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17 February 2023

Online at <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/116381/>
MPRA Paper No. 116381, posted 18 Feb 2023 07:28 UTC

Self-Undermining Policy Feedback and Social Policy Making in Iraq

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ABSTRACT

This article examines self-undermining policy feedback and social policy making in Iraq. It discusses Jacobs and Weaver's (2015), self-undermining feedback mechanisms which include: Mechanism 1) Self-undermining-feedback through emergent losses for individuals and for organized groups (eg. emergent costs); Mechanism 2) Policy losses in mass cognition for individuals and for organized groups (eg. negativity bias, framing effects, informational conditions); and Mechanism 3) Expanding menus of alternatives/menu effects of policies for individuals and for organized groups (eg. windows of political opportunity). In Iraq, governments implemented both policies of blame avoidance and of credit claiming that became "self-undermining over time" (Weaver 1986; Jacobs and Weaver 2015). In patronage and exclusionary politics associated with civil war or the war against terror, new pension entitlements, health care, protection against unemployment and social safety nets, which tend to reward special privileged categories or loyal ethnic groups, such as state officials and corrupt members of the security apparatuses might intentionally escalate tensions to increase their own profits. This have led in an increase in expenses for those programs that can become self-undermining over time and could block their dismissal, whilst decreasing the scope for later development and social policy improvements. Politics and policies have become in this way without dignity for the beneficiaries, since they became part of a clannish exclusionary tribal politics that rises expenses without resolving the conflict resolution problem.

Introduction

Since the advent of the Saddam Hussein regime and, subsequent, first Gulf War of 1980-1988, Iraq underwent a difficult transition to democracy which has been characterized by the emergence of civil war and system instability. The second Gulf War in 1991, the international economic sanctions during the period 1991–2003, and the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime in 2003 did not succeed to resolve the internal problems, but have often exacerbated pre-existing ethnic and religious tensions. This difficult transition to stable peace has resulted in an increasing number of casualties, which, from 2003 to 2011, have amounted to (publicly

displayed) no less than 400,000 individuals and 4.5 million orphans (MIT 2018)¹. However, the real number of deaths is estimated to be much higher than the one reported by official statistics. Overall, these same considerations apply to the number of violent attacks which have increased significantly since the beginning of the conflict. In 2018, Iraq had an estimated population of approximately 39 million inhabitants. About 75-80 percent are Arabs, whilst the remaining 15-20 percent are of Kurdish Turkoman and Assyrian origins. The Kurdish minority lives for the most part in northeastern Iraq (Kurdistan Regional Government, henceforth KRG). Islam is the official religion and accounts for almost 95- 98 percent of the population. Shia Muslims correspond to 64-69 percent of the total population. Sunni Muslims to approximately 29-34 percent. The remaining population is made of Christians (about 1 percent), Hindus, Buddhists, Jewish, and people not affiliated to the above mentioned religions². Electoral engineering (Sartori 1994) has been key for the Iraqi transition to democracy, whose main goal has been to reduce the power of the Shiite majority, expanding the representation of the Sunnis. The intended consequence, most clearly expressed in the Iraq Study Group report of 2006 and in the 18 benchmarks of 2007, was to speed up the de-baathification process. Simultaneously, it was supposed to limit the incentives for violence and sectarian conflict (Haggard and Long 2007, p. 2).

After decades of authoritarian subjugation, in order to bring democracy back to the table, national and international authorities have attempted to create a more representative territorial structure. A proportional system of electoral representation was introduced after the fall of the Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003. As a consequence, since the first elections in 2005, several different lists of independent candidates (almost 36 in the elections of 2014) have emerged. The first "free" elections were, however, held in 2005 and were characterized by the victory of President Jalal Talabani and of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki (6 April 2005). Both candidates were re-elected in the polls of May 20, 2006. Mr Talabani, of Kurdish origin, represented, for the first phase of transition, the most prominent figure of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. Mr al-Maliki represented, instead, the leading figure of the Shia leading coalition 'State of Law'. In the elections of 2014, Mr al-Maliki was re-elected as Prime Minister but was replaced in 2016 by the Shiite politician Haider al-Abadi³. Mr Fuad Masum, also of Kurdish origins, became instead the new President (Al-Jazeera 2014; Wikipedia 2015). In the national elections of 2018, 87 parties and 6,990 candidates tried to acquire a seat in the Iraq's parliament (Ibrahim 2018a,b). This was the result of the political fragmentation caused by the subsequent waves of war. The Shia leader Muqtada al-Sadr of the Sairoon Alliance won the parliamentary

1 MIT (2018), Iraq: The Human Cost of War. <http://web.mit.edu/humancostiraq/> (accessed 19 May 2018)

2 CIA World Factbook (2018) <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/iz.html> (accessed 19 May 2018)

3 The Washington Post (2014), Iraqi president names Haider al-Abadi new prime minister, defying al-Maliki. http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/iraqs-political-situation-dire-as-maliki-digsin/2014/08/11/1c70942a-213a-11e4-958c-268a320a60ce_story.html (accessed 19 May 2018).

elections with 54 seats. Shia militia chief Hadi al-Amiri of Fatah (Conquest) Bloc obtained 47 seats. Former Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi of Nasr (Victory) Coalition obtained 42 seats (Al-Jazeera 2018; The Baghdad Post 2018a). Elections' results were soon subjected to disputes. Close to the announced defeat of Al-Qaida, ISIL (Da'esh) and affiliated groups (Mansour 2017), the unity of all Iraqis⁴, the fight against corruption (فساد [fasad]) became one of the main mobilization strategies of the 2018 national elections. The fight against corruption also represented the main keyword for identity politics (Shia, Sunni, Kurds, etc.), civicness, public authority, as well as for good governance (IRIS 2018). Here, it is important to note that the fight against "The Corrupt" (الفاسدون [alfāsīdeen]), seen as bad as ISIL (Da'esh) (Mansour 2017), also includes religious normative connotations, such as those concerned with religious "immorality" (الفجور [fajur]) and moral decay (الانحلال الأخلاقي [alanhalal alakhlaki]). It does not simply refer to the "unprincipled" (امجرد من المبادئ [mjrd min almadadi]), "corruptible" (اقابل للفساد [qabil lilrashwat walfasad]), "purchasable" (قابل للشراء [lilshira]), "dishonest" (غير شريفة [ghyr 'amin]), etc. individual.

In the light of a persistent electoral fragmentation of the political spectrum, Haggard and Long (2007, p. 3) have identified in the 'engineer's dilemma' a critical situation for future stabilization and consolidation attempts in Iraq. The 'engineer's dilemma' refers to a situation where the presumed institutional change aimed at enlarging the representation of the Sunni minority has ended up in an unexpected increase of violence. Among the problems of political inclusion associated with this failure in constitutional and electoral engineering, the authors mention 'the fragmentation of the combatants, their weak representation in the formal political process, and the presence of extremists and the associated process of outbidding' (Haggard and Long 2007, p. 3). The fiscal and federal structure, which continues to favour the two major allies (Shia and Kurds), also played a dominant role in reducing the prospects for stable peace and stability. Interestingly, always according to the authors (see Haggard and Long 2007, p. 8), these problems of 'engineering' have contributed to exacerbate the demands of radical nationalists to re-establish a Sunni hegemony, and increasing the jihadists' requests for an Islamic 'caliphate'. An additional important and often neglected issue of Iraq's political system concerns the increasing autonomy of the Kurdistan National Assembly, which also thanks to the number of seats (111) and the relative power of the Kurdish minority, makes it de facto an autonomous regional state or, in other words, a 'state within a state' (UNPO 2013). This has clear repercussions not only for Iraq's future national unity and long-term stability, but also for future redistributive attempts and associated distributive conflicts (see Haggard and Kaufman 2016). The territorial distribution of natural resources in the contemporary federal structure continues to favour existing winning coalitions, not avoiding the creation of insider-outsider divides. The limits of such a

4 On a tweet on May 2018, the Shia leader Muqtada al-Sadr stated: "Iraqi people are twins in faith and brothers in Islam, nation and life [...] No more Kurdish demand for secession, no more Sunni calls for revenge and no more Shiite fighting. Unity, tolerance and peace are our target" (The Baghdad Post 2018b).

constructed 'consociational democracy', aptly highlighted by Lijphardt (1999), have become in this way more apparent (Haggard and Long 2007, p. 12). This can also be seen in the formulation of the new constitution, which, adopted by a referendum on 15 October 2005 (amended in 2013), has established a mixed legal system of civil and Islamic law, still subjected to multiple interpretations⁵. The challenge for the international community at large is, therefore, to promote new forms of 'culturally sensitive capitalism', able to integrate and to pacify different hostile factions of the society. The number of firms must increase, but also the human security and the economic integration of the affected population must do. In order to achieve these objectives, there is a need for a new political economy with new distributive and fiscal priorities.

The Political Economy of Iraq

Iraq's main development model remains heavily based on oil revenues and state transfers, which take the form of public subsidies, employment in the public sector and transfers to state-owned enterprises (Gunter 2014 ; World Bank 2014). Iraq's variety of capitalism (see Hall and Soskice 2001) can be described as an oil-led state-captured capitalism, subjected to well-known distributive "resource curse" problems (Ross 2012), including a resource predation and a resource-seeking foreign direct investment dependence mechanism (Stevens et al. 2015). I describe this: *oil-led state-captured capitalism* with associated *oil-led state-captured war-fare regime* (see Esping-Andersen 1990; Gough et al. 2004; Cerami and Stubbs 2013). In formerly ISIL (Da'esh)-occupied territories, war developments turned the system into an *Insurgent ISIL (Da'esh)-captured capitalism* with associated *Insurgent ISIL (Da'esh)-captured war-fare regime* (Cerami 2018, 2019). Individuals paid a very small amount of taxes, as the majority of state revenues and public services was financed through oil. In 2016, oil revenues accounted to more than 90 percent of total revenues, whilst taxes amounted to only 2 percent. Income tax, corporate income tax, taxes on goods and services, property taxes and taxes on international trade were below the MENA region of 10 percent and an international comparator average of 15 percent (Feher et al. 2017, p. 16-19). In absence of a clear involvement of citizens in financing their own state and system of public governance, electoral requests become easily a gift of the political elites to 'their' citizens (Diamond 2008). In 2017, because of the economic recession following the protracted reduction in oil and gas prices, of war-fare related activities, as well as of ongoing political contestation and civil conflicts due to the ISIL (Da'esh) presence (OECD 2016a), Iraq's GDP corresponded to 230.7 trillion IQDs (-0.8 percent in comparison to the previous year), of which oil GDP was equal to 87.3 trillion IQDs (-

5 According to the Arab Barometer for Iraq (2012, p.5), about 72 percent of respondents agree that 'religious practices should be kept as a private matter and separated from public life', 85 percent that 'religious leaders should not interfere in voters' decisions', whilst only 31 percent that 'Islamic law was appropriate for their country'.

3.5 percent) and non-oil GDP to 143.4 trillion IQDs (4.4 percent) (World Bank 2018, Table 56, p. 128)⁶.

Ten main transmission mechanisms of economic and fiscal crises can be identified in Iraq: (i) trade shocks; (ii) oil prices and oil price cycles shocks; (iii) exchange rate shocks; (iv) banking sector risks; (v) foreign direct investments shocks; and (vi) debt refinancing squeeze (that is - dependency on foreign financial markets for debt refinancing; see Stubbs et al. 2009). In addition, (vii) corruption, (viii) “oil resource curse”, (ix) state-capture and (x) policy capture (OECD 2017a,b)⁷ related mechanisms also played a crucial role in the transmission of economic and fiscal crises. War-fare amenities with associated damages (see World Bank 2018) also continue to create significant macro- and micro- economic vulnerabilities. They also alter the main sources of financing for public expenditures, subsequently, reducing the fiscal space available for public policies. Furthermore, they also exacerbate problems linked to the international competitiveness of Iraq’s firms and trade..

The Political Economy of War in Formerly ISIL (Da’esh)-occupied Territories

In formerly ISIL (Da’esh)-occupied territories⁸, until 2017 almost one-third of Iraq (Mansour 2017), close to war making activities, ISIL (Da’esh) established a “war economy” based on resource predation. As introduced by Eaton (2018, p. 5), “the term ‘war economy’ encompasses economic activities dependent – directly or indirectly – on the dispensation or perpetuation of violence” put in place by *war economy profiteers*. This includes war-making income-generating activities, among which the acquisition of state assets of captured cities, smuggling (including the sale of commodities, goods, services, humans and parts of humans), extortion, taxation, and rents (e.g. land rents) (Eaton 2018). In 2017, main sources of financing the ISIL (Da’esh) self-proclaimed state and war-fare regime included oil, natural gas, phosphate, cement, agriculture, revenues of criminal origin, extortion, kidnap and ransom, antiquities trafficking and donations (Swanson 2015; CAT 2016), which were redistributed among the population to acquire legitimacy and support (Almukhtar 2015; Callimachi 2018). This “caliphate-building” activity also implied the creation of its own ISIL (Da’esh) currency (Milliken 2015). In June 2014, ISIL (Da’esh)’s estimated assets in Iraq corresponded to no less than \$875 million. Its major revenue sources were given by extortion and taxation activities in the Iraqi territory, which were estimated at \$600 million. In addition, \$500 million were stolen

6 In 2017, 1 USD corresponded to 1,171 Iraqi dinars.

7 The term “state capture”, derived from the concept of “regulatory capture”, refers to the ways in which private individuals capture state bureaucracies (including formal and informal norms) to manipulate public policy-making, including their ideas, interests and institutions (see Hall 1993), for their private interest (World Bank 2000, p. 3). The term “policy capture” refers, instead, to “public decisions over policies [that] are consistently or repeatedly directed away from the public interest towards a specific interest” (OECD 2017b, p. 1).

8 For recent maps, see 2016 ISIS-occupied territories available here, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/10/this-map-shows-how-much-territory-isis-has-lost-in2016/> and 2017 map available here <https://dailybrief.oxan.com/Analysis/GA224615/Islamic-Statewill-prepare-for-the-next-phase> (accessed 19 May 2018).

from state-owned banks, \$100 million from oil whose barrels were sold at half of the official price. \$20 million were raised by kidnapping ransoms (Almukhtar 2015). In 2015, ISIL (Da'esh) expanded increasing its “public policy investment” in people, paying its 20,000-30,000 fighters between \$350 and \$1500 per month according to their rank, skills and nationality (FATF 2015, pp. 29-30). Similar estimations made by Lister (2015) stated that there were approximately 30,000 ISIL (Da'esh) armed members in early 2015, and about a half of these were foreigners of not Iraqi or Syrian origin. The ISIL (Da'esh) total assets, presumably including also the occupied territories in Syria, should have, in reality, corresponded to \$2 billion, with an annual revenue of \$200 million to \$300 million (Waterbury 2015). In 2016, ISIL (Da'esh) oil revenues were estimated to range from \$250 million per year to nearly \$365 million per year. However, these numbers declined due to the airstrikes on tanks and oil refineries (Jones et al 2017, p.8)⁹. Between 2016 and 2017, ISIL (Da'esh) money for funding the ISIL (Da'esh) warfare regime also came from stealing and redistributing credit cards, social security benefits, small loans, scooters, or even selling organs of dead fighters (for more information on such disgusting business, see also FATF 2017; May 2017). As in other countries, selling weapons was also used as a corruption mechanism (see Enough Project 2017), which was then re-employed for increasing the performance of the ISIL (Da'esh) war-fare state. At the end of 2017, daily commerce and agriculture (worth hundreds of million of dollars) rather than external donor or oil sales represented the main sources of funding for the ISIL (Da'esh) new tax revenue regime (Callimachi 2018). Between 2014 and 2017, ISIL (Da'esh) established at least 14 new administrative offices named “diwan” (including education, health, etc.) (Callimachi 2018). The term diwan stems from the Sultan of Sulu Sharif ul-Hashim's (who lived approximately in 1405) system of laws based on Quran¹⁰. The diwans established by Sharif ul-Hashim can therefore be understood as the administrative and bureaucratic expressions of a Quran's interpretation of a caliphate tax financing system. In ISIL (Da'esh)-occupied territories, local administrators are understood not as the owners of the land, but their protectors (Maulana, e.g. the Sultan) – and their administrators (the Sheiks). Hence, the distinction between direct and indirect taxation in “Islamic State” territories is, to some extent, misleading, since taxes should rather be seen as “religious endowments” paid for the individuals' benefiting of goods and services. In the new “tax farming” system¹¹, taxes, or “religious endowments” are important steering mechanisms¹². They aimed to change the behaviour of people and become functional to the establishment and maintenance of a “state/caliphate”¹³. Tax-steering or religious endowment-steering became, in this case, an important social

9 Up-to-date information on ISIS financing mechanisms, including wage salaries, is provided by Jones et al. (2017).

10 The original name of Sharif ul-Hashim was Sayyed walShareef Abubakar Abirin AlHashmi, which shows that he was supposed to be a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad.

11 On tax-farming in Muslim societies, see Cerami (2015).

12 On steering mechanisms see Mayntz (2003).

13 In the bills and receipts it was written “The Islamic State, Caliphate on the path to prophecy”, see Callimachi Twitter Post (2018a) <https://twitter.com/i/moments/983112616146071553> (accessed 19 May 2018).

mechanism of consonance-driven desire formation (Hedström 1998) with 'environmental', 'cognitive', as well as 'relational' repercussions (see MacAdam et al. 2001). Religious endowments have an impact on the closest surrounding conditions that affect the lives of individuals, as well as their psychological and behavioural patterns, with associated connections among people, groups and interpersonal networks (see also Mayntz 2003). This, consequently, may lead to social mechanisms of anger mobilization and contagion in collective action. These religious "taxes" involved, for example, financing public and social security services, such as taxes for garbage collection, VAT, tariffs for trade, electricity, sanitation, fees for social security services, tax subventions (such as for the sheep milk) or tax deductions, taxes from oil extraction, land taxes and poll taxes, taxes on accessing the labour market, payroll taxes, personal income tax, property usage contracts and associated taxes (e.g. concession tax), withholding taxes, price subsidies, custom duties, and landholder taxes. In formerly ISIL (Da'esh)-occupied territories, even bus tickets were part of the overall tax financing system regime, since they helped to fund the functioning of municipal local social security services¹⁴.

The System of Public and Social Policy Governance in Formerly ISIL (Da'esh)-occupied Territories

Drawing on Charles Tilly's (1985) seminal work entitled *War Making and State Making as Organized Crime*, it is possible to affirm that the functions that several rebel and terrorist organizations linked to ISIL (Da'esh) carry out in their everyday lives (in particular, protective, extractive, and redistributive) are equivalent to those of a state and, therefore, turn the organization or the rebel group into something more than a simple loose confederation of organized 'self-made' criminals. It is not by chance that their members, once emotionally and institutionally affiliated to the organization, have started to: (1) carry out 'intelligence' activities typical of a state, such as those linked to searching and punishing possible spies within the territory under their control; (2) tax for the passage from one city to another city of any illicit contraband (e.g. drugs, weapons, laundered cash and people); (3) collect profits, and protect and control the production areas; (4) recruit and provide subsistence to the marginalized peoples living in underdeveloped regions; and (5) deliver a range of public services to the population in need (see also Sanger and Davis 2014; see also the *ISIS Files Callimachi 2018*, see ANNEX)¹⁵. In this process of nation-state building, rentierism has become a complementary mechanism of public governance and state formation made possible by the predation and redistribution of natural resources. This nation-building process has also required a system of propaganda that occurs mostly through social networks (Khatib 2015), as well as the construction of a Weberian bureaucratic structure (see ANNEX public service governance), necessary to ensure the state fiscal capacity to reduce a 'state failure' and state collapse. In this context, the creation of an ISIL (Da'esh) organized rentier state represented a further impediment to the process of democratization in Iraq, as it

14 See Callimachi Twitter Post (2018b) <https://twitter.com/i/moments/982358498863407104>

15 <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/04/04/world/middleeast/isis-documents-mosuliraq.html>

aligned sociopolitical norms to the patrimonial nature of social interactions with associated more radical religiously dominated loyalties (Thies 2015). In order to increase its acceptance among the population, ISIL (Da'esh) has also invested in infrastructures (such as building underground pipelines, employing engineers, etc.), in public services and in social benefits. It has also made regular payments to the families of members killed or captured. It has purchased diesel generators for distributing electricity and mobilized existing infrastructures to provide basic services, or engaging in agricultural production and taxation (FATF 2015, pp. 29-30). In ISIL (Da'esh)-occupied territories, the largest expenditures in salaries estimated (between \$3 million and \$10 million every month) were, however, employed for ISIL (Da'esh) police-state institutions, such as committees, media, courts, and market regulation; thus ensuring Tilly's security function (see Almkhtar 2015). In the past, the access to public services and distribution of welfare benefits has depended, for the most part, on non-state and religious actors (see Gellner 1981; Benthall and Bellion-Jourdan 2003). These tasks are now carried out by ISIL (Da'esh) religious leaders. As a telling article by Shatz (2015) has demonstrated, the use of public employment in ISIL (Da'esh)-occupied territories has had the unintended consequence of radicalization and social deviance reinforcement. Financing ISIL (Da'esh) has, for example, been made possible by ISIS "government" subsidies to "government" employees who lived in ISIL (Da'esh)-occupied territories (wilaya or 'protectorates') (Khatib 2015). This money estimated, as mentioned, in several hundred million US\$ have not only reinforced the local system of patronage and clientelistic relations. They have also provided additional support for an involuntarily sponsored ISIL (Da'esh) administrative local economy and local war-fare state, reinforcing the ISIL (Da'esh) 'clear, hold, build' strategy (Khatib 2015; see also Callimachi 2018)¹⁶ or sustained ambushes, raids, subversions, sabotage operations, assassinations, various type of bombings, insults, spits (أنت بصدق), harrasments and akfir (accusations of disbelief) as main insurgents' tactics (Ashour 2021, p.11, 19)

The importance of ISIL (Da'esh) in changing cultural patterns in the Iraq public administration must be emphasized. It involves, for example, not only a radicalization and over-secularization of society, but also de-modernization. The increasing number of women who joined the organization as fighters (and, in case, martyrs) and built a new family (Saltman and Smith 2015) represents here a notable example of a new societal structure in the making, with associated emerging social order and social risks. This has a price also for gender-equality. Education of women is based on ISIL (Da'esh) Sharia law. ISIL (Da'esh) understanding of social policy also applies to education in general where some academic fields are forbidden (such as sociology) and housing where rents are locally managed (see ANNEX). ISIS-leaders had become the new "autocratic Leviathans"¹⁷ of Iraq. In 2016, ISIL (Da'esh) taxation rates in Iraq and Syria range, in the agricultural sector, to \$46 per irrigated hectare of

16 According to FATF (2015, p. 30), 'energy experts estimate that ISIS can rebuild a single mobile refinery in 10 days for 230,000 USD'.

17 On the autocratic Leviathan and tax competition, see Genschel et al. (2016, p. 27).

land per year and 10 percent of wheat crop produced and their sale at the local market. There is also a tax on Jizya tax on non-Sunnis equivalent to \$2,500 for delivering a certificate for Shiite or non-Muslim and \$800 fee in order to leave the city in Raqqah. In addition, there is also \$43 tax for an official Islamic State license plate, \$23 per woman with a pack of cigarettes and a \$10 per woman who shows her eyes (Robinson et al. 2017, Table 2.1, p. 12). This also included judiciary files, such as those concerned with marriage laws/contracts under ISIL (Da'esh) rule (see Annex).

Social Aspects and Social Pathologies in Iraq

As discussed by Wolchik and Curry (2015) in their volume on the Eastern European transition to democracy, social aspects of transformation with associated social pathologies are an important part of system change, often poisoning the political discussions of a country. Social aspects and social pathologies include alcoholism, juvenile delinquency, prostitution, violence in the home, drug use and street crime, organized crime, human trafficking, smuggling, sex trade, tensions between various ethnic groups, discrimination and marginalization of minorities (Wolchik and Curry 2015, p. 30), not to mention an increase in state-organized crime relations. In the specific case of Iraq, the social costs of war with associated war amenities must also be added, as these have important repercussions on the socio-structural transformations in employment relations, in the availability of funds for security, also leading to an increase in terrorism and suicidal bombings. To provide a brief picture of the main socio-economic transformations, since the 1960s, Iraq witnessed an exponential growth of the population. This was caused by the economic expansion following the increase in oil prices resulting from the OPEC decision of the 1970s (World Bank Development Indicators 2015). The subsequent sudden rise in revenues and in welfare significantly changed the lifestyle and political aspirations for liberty of many Iraqis. This included the materialization of a baby-boom, as it happened in Western Europe during the golden age of the welfare state (Esping-Andersen 1999; Pierson 2001), with an exponential rise in the number of new births. Changes in political orientation towards an increase in post-materialist values and the secularization of the society, as aptly described by Inglehart (1990), have also materialized, though to a lower extent than in Western post-industrial societies. The al-Anfal Campaign against the Kurds conducted between 1986-1989 (or Kurdish genocide) is only one notable example of the crimes against humanity committed by the Saddam regime. The wars that followed, both for oil-related reasons, as well as for reasons concerned with the responsibility of the international community to protect against such massacres, as expressed in the Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (2001) (see also Merkel and Grimm 2009), did not yet succeed to put an end to pre-existing socio-structural problems of development.

Formal and informal Cultural Institutions in Iraq

Contrary to most countries in the Arab world, in Iraq, Sunnis are a minority, whilst Shias represent the majority of the population. Before the US intervention, Iraq had a

central planned economy and, as a legacy of the past, it is still common to access jobs through clientelistic relations in the government¹⁸. As a state-building objective, Saddam Hussein once stated that an educated and liberated mother is one who will give back to the country conscious and committed fighters for Iraq¹⁹. This understanding of family planning is, to some extent, still in place²⁰. Recognizing the importance of the tribal structure is key for understanding the Iraqi modern civilization. Throughout the turmoil that have materialized in the country over the centuries, the tribe has always remained the most important social entity. In absence of strong central authority and an accountable bureaucracy (Weber [1922]1968), tribes have played the important function of “quasi-polities” whose leaders (known as sheikhs) have administered resources, social services, managed emerging social and ethnic conflicts, as well as providing law enforcement capabilities. In order to create an alternative, complementary but still loyal power structure, the Saddam Hussein regime reinforced the functions of tribes as vital socio-political sub-units, re-establishing tribal councils and putting them under direct control of mostly Sunni sheikhs²¹. Sunni tribes are particularly present in central and western Iraq, whilst Shiite tribes in the North. Kurdish tribes are, instead, predominant in the northern part of the country and, more specifically in Kurdistan. Recent estimations show that at least 75 percent of the Iraqi population belong to one of the country’s 150 tribes²². Power relations in the tribes’ social structure remain feudalistic and characterized by a strong hierarchy between members. These represent the basis for clientelistic do ut des bargaining, often exacerbating already existing sectarian divides (eg. Sunni vs. Shia dominated tribes) (Khan 2007). In this tribal-oriented society, individuals are protected, but their rights and autonomy are limited by the sheikhs and by the other members of the tribe. This particularly applies to women and children, who, as members of the family, do not have much right to choose about their own future²³. The ‘politics of revenge’ is a particular important aspect of Iraqi clans and tribes (see Hames 2017). For clan and tribe members, seeking revenge is seen as a crucial and compulsory act for the maintenance of power and status. Every insult or affront must, in some way, be avenged (see also Eisenstadt 2007). The importance of ISIL (Da’esh) in changing cultural patterns in Iraq must be emphasized. It involves, for example, not only a radicalization and over-de-secularization of society, but also de-modernization. The increasing number of women who joined the organization as fighters (and, in case, martyrs) and built a new family (Saltman and Smith 2015) represents here a notable example of a new societal structure in the making, with

18 According to the Arab Barometer for Iraq (2012, p.52) approximately 65 percent of the population state that ‘obtaining employment through connections is extremely widespread’

19 See Countries and Their Culture 2015.

<http://www.everyculture.com/Gelt/Iraq.html#ixzz3S6WDx9Gb>

20 According to the Arab Barometer for Iraq (2012, pp. 28-29), ‘over 75 percent agree that men are better than women at political leadership’, whilst approximately ‘25 percent of respondents believe that university education is more important for men than it is for women’.

21 See Countries and Their Culture 2015.

<http://www.everyculture.com/Gelt/Iraq.html#ixzz3S6WDx9Gb>

22 See Countries and Their Culture 2015.

<http://www.everyculture.com/Gelt/Iraq.html#ixzz3S6WDx9Gb>

23 See GlobalSecurity.org 2005. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/tribes.htm>

associated emerging social order. This has a price. According to Fatf (2015, p. 13), ISIL (Da'esh) fighters paying for a female slave approximately \$13. In 2017, the price has increased between \$35 or \$50 (Jones et al. 2017, p. 11).

The Social Security System in Iraq

In Iraq, the formal social security system is based on the social insurance principle and depends on the attachment of citizens to the labor market or, when not accessible, on informal social security arrangements provided by the members of the family or the tribe. Due to the oil-based orientation of the economy, public sector employees represent a larger part of the insured persons. In order to protect uncovered citizens, the government has established a Public Distribution System based on state-sponsored fuel subsidies and rations. The implications of this system are, first of all, high dependence from state-owned enterprises and state-driven labor market performance with a residual neo-liberal coverage for the non-employed, and, second, to food rations distributed to approximately 99 percent of the population (El Mekkaoui de Freitas and Johnson 2012, p.9). The fiscal space for such policies, therefore, greatly depends on oil revenues and state-budget availability of funds. With regard to pensions, these rely on the social insurance principle, which implies that only workers in formal employment have access to retirement. Self-employed persons, agricultural employees, temporary employees, household workers, and family labour are excluded from pension entitlements. This situation becomes particularly worrying in the case of disability and survivor pensions, especially in a war-setting environment. The public distribution system is set to cover this deficit, but, as mentioned, it is often subjected to a lack of funds due to the drop in oil prices. Similarly, access to health care is based on health insurance contributions. This implies that in absence of state-sponsored provisions only employed persons have access to full coverage. Important to note is that the subsequent wars in Iraq have destroyed most of the health facilities and this has, subsequently, resulted in a lack of infrastructures, medical equipment, personnel and medicines.

With regard to protection against unemployment, jobs are mostly provided by the state, unemployment insurance covers only a small part of the population. Usually, this involves those citizens who have worked in state owned enterprises and are attached to national and local political elites. Interesting to note is that employment protection law dates back to 1964 (with subsequent amendments) and, therefore, it has been established in a period antecedent to Saddam Hussein's rise to power. It is based on the social assistance principle, though highly residual in scope and coverage (US Social Security Administration 2014). Finally, maternity and family benefits are also based on the social insurance principle and, thus, covering only a very small part of Iraqi women. In absence of full and decent employment, women continue to be seen as wives-mothers rather than active participants in the labor market. This is also, to some extent, represented in the attitudes of the Iraqi population toward women.

The Social Security System in Formerly ISIL (Da'esh) Occupied Territories

In this process of nation-state building, rentierism has become a complementary mechanism of state formation made possible by the acquisition and redistribution of natural resources. This nation building process also requires a system of propaganda that occurs mostly through social networks (Khatib 2015), as well as the construction of a Weberian bureaucratic structure, necessary to ensure the state fiscal capacity to reduce a 'state failure' and state collapse. In this context, the creation of an ISIL (Da'esh) organized rentier state represents a further impediment to the process of democratization in Iraq, as it aligns socio-political norms to the patrimonial nature of social interactions with associated religiously dominated loyalties (Thies 2015). In fact, as argued by Schwarz (2011, p. 427) for the Saddam era, "the massive influx of oil revenues during the 1970s enabled Iraq to pursue a policy of 'guns and butter' – extravagant spending on expanding its military-security machinery and on welfare benefits [...] [which allowed] the regime to embark on a state-making project based on large-scale spending implemented in a top-down fashion and divorced from societal demands. These benefits mainly came in the form of state-provided jobs". In order to increase its acceptance among the population, ISIL (Da'esh) has also invested in infrastructures (such as building underground pipelines, employing engineers, etc.), in social services and social benefits. It has also made regular payments to the families of members killed or captured, purchases of diesel generators for distributing electricity, and mobilizes existing infrastructures to provide basic services, or engaging in agricultural production and taxation (FATF 2015, pp. 29-30)¹⁷. In 2016, ISIL (Da'esh) taxation rates in Iraq and Syria range, in the agricultural sector, to \$46 per irrigated hectare of land per year and 10 percent of wheat crop produced and their sale at the local market. There was also a tax on Jizya tax on non-Sunnis equivalent to \$2,500 for delivering a certificate for Shiite or non-Muslim and \$800 fee in order to leave the city in Raqqah. In addition, there is also \$43 tax for an official Islamic State license plate, \$23 per woman with a pack of cigarettes and a \$10 per woman who shows her eyes (Robinson et al. 2017, Table 2.1, p. 12). According to Fatf (2015, p. 30), 'energy experts estimate that ISIL (Da'esh) could rebuild a single oil refinery in 10 days for 230,000 USD' (see also ANNEX).

In formerly ISIL (Da'esh)-controlled territories, the largest expenditures in salaries estimated (between \$3 million and \$10 million every month) were, however, employed for ISIL (Da'esh) police-state institutions, such as committees, media, courts, and market regulation and thus ensuring Tilly's security function (see Almkhtar 2015). As a consequence, in order to de-radicalize extremists, the importance of timing and sequencing of reforms (Pierson 2004) in the implementation of social and public policy instruments must not be underestimated. Whilst guaranteeing security is an urgent and unavoidable necessity in order to make development, social security and democratization related projects really work, recalibrating and rescaling policy-making (Kazepov 2010; Stubbs and Zrinščak 2009) towards non ISIL (Da'esh) affiliated tribes represents an additional important element

to take into account in system transformation. It affects positively the restructuring of spatial politics through the creation of new political boundaries (Bartolini 2005), as well as new boundaries of responsibilities (Ferrera 2005). This would have necessitated the creation of new steering mechanisms (Mayntz 2003) and structures of more adaptive multilevel governance (Hooghe and Marks 2001), shifting responsibilities from ISIL (Da'esh) to non-ISIL (Da'esh) affiliated actors. In order to resolve the issue of a failing federalism, as discussed by Haggard and Long (2007), the creation of a system of multilevel governance, in which 'local states' interact among each other to ensure that national human development objectives are effectively implemented, would have been needed.

Electricity Usage in Iraq

The reduction in electricity usage in Iraq due to conflict and war has also resulted in a subsequent reduction in human and economic activity, as well as in the progress and in the socio-technical advancement of the Iraqi society. Electricity infrastructural damage reduced the availability of public services and utilities, which contributed to the post-2018 mass protests elections²⁴. This, subsequently, reinforced extremists' cooptation capabilities. Offices and shops closed. ISIL (Da'esh) informal labour delivery capacity and hidden social bondage activities increased (Callimachi 2018). What should not be forgotten here is that ISIL (Da'esh) camps are difficult to target. In Syria, for example, they are located in open space places with no clear boundaries (Squarcini 2015). Hence, who hits whom is still an open question. Re-switching the lights on (NASA Earth Observatory 2017) has become an important task to accomplish. As mentioned, the Iraqi oil-led political economy model is now primarily centered on war-fare debt damage consolidation (the war damage debt refinancing squeeze problem), which has reduced the space for fiscal policies.

Despite significant efforts made by subsequent governments, the decrease in electricity usage has also meant a decrease in the availability of school and educational services. Underage individuals could simply not go to school because of electricity infrastructural destruction or reduction in energy service supply and demand. Unfortunately, problems of education were even more preponderant in ISIL (Da'esh)-occupied territories. Electricity is crucial for keeping public services alive. As electricity usage shrank, the efficiency of public facilities with associated performance outcome shrank. The decrease in electricity usage also includes digital technology divides between war-fare damaged and the non war-fare damaged zones of Iraq, as well as an increase in informal economy and in women's vulnerabilities. Feminization of poverty has, hence, been the most obvious result, and this has especially occurred in ISIL (Da'esh) occupied territories. Electricity plays a determinant role also in the food production chains. Farms, factories and machines

24 Salamé (1994, p.6) states that « 'asabiyya », refers to the esprit de corps based on a common background, which, though already condemned by the Prophet Mohammed, represents also the basis for a state power that links not only blood-lines but also para-legal and para-religious adhesion-allegiances

can be shut off, either by destruction or by electricity disruption. As lights decreased in Iraq, food production also decreased.

Clannish Social Policy Making

In response to colonial governance, practices, structures and conducts of conducts (Carmel 2019), Iraq and other countries in the Middle East and North Africa, enhanced clannish and kinpolitik (Ronfeldt 2006). The famous film *La Bataille d'Alger* (The Battle of Algiers) of 1966 with French actor Jean Martin has portrayed “les géométriques pyramidales et triangleuses” (pyramidal and triangle geometries) of power and governance relations of the Algerian FLN. These pyramidal and triangle geometries characterized not simply the Algerian clans' social structure (clans and tribes as quasi polities) of the time, but also other contemporary national and international state-led and non-state-led organizations, among which other terrorist groups, such as the members of Al-Qaeda and ISIL (Da'esh). They are key for understanding the formal and informal social security system of Iraq, as well as its distribution of goods and of distributive conflicts. The governance structure of these quasi-polities also concerns clannish hierarchy, patron-client relations, status differences, social differentiation and chiefdoms, as well as markets and associated networks in social and social policy structuring.

As mentioned, clans provide to their members loans, jobs, political support, bureaucratic intervention, etc. (Hames 2021). Tribal and clan values have a strong influence on Iraq political culture. These values include: i) in-group solidarity ('asabiyya) that concerns loyalty to the family, clan, and tribe, as well as group feeling, unity, solidarity (Ronfeldt 2006), autonomy from other tribes, non-tribal groups, and authorities²⁵; ii) personal and group honor (sharaf); iii) sexual honor ('ird); iv) manliness (muruwwa); and v) pride in ancestry (nasb). Tribal and clan processes to resolve conflicts include blood feud, cease-fire (atwa), blood money (fasl), and peace agreement (sulha) in accordance with tribal/clan law ('urf), as opposed to Sharia (Islamic) or civil law.

Self-Undermining Policy Feedback

The above mentioned discussion leads to the very important question of When Change is Real Change (Carruthers 2012). For example, Jacobs and Weaver (2015) have examined SelfUndermining Feedback as a Source of Policy Change. In studying when policies destroy themselves over periods of time leading to further policy and institutional transformation (esp. policy roll-back and re-orientation), the authors have identified some key self-undermining feedback mechanisms: Mechanism 1) Self-undermining-feedback through emergent losses for individuals and for organized groups (eg. emergent costs); Mechanism 2) Policy losses in mass cognition for individuals and for organized groups (eg. negativity bias, framing effects, informational conditions); and Mechanism 3) Expanding menus of

25 Al-Jazeera (2018b), <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/iraqis-protesting180718131316968.html>

alternatives/menu effects of policies for individuals and for organized groups (eg. windows of political opportunity). As mentioned, in response to colonial governance practices, countries in the MENA region enhanced clannish and kinpolitik. But, sometimes, this clannish and kinpolitik became self-undermining to peace over time, because of an increase in bribery, malfeasance, nepotism, fraudulency, unscrupulousness, crime, exploitation, shadiness and shady deals, robberies, jobberies, breach of trust, venality, rackets, etc. (please see Ronfeldt 2006).

In Iraq, governments implemented both policies of blame avoidance and of credit claiming that became “self-undermining over time” (Weaver 1986; Jacobs and Weaver 2015). In patronage and exclusionary politics associated with civil war or the war against terror, new pension entitlements, health care, protection against unemployment and social safety nets, which tend to reward special privileged categories or loyal ethnic groups, such as state officials and corrupt members of the security apparatuses might intentionally escalate tensions to increase their own profits. This leads an increase in expenses for those programs that can become self-undermining over time and could block their dismissal, whilst decreasing the scope for later development and social policy improvements. Politics and policies become in this way without dignity for the beneficiaries, since they are part of a clannish exclusionary tribal politics that rises expenses without resolving the conflict resolution problem. Adverse social effect may generate powerful coalitions for retrenchment (Weaver and Jacobs 2015, p.446 ; Häusermann 2010) that, however, face the dilemma of how to cover the increase of costs for loyalty and security. How much does loyalty and security cost under conditions of patronage and clientelism? Who does benefit from tensions and increasing expenses for security: the citizens or industrial military complexes with associated corrupt politicians? If the latter applies, these policies become self-undermining to peace and conflict resolution, since money goes to fund endless conflicts and wars.

Conclusion

As examined by Jacobs and Weaver (2015), self-undermining feedback mechanisms may include Mechanism 1 that concerns self-undermining-feedback through emergent losses in development policies for individuals and for organized groups. In the case of Iraq, this presupposes emergent political and social costs for expenses in security. Old territorial disputes in the north of the country (e.g. Kurdistan), distributive conflicts between North and South, Sunni-Shia citizens, informal labour market, fight against hunger in the shadow of climate change and other development and political challenges are now hidden by the priorities of the war against ISIL (Da'esh).

Mechanism 2 entails policy losses in mass cognition on development issues, human rights and conflict resolution priorities for individuals and for organized groups. This has to do with a negativity bias in perception and judgement on security and economic development in a resource rich economy like Iraq, which, as argued by

Jacobs and Weaver (2015, p.447), may weigh more heavily negative or threatening information than positive information. It also requires framing effects that emphasize prominence of high expenses for security and let citizens not paying attention to the practical repercussions of such politics and policies. Moreover, informational conditions or informational environment that “allows elites to exploit voters’ negativity biases for policy change” (ibid.) toward more security. Status quo is seen, in this context, as a choice that implies important losses. The new security-oriented informational environment highlights instead the need to empower electoral coalitions for policy change.

Finally, Mechanism 3 necessitates expanding menus of alternatives and the menu effects of policies for individuals and for organized groups. This implies windows of political opportunity for new technological innovations of citizens’ surveillance that can threaten their most fundamental human rights and, therefore, be self-undermining over time. In his book *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time*, Katznelson (2014) reminds that the reduction of some civic rights and liberties (such as the right to privacy) has been temporarily admissible to preserve democracy during extremely difficult time (such as during World War II or immediately after 9/11 attacks). But one of the greatest success of democracy was not to abandon rules and practices of parliamentary discussion and decision-making but to reinforce them even in times of emergency and crisis.

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ANNEX

The Social Security System in Formerly ISIS Occupied Territories
Source: The ISIS FILE 2022. The New York Times & George Washington University (GW). URL <https://isisfiles.gwu.edu/about?locale=en>

Education Announcement: Sharia Course / شريعة دورة :إعلان

Source Document Identifier

35_001605

Persistent URL

<https://isisfiles.gwu.edu/artifact/1544bp08d>

Police Passage permits

Source Document Identifier

33_001526

Persistent URL

<https://isisfiles.gwu.edu/artifact/kp78gg37r>

Education Assignment request to supervise girl's school

Source Document Identifier

35_001583

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<https://isisfiles.gwu.edu/artifact/f7623c57r>

Education Policy of the Islamic State

Source Document Identifier

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<https://isisfiles.gwu.edu/artifact/pr76f340k>

Education Decision on school registration

Source Document Identifier

35_001577

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<https://isisfiles.gwu.edu/artifact/qn59q396v>

Education canceled subjects

Source Document Identifier

35_001576

Persistent URL

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Supply of Materials to Mosques

Source Document Identifier

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Education Grammar Notes

Source Document Identifier

● 27_001368

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Social Service Family Expense Form

Source Document Identifier

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● <https://isisfiles.gwu.edu/artifact/8623hx72q>

Water and Sanitation: Water and Sewage Bill

Source Document Identifier

● 33_001548_06

Persistent URL

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Electricity

Inspection to Connect Houses to the Grid

Source Document Identifier

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● <https://isisfiles.gwu.edu/artifact/5x21tf42q>

Housing Inventory of House Furniture

Source Document Identifier

● 34_001544_01

Persistent URL

● <https://isisfiles.gwu.edu/artifact/sn009x77v>

Social Assistance Forms and Population

Personal Information Form
Source Document Identifier

- 33_001537

Persistent URL

- <https://isisfiles.gwu.edu/artifact/td96k2496>

Requesting Supplies Telecommunications
Source Document Identifier

- 32_001503

Persistent URL

- <https://isisfiles.gwu.edu/artifact/j3860692c>

Telecommunication Subscription Fees
Source Document Identifier

- 24_001295

Persistent URL

- <https://isisfiles.gwu.edu/artifact/bg257f046>

Children and Orphanage Handover of Children
Source Document Identifier

- 05_00449

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- <https://isisfiles.gwu.edu/artifact/3t945q78b>

Housing Rent and Real Estate
Source Document Identifier

- 36_001651_07

Persistent URL

- <https://isisfiles.gwu.edu/artifact/0z708w41n>

House Request Form
Source Document Identifier

- 36_001651_02

Persistent URL

- <https://isisfiles.gwu.edu/artifact/nk322d32h>

Education Assignment request to supervise girl's school
Source Document Identifier

- 35_001583

Persistent URL

- <https://isisfiles.gwu.edu/artifact/f7623c57r>

Marriage Certificate / عقد نكاح

Source Document Identifier

- 36_001652_06

Persistent URL

<https://isisfiles.gwu.edu/artifact/1831cj94h>

To/ Care Facilities in Wilayat Ninawa / إلى/ دور الرعاية في ولاية نينوى

Source Document Identifier

04_000423

Persistent URL

<https://isisfiles.gwu.edu/artifact/76537133j>

Receipt of Sum of Money / مذكرة/ استلام مبلغ

Source Document Identifier

02_000300_03

Persistent URL

<https://isisfiles.gwu.edu/artifact/44558d306>

Islamic Police / الشرطة الإسلامية

Source Document Identifier

02_000292

Persistent URL

<https://isisfiles.gwu.edu/artifact/4m90dv490>