Iraq', occupied Mosul. The rapid collapse of the Shia-dominated Iraqi army, which revealed its weak legitimacy in the predominantly Sunni city, and the occupation by IS of vast (Sunni) territories in Iraq (and Syria) reflected the depth of Sunni grievances. Fearing that IS could extend its reach to Baghdad and Shia regions of Iraq, Ayatollah Sistani, Iraq's most prominent Shia cleric, issued a *fatwa* calling upon all Shias to resist IS. This gave rise to the Popular Mobilization Forces – a Shia umbrella group which included the Badr, Asaib Ahl al-Haq, and Kataib Hezbollah militias – and in 2017, along with Iranian and American assistance, these forces managed to roll back IS (Haddad 2015:17–18). Similarly, in Lebanon, Hezbollah's intervention in the Syrian war in support of al-Assad deepened Sunni/Shia divides and paralyzed Lebanese institutions. In the period from 2009 to 2018, no parliamentary elections were held in Lebanon at all.

The tumultuous period between 2003 and 2017 in Iraq reflects the transition to a consociational political order which recognizes the salience of identity (sectarian and ethnic) politics. However, as is not unusual for consociational democracies, we also observe a resistance to 'sectarianism'. For example, the extensive debate over the introduction of religious personal status courts to resemble those of Lebanon reflects socio-political divisions regarding the extent to which sectarianism can and will be institutionalized in Iraq (al-Awsat 2017). Popular resistance to sectarianism, *muhāsasa*, and corruption was particularly salient in the discourse of the main parties in the run-up to the 2018 elections.

In Lebanon, this desire to move away from sectarianism is reflected in the old and new constitutions which accept 'political sectarianism' as an interim phase (Makdisi 2017: 5). At the beginning of the Arab uprisings (2011–2017), a spontaneous protest demanded an 'end to sectarianism', but this did not alter the consociational order (Fakhoury 2015). Moreover, despite the wars in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen, and Hezbollah's controversial interventions therein, Lebanon remained relatively stable. The sectarian representation of communities in the state, the memory of war, and Hezbollah's military deterrence all helped to keep the country quiet. On 29 August 2015 an historic demonstration took place in central Beirut against the Lebanese government's failure to

solve a garbage collection crisis, which united people from various sectarian and political groups against the 'political class'. Many protesters held sectarianism to be 'the mother of all ills'. However, whether this protest will form the seeds for a Lebanese social movement that transcends sectarianism or not remains to be seen (Saouli 2015b).

Despite these acts of resistance to the political sectarianism that engulfs Lebanon and Iraq, both societies have so far failed to establish influential political movements that transcend sectarian communities. The results of the parliamentary elections held in both Iraq and Lebanon in 2018 reflect this reality.

### **Conclusion**

This comparative examination of the cases of Iraq and Lebanon offers ample opportunities to assess the causes and effects of sectarianism on and in political orders. By taking a longitudinal approach, this study has shown how sectarianism becomes salient when it is activated by political actors, whether Lebanese feudal lords in the nineteenth century or modern political regimes and movements in twentieth-century Iraq.

To account for the divergence in the political trajectories between Iraq and Lebanon, the study highlighted the initial phases of state formation in both countries: whilst Lebanon's formation activated political sectarianism and laid the foundations for a consociational regime, the formation of Iraq gave rise to successive authoritarian regimes that ostensibly suppressed sectarianism whilst advancing an homogenizing framework such as Pan-Arabism. In each case, the early phase of state formation determined the political trajectory each country subsequently pursued. This revealed that sectarianism alone cannot explain regime trajectories and types; it must be examined alongside other factors such as class, ideology, and national identity.

The study also showed that, despite their attempts to contain it, successive authoritarian regimes in Iraq, either directly or indirectly, contributed to the crystallization of sectarianism. By seeking to homogenize society from the top, by manipulating identities for political survival, and by repressing rival political models, Iraq's regimes generated resistance from below. This resistance contributed to the demarcation of a Shia communal consciousness, represented in various expressions of dissent starting with the *Hawza* in 1920 and culminating in the politically organized *Dawa* in the 1970s. Thus, when Saddam Hussein's regime collapsed in 2003, Iraqi

sectarian (and ethnic) boundaries had already been drawn. To consolidate their own power and prevent the emergence of a new hegemon, the forces in power in Iraq set the foundations for a consociational order resembling Lebanon's.

In Lebanon, the consociational system set the country on a political path which made its reversal or removal difficult. This sectarian consociational system amounts to an historical institution that has endured several political shocks since the country's formation in 1920. But despite the corruption, institutional erosion, and occasional conflicts which the system has generated, Lebanese elites have worked to preserve it and, in so doing, have reproduced their own powers.

The presence of sectarian communities which reproduce varying memories and visions in both Iraq and Lebanon makes these countries prone to sectarianism. The study shows that the rise or decline of sectarianism in the two countries was determined by the political challenges – i.e. political representation, national identity, and foreign policy – that the two countries faced at their inception or would come to face. However, regardless of the rise or decline in sectarianism, considering Lebanon's history and Iraq's post-2003 experiment, the convergence of the two countries towards consociationalism will be difficult to reverse.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> A society is divided if 'ascriptive ties generate an antagonistic segmentation of society, based on terminal identities with high political salience, sustained over a substantial period of time and a wide variety of issues (Lustick 1979:325). Consociationalism 'focuses on the mutual cooperation of subnational elites' (Lustick 1979:328) to counteract centrifugal forces by, according to Arend Lijphart (1977:118–19), establishing a grand coalition, guaranteeing a mutual veto, proportionality, and segmental autonomy.

<sup>2</sup> It is useful to point out here that a sectarian identity is different from ethnic identities. In Iraq, as the following sections will show, there are two major divides: ethnic (Arab/Kurdish) and sectarian (Sunni/Shia). This article focuses on sectarian interactions only.

<sup>3</sup> For example, Article 9 of the constitution obliges the state to 'respect all religions and sects and guarantee the freedom to hold religious rites under its protection' (Quoted in Salloukh *et al.* 2015:32).

<sup>4</sup> Major councils include: The Shia Higher Council, Dar al-Fatwa (the Sunni 'House of Religious Edicts'), and the Maronite (Catholic) Patriarchate.

<sup>5</sup> By 2005, Lebanese Muslims had become the majority with around 60–65% of the population.

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