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The Making of Iraq's Foreign Policies Post-Saddam

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the dilemma of Iraq's fragmented foreign policy making post-Saddam until December 2016. It investigates how foreign policy is made and maps and examines the key actors involved. The thesis seeks to untangle bureaucratic complexities by scrutinising the foreign policy making of core executive bodies, both in the federal government in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Erbil. It explains the nexus between elites within governmental bodies and political parties and how this has shaped policy making. Iraq's constitutional framework and its ramifications for foreign policy making are explored. The research goes beyond domestic politics to explain regional and international dynamics and influences on Iraq's foreign policy making. By focusing on these areas, this thesis fills the gaps in the literature on post-2003 foreign policy making in Iraq.

The research posits that Iraq's splintered foreign policies result from it having two governments: the sovereign federal government in Baghdad, and the non-sovereign KRG in Erbil. It found that Baghdad's foreign policy actors are incoherent, while Erbil's are relatively coherent. Thus, Iraq's foreign policy is divided and weak, yet resilient enough to survive. Beyond the meagre Iraqi constitution, incoherent and feeble state structure of the federal government and the KRG, the dissertation found that elites (backed by political factions, which control or possess key executive positions) determine foreign policy.

A hybrid theoretical framework is utilised. First, a strand of neoclassical realism is applied to the federal government to examine domestic and external contributions to foreign policy. Second, paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy are applied to the KRG's de facto foreign policy. Fieldwork undertaken for the research consisted of 40 elite interviews, mainly in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I), as well as in Europe. Analysis of Arabic and Kurdish academic literature and other documents unavailable in English further enriches the research.

This research contributes to one of the most complex foreign policy cases, which includes a divided state, disparate federal and regional (sub-state) governments and incoherent policies.

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List of Abbreviations

AAH	Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq
AKP	Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)
AQI	Al-Qaeda in Iraq
CTG	Counter Terrorism Group (Kurdish – PUK)
EU	European Union
EUP	European Union Parliament
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FM	Foreign Minister
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
I-CTS	Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service
I-MOFA	Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs
I-MONS	The Iraqi Ministry of National Security
IA	Iraqi Army
IAF	Iraqi Accord Front
ICR	Iraqi Council of Representatives
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
IGC	Iraqi Governing Council
IIG	Iraqi Interim Government
IIP	Iraqi Islamic Party
INA	Iraqi National Accord
IRGC-QF	Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps – Quds Force
IS	Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham "Levant" al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham (Daesh)
ISCI	Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
ITG	Iraqi Transitional Government
JAM	Jaish al-Mahdi
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KNA	Kurdistan National Assembly
KNC	Kurdistan National Council
KP	Kurdistan Parliament
KR-I	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
KRG	The Kurdistan Regional Government
KRP	The Kurdistan Region's Presidency

KRSC	The Kurdistan Region Security Council
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
MCNS	Ministerial Committee for National Security
MIT	Millî İstihbarat Teşkilatı (Turkey's National Intelligence Organisation)
MNSTC-I	Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq
NATO	The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NTM-I	The NATO Training Mission-Iraq
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PCNS	Political Council on National Security
PKK	The Kurdish Workers Party
PL	The Presidency Law of Kurdistan Region of Iraq
PM	Prime Minister
PMF	Popular Mobilization Forces (al-Hashd al-Sha'abi)
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
PYD	Democratic Union Party
SLC	State of Law Coalition
SOFA	Status of Forces Agreement
TAL	Transitional Administrative Law
UIA	United Iraqi Alliance

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Chapter 1

Introduction

After Saddam's fall in 2003, Iraq's foreign policies split between Baghdad and Erbil. Neither the federal government in Baghdad nor the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) in Erbil are cohesive, but Baghdad's bureaucratic foreign policy actors' behaviour and interests are far more contradictory. In addition to the incoherence of Iraq's two divergent governments and three traditional ethno-sectarian political forces (Arab Shia, Arab Sunni and Kurds), Iraq's elites and political factions have fragmented interests and distinct viewpoints – not least when it comes to deciding which states are a potential threat and which should be allies. This dissertation is about the divergence and competition of key actors' involvement in formulating foreign policy post-2003 until the end of 2016.

Foreign policy making in Iraq has an intricate and fragile nature, and holds a plethora of challenges and obstructions. This thesis untangles this complexity and addresses the dilemmas of foreign policy making. It diagnoses and explains the difficulties on various levels of Iraq's foreign relations, and explores Iraq's weak and fragmented foreign policies. The dilemmas and difficulties refer to the factors such as elites divisions and disagreements that shape Iraq's splintered and incoherent foreign policies.

A key aim of the thesis was to test the hypothesis: Baghdad and Erbil each have their own distinctive foreign relations and foreign policies, and that Baghdad struggles to formulate a coherent foreign policy. According to research evidence, this hypothesis is correct, but the author has developed granular-level arguments, which are presented in the core arguments and findings section.

This thesis provides a theoretical framework for understanding the splintered foreign policies of Iraq by utilising Neoclassical Realism (NCR) for Baghdad and paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy for Erbil. An aim is to comprehend how foreign policies are taking shape and which actors are involved in making them. It investigates foreign policy making in Iraq, identifies the role and influence of each crucial official and governmental body, and identifies the most powerful organisations and actors in foreign policy making. These include the Prime Minister (PM); the President; the Foreign Minister

(FM); Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs (I-MOFA); diplomats; the Iraqi Council of Representatives (ICR) and its Speaker; the Foreign Relations Committee (FRC) in the ICR; and briefly indicates to auxiliary agencies such as the National Security Advisor and Agency. The dissertation explores the KRG's de facto foreign relations and foreign policy behaviour and its key actors' performance, and how these have resulted in splintering Iraq's foreign policies. The core executive bodies include the KRG's President, the PM, the Department of Foreign Relations (DFR) and its Head.

The dissertation explores the coordination and divergence within and between the federal government in Baghdad and the KRG in Erbil in formulating foreign policy. It scrutinises the foreign policy perspectives, external ties and agendas of Iraqi and Kurdish political factions and key elites, as well as the loopholes and different interpretations of Iraq's constitution in respect to foreign policy. The thesis uncovers and analyses the regional influences and interference in foreign policy making in Iraq, studies the federal government's foreign policy imperatives and exposes the challenges to agreeing on and achieving those priorities.

This introductory chapter lays the foundations of the thesis. It first outlines the research questions, and then summarises the core arguments and findings and provides definitions of foreign relations and foreign policy. Subsequently, it sets out the research's significance, before discussing the existing literature, the gaps therein and the contribution of this thesis to the literature. Finally, the chapter presents the methodology and structure of the thesis.

Research questions

The thesis' main research question is:

- How is foreign policy made in Iraq?

The following research questions are subsidiary:

- Which elites, political forces, key figures and core executive bodies have been involved in conducting foreign relations and shaping Iraq's incoherent foreign

policies post-2003? What is their role and who has superiority in foreign policy making?

- Why does the KRG need a foreign policy? How is the KRG's foreign policy made, and who is making it? Do the KRG's foreign relations and policy diverge from Baghdad's?

- What are Iraq's foreign policy priorities or imperatives, and has the federal government achieved them?

- How do neighbouring actors interfere in and influence Iraq's foreign policy? Which are the most influential?

The central question is concerned with how foreign policies are made in Iraq. The subsidiary questions' purposes are to answer the main question and seek to further explore the dilemma of foreign policy making in Iraq. The thesis addresses these questions by providing original analyses, literature and insights into this under-researched topic as well as an assessment of the research questions (for example, an approximate evaluation of the regional interferences).

Core arguments and findings

This section addresses the core arguments of the thesis and summarises the key research findings.

Post-2003, Iraq has had two formal foreign relations and foreign policies; one emanates from the sovereign federal government in Baghdad, and the other from the non-sovereign KRG in Erbil. Officially, Erbil's foreign relations and foreign policy should be complementary to Baghdad's, and the KRG's foreign policy ought not to be outside the official foreign policy of the federal government. However, the formulation and the implementation of the two governments' foreign policies are neither coordinated nor officially related, as the KRG's foreign policy is independent.

The research found that Iraq is a weak and fragmented country with two uncoordinated official foreign policies. The federal government in Baghdad has a fractured foreign

policy; furthermore, there are extremely poor communication channels between and within Iraqi ruling elites (with their political forces) and the core executive bureaucratic bodies, with each key actor trying to project their own vision and version of foreign policy. In 2004, under Allawi's Iraqi Interim Government (IIG), new characteristics of Iraq's foreign policy emerged, including peacefully reaching out to the international community. From 2005 under al-Jaafari's Iraqi Transnational Government (ITG), to 2016 under PM Haider al-Abadi, Shia elites have led the federal government.

The PM is the key driver of Iraq's foreign policy. The PM has the highest executive authority in articulating the federal government's foreign policy, and since 2005 has been from a Shia Islamic political party (Islamic Da'wa Party). The FM implements official foreign policy; however, the fragility of the government and significant shortcomings of the political ethno-sectarian quota system (*al-Muhasasa al-Hizbiyya w al-T'aifiyya*), political accord *(al-Tawafuq al-Siyasi)* and power-sharing agreement and partnership government *(al-Sharaka w Ittifaq Taqasim al-Sulta)* as well as the absence of an agreed foreign policy plan, has led the FM to attempt to fill the vacuum, with limited coordination with the PM.[1] Individual diplomats and officials have made uncoordinated attempts to fill the vacuum. The President is part of the executive authority and has a limited and ceremonial role in foreign policy, as Iraq is a hybrid or mixed presidential–parliamentary executive in which the PM leads the Council of Ministers and the entire executive authority. As a legislative authority, the ICR has a monitory role, occasionally questions officials and approves some of the foreign policy executive's actions, such as international agreements. The FRC in the ICR does not have a direct role in drawing up or implementing foreign policy. It studies international agreements, provides recommendations, proposes laws, and monitors the I-MOFA. The Speaker of the ICR has no direct role in foreign policy formulation; however, due to the quota system this position has been viewed as more critical (particularly by external powers), as it has mostly been allocated to the Arab Sunni political component. Thus, the Speaker interacts with foreign entities.

Iraq's major actors contest the federal government's foreign policy priorities or imperatives. Foreign policy priorities have focused on three interconnected areas – diplomacy, security and economy – imperative to regime survival and state building.

[1] Al-*Muhasasa* is a common term in Iraq to describe the inclusivity and share of key ethno-sectarian political components in the executive branches of the Iraqi state. Consequently, it has come to have negative connotations. The word *muhasasa* is derived from the Arabic word for *apportionment*. The *muhasasa* ethno-sectarian quota system has been used by successive Iraqi governments to distribute cabinet positions for so-called "National Unity" *Wahda Wataniya* and "National Partnership" governments (Al-Min, 2016).

Iraq has failed to obtain the security imperative and has poorly achieved diplomacy and economy.

Investigating the KRG's foreign relations and foreign policy underlines the second major centre of power and the official split between foreign policy making in the federal government and the KRG. The KRG's foreign policy is de facto and relatively coherent in terms of the KRG's pronouncements, messages, and core bureaucratic bodies. This is partially because key executive bodies are dominated mainly (but not only) by the KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party). The President of the KRG (from the KDP) has superiority in formulating foreign policy. Despite the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) having its own preferences and foreign relations, it does not actively contradict the KRG's foreign policy.

This thesis argues that, to various degrees, Iraq's neighbouring countries' (Iran, Turkey, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), and Syria (before the civil war)) activities in Iraq have influenced and interfered in Iraq's internal affairs, and consequently in bilateral relationships and foreign policy. Iran and Turkey are the most active and influential. Iran mainly influences Baghdad, particularly Shia elites, while Turkey mainly influences Erbil and Arab Sunni political elites and factions respectively. To a lesser degree, the KSA influence Arab Sunni political elites and factions. Syria has been a destabilizing actor in Iraq. Iraq's fragmentation and state weakness and Iraqi elites' interests have provided further opportunities for neighbouring countries to expand their leverage and mobilise allies and agents in Iraq.

The theoretical framework most suited to the dissertation is NCR, which Gideon Rose (1998) first articulated. NCR opens the "black box" of the state to understand foreign policy by examining the influences of the internal and external environment and factors (domestic and external variables). NCR argues that domestic factors are led by elites' perceptions, and external power distribution in the international system determines how states behave and form foreign policies. Domestic factors in NCR are incorporated as intervening variables that shape the process of policy making to provide an accurate analysis of foreign policy. The incorporation of domestic intervening variables explains the relationship between power distribution in the international system and the dependent variable, which is foreign policy outcome. Thus, NCR untangles domestic politics to explain foreign policy making, responses and behaviour, while taking into account the systemic structure and distribution of power in the international system.

According to Rose (1998, 167) and Schweller (2004, 161) NCR predicts the occurrence of incoherent, weak and contracted foreign policy responses when the following factors are present: the decrease in relative power, weak state inability to mobilize powers swiftly, and state fragmentation on multiple levels including the elites and society.

Schweller's (2004) version of NCR and his underbalancing theory has been applied to the thesis because it can explain incoherent states' foreign policy responses to external stimuli or threats. Due to the limitations of NCR including the absence of a framework within NCR that could explain an ambitious non-sovereign government's international activities, which in this case is the KRG's de facto foreign policy, therefore the thesis has adopted paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy. These concepts are perfectly suited to explaining the non-sovereign entity's foreign relations and policy, and do not contradict NCR, which is applied to Baghdad. Paradiplomacy refers to the international activities of non-sovereign authorities that control territories and pursue certain international objectives. Protodiplomacy refers to the international activities of non-sovereign governments to obtain sovereignty and independence.

Defining foreign relations and foreign policy

There is no consensus between scholars on a definition of foreign policy (Gyngell and Michael, 2003, 18). However, there is no objection to international relations (IR) students developing foreign policy definitions that suit their cases. The following definitions for this dissertation are not ultimate, as they could be developed in further research. The author has presented his own definition of foreign relations and foreign policy that applies to this case, inspired by Gyngell and Welsey (2003) and Frankel (1970). Foreign policy is best discussed via examples of detailed case studies, which is the NCR approach adopted in this dissertation.

The author argues that *foreign policy* is the operation of a government and its elites (or those that have authority) to formulate desired outcomes (including objectives, agenda and strategies), which they seek or intend to implement outside the state's border. Another synthesised definition states that foreign policy is the visions and goals of key decision makers (or those who have authority), which are pursued and subsequently followed by actions or decisions transmitted and/or echoed externally to the outside world, and lead to policies regarding relations with foreign entities.

Foreign relations refers to the practice of day-to-day, relationships and bilateral and multilateral relationships with states or non-state actors. Foreign relations include the practice of diplomacy by officials including diplomatic actors or representatives.

These definitions are compatible with NCR as it believes foreign policy is made by governments particularly elites and shaped by other domestic and external factors (variables).

The Iraqi federal government conducts foreign relations, but has a weak and incoherent foreign policy. The KRG conducts foreign relations, and has begun to develop a de facto foreign policy. The terminology *"Iraq's foreign policy"* will be utilised throughout the research as splintered or fragmented *"Iraq's foreign relations and foreign policies"* to reflect Iraq as a whole which includes Baghdad and Erbil, and the real practices based on the findings and the developed arguments where Iraq does not have a unified foreign policy. Baghdad or the federal government's foreign policy does not include the KRG/Erbil. A more appropriate term might therefore be Iraqi foreign policies, as it represents the foreign policies of at least two governments' (the federal government and the KRG).[2]

Significance of the research

What can we learn from studying Iraq's foreign policy making post-2003, and why is it important – both to the researcher and to others? The author has closely witnessed elites' engagements in the new state-building project (and the hiccups and setbacks therein), and the rise of elites, political factions and non-state actors. The most prominent issues the author noted were instability; insecurity; a number of elites seizing power for personal and partisan interests, and the lack of building independent state institutions, genuine reconciliation or a roadmap for the future. Iraq has become a globalised theatre in which foreign actors have an obvious role.

The author felt compelled to examine the process of government decision making in foreign policy within this environment. The author had an opportunity to observe and

[2] This term has been developed by the author through primary research, such as interviews with Dr Barham Salih (2014) former Deputy PM of Iraq and KRG's former PM, and Lukman Faily (2016) Iraq's former Ambassador to the US (2013-2016).

interact with internal and external state officials; it appeared that the Kurdish factions had started to build their own relationships without Baghdad's knowledge or consent, particularly in security, energy, and political aspects. The de facto nature of some entities in Iraq has become a common pattern across Iraq's non-state actors, regardless of ethno-sectarian leanings. The author was inspired to conduct academic research to have an impact on policy makers and the public, address the shortcomings and encourage change – without being affiliated with or supporting the state apparatus or political organisations.

It is necessary to conduct original, evidence-based research into war-torn Iraq's foreign policy making to assist policy makers, academics and the Iraqi and non-Iraqi public about how foreign policy in Iraq is made, and to understand its dynamics and challenges. The research notes a lack of awareness among both academics and bureaucrats regarding vital details of Iraq's foreign policies. For example, how is foreign policy made, what are Baghdad's foreign policy priorities, and (critically) how can we explain the overlap of policy and non-policy makers' (including non-state actors and others) power and intervention in Iraq's foreign policy making? This research diagnoses and address these problems and obstructions academically. It analyses and provides accurate terminology for the actions and behaviour of the governments, officials and Iraqi non-state actors, in the context of foreign affairs, based on the findings. Questions and scepticism about the Iraqi state's survival and the ability and viability of its governmental bodies to perform are continually being raised.

Understanding the shortcoming and setbacks in foreign policy making will help us to understand why Iraq is failing in other areas, such as security. This is briefly discussed in Chapter 6. Raising further, granular questions about Iraq's componential relationship with regional and international powers contributes to the study of IR in the Middle East, where Iraqi sociopolitical groups' identities and ties extend beyond its borders (and vice versa). This thesis provides an opportunity to examine Iraq's foreign policy through an IR theoretical and conceptual framework, which requires the synthesis and utilisation of more than one lens in the theoretical framework (NCR, paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy) to explain the complexity of Iraq's splintered foreign policies.

This thesis will aid academics and policy makers in proposing a formula and/or mechanism to produce a relatively functional and coherent foreign policy in Iraq. It enriches academia with a foreign policy case that is both extremely fragmented and

resilient. This will help us to understand other cases around the world with similar symptoms and/or characteristics such as Lebanon's fragmented politics and incoherent foreign policy. Furthermore, in the fragmented state of Syria, Damascus and de facto Rojava's authority (Syrian Kurdistan) have different international relationships.

Existing literature

Literature on Iraq's foreign policy in the post-Saddam period is scarce. The few existing short works do not comprehensively examine Iraq's foreign policy decision-making processes and challenges; neither do they address the coordination, competition, obstructions, performance and engagement at a granular level between Iraq's elites, core executive bodies or political factions, nor the practical reasons for Iraq's splintered foreign policies.

This existing literature is divided into five areas of focus: first, literature on Iraq's foreign policy before the toppling of Saddam in 2003; second, literature on Iraq's foreign policy post-2003; third, literature on Iraqi Kurds and the KRG; fourth, associated literature divided into two areas: First, the new polity of Iraq and transitional period post-Saddam; second, Iraq in Middle Eastern politics. Finally, literature that contributes to the theoretical framework.

Literature on Iraq's foreign policy before 2003

The key literature explaining Iraq's foreign policy before 2003 includes Tripp (2002); Dawisha (2002); and Marr (2001). These provide an understanding of the major factors that drove Iraq's foreign policy before the toppling of Saddam. They present the internal and external (mainly geopolitical) dynamics, aspects and complexity of Iraq's foreign policy. They indicate key drivers including conflicting identities; the regime's unwise decision making; domestic fragmentation; the geopolitics of Iraq's weak artificial borders, the Kurdish issue and dependency on oil revenues. All of these factors contributed to a centralised but weak foreign policy under Saddam, and the aspiration for a centralised policy remains strong.

Literature on Iraq's foreign policy post-Saddam

The literature on Iraq's foreign policy post-Saddam misses influential elements, such as studying competing key actors and core executive bureaucratic bodies, and external

factors that are entangled in making Iraq's foreign policy. Furthermore, they do not address whether these bodies are coordinating or even functioning, or what their role is in designing and executing foreign policy. Critically, the literature does not explain the KRG's foreign policy in the context of the splintering of Iraq's foreign policies. Neither does it address how prominent figures and armed non-state actors (such as Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani and Iraq's Shia militias, including the nascent Hashd al-Sha'abi) influence Iraq's foreign policy making. The literature tries to provide a vision for Iraq's foreign policy; but the arguments and analysis are not comprehensive, because they do not include all the key factors and ingredients contributing to the fragmentation of Iraq's foreign policies.

Soffar's (2010) chapter neither scrutinises the making of Iraq's foreign policy nor explores the KRG's foreign policy. Stansfield (2010a) presents a brief analysis of the reformation of the foreign policy of Iraq. While Stansfield discusses particular scenes of Iraq's foreign relations in the transformational stage until 2010, he does not address the government structure or key actors' and core executive bodies' involvement in foreign relations and foreign policy; nor does he discuss the coordination and performance of the federal government and the KRG on foreign policies.

Saouli (2014) discusses Iraq and Lebanon, attempting to compare similarities in their foreign policies in every paragraph – even every sentence. The chapter does not explain how Iraq's foreign policy is formulated or which executive bureaucratic bodies and elites are involved; nor does it even discuss the KRG's foreign relations. While Saouli and Soffar recognises the fragmentation of Iraqi policy, they do not discuss the dilemmas in formulating foreign policy, where the fragmentation originates or how foreign policy is made.

Salem (2013), similarly to Stansfield, Saouli and Soffar, does not study the core executive bureaucratic bodies of the federal government and the KRG and their political factions' external relations conjointly. However, Salem's work has inspired the author's Chapter 6 about priorities. This thesis digs further into the imperatives (priorities), justifying them with primary resources. Furthermore, it tries to narrow the imperatives into focused areas of foreign policy analysis, whereas Salem did not address how the imperatives have been articulated in foreign policy; he examined areas that have not really been pursued or presented in Iraq's foreign policy.

Literature on Iraqi Kurds and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)

The literature on the Iraqi Kurds and the KRG focuses on the rise of the Kurds, their state-building project and its challenges, as well as their interactions with external powers. A few scholars discuss the KRG's foreign relations, but none discuss foreign policy decision-making. A few works throw light on the KRG's regional interactions Low and Stansfield, (2010); Charountaki, (2012), but unlike this thesis they neither discuss the KRG's core bureaucratic bodies in foreign relations nor how they formulate foreign policy. These works also tend to focus on aspects of the KRG state building efforts and Turkey's role in Iraqi Kurdistan and its relationship with the KRG, which will also be discussed and which includes economy, natural energy and security. Further works that discuss the state building and relationship with Baghdad and its challenges are Romano (2010), Stansfield and Anderson (2009), Ahmed (2012) and Voller (2013) these works discuss the KRG's oil and politics and how it has contributed to the state-building project and further fragmenting of Iraq particularly between Baghdad and Erbil. The following works show Iraqi Kurdish political components as non-state actors and discuss some of their international activities: Shareef (2014), Charountaki (2010) and Stansfield (2013). These works recognise and discuss the increasing role of the Iraqi Kurds in international relations, and their increasing relations with the US. They do not analyse how and who in the KRG formulates foreign policy or its core executive bodies. Although, Stansfield (2013) recognises the KRG's formulation of foreign policy, unlike this dissertation he neither scrutinises the process of decision-making, nor the divergence of KRG's priorities from Baghdad.

These literatures have supported the insights of this thesis, as they argue that the KRG has increasingly become an international actor without sovereign status. However, they explain neither the contributions of core executive bodies to the KRG's foreign relations and foreign policy, nor the KDP's and PUK's foreign relations and how they coordinate to shape the KRG's foreign relations and policy. Importantly, they do not discuss how the KRG's foreign relations and foreign policy have evolved and diverged from Baghdad, nor the KRG's purpose and objectives in drawing up a foreign policy. The literature has presented the Kurdish political entanglement in the Middle East and beyond, but has not investigated the KRG's foreign policy, apparatus, performance, purposes and objectives.

Contributing associated literature

The following associated pieces of literature focus on two interrelated areas that have been cited and enriched the research. First, the new political spectrum including elites and political parties in Iraq and Iraq's transitional period post-Saddam; second, Iraq in regional politics. The following works throw light on Iraq's political elites; state structure; political trends; sectarianism; domestic conflicts; elements of Iraqi state fragmentation and social groups. A combination of these factors contributes to the splintered foreign policies of Iraq.

The first associated literature has contributed to providing an understanding of Iraq's new dynamics, including the dramatic shift in Iraq's politics and polity post-2003. Tripp (2007), Stansfield (2010b) and Dodge (2012 and 2013) discuss the new elites and their political parties, which the dissertation focuses on as it argues they have contributed to the formulation of Iraq's foreign policies. These explore Iraq in the transitional period and highlight prominent domestic factors. They also expose and criticise the failure of the government to formulate and implement policies. The author synthesises some of these works to explain foreign policy-making processes. The works discuss Iraq's new internal and regional dynamics, including the ascendance of Iraq's elites, key figures and the political factions, as well its politics and polity evolution, which explain some important internal factors. They address some domestic governance challenges, such as corruption, utilising sectarianism as a tool and incompetence. Furthermore, Dodge (2012 and 2013) focuses on the rise of authoritarianism during al-Maliki's tenure, which provides some insights into this period of foreign policy making.

The second associated literature looks at how regional powers' external interferences and influences have affected Iraqi internal affairs. The essential argument is that regional powers have ties with Iraq's internal politics, economy and, to a certain degree, security; this indirectly influences the making of foreign policy via domestic surrogates. Barkey, Lasensky and Marr (2011) focus on Iraq's actors' links and ties with regional powers. Juneau (2015) discusses Iran's influence on and interference in Iraq's domestic politics and security. Although the aforementioned have contributed to Chapter 7, neither discuss how this has influenced decision making in the context of Iraqi foreign policies nor investigates developments up until 2016. Finally the author's own published research contributed to and is cited in this thesis, as it addresses internal and

regional security, political dynamics and policies; for example, Gulmohamad (2016) in CTC Sentinel.

There is no existing literature, based on first-hand information gathered from interviews with top decision makers that investigates Iraq's splintered foreign policies. This thesis fills the gaps in analysing the performance and coordination within and between the governmental bodies in Baghdad and Erbil. The aforementioned literature doesn't cover Baghdad's or the KRG's top imperatives, or present a comprehensive analysis of the shortcomings of Iraq's foreign policies or analyse the elements that influence and shape them. These elements include elites; political factions; bureaucratic executive bodies; sociopolitical groups, key figures and external (regional) powers.

The theoretical literature

No theoretical literature adequately examines the fragmentation of Iraq's foreign policies post-2003. However, it is essential for any research on Iraq's foreign policy to look at various IR and foreign policy theories.

This thesis presents and synthesises theoretical perspectives from ideas, frameworks and assumptions of the writers that are the most proximate to Iraq's foreign policies – mainly NCR, a foreign policy theory. Works on NCR that are essential to this thesis are those of Gideon Rose (1998), Lobell, Ripsman and Talaiferro (2009 and 2016) and Schweller (2004 and 2008). These literatures provide an approach that can explain the weak and fragile government's incoherent foreign policies, which match the core arguments of this thesis – particularly those that apply to the federal government in Baghdad. However, no literature uses NCR to examine Iraq's post-Saddam foreign policy. Therefore, the thesis presents an original perspective and application by applying NCR theories and its frameworks to Iraq, which can explain Iraq's weak and contradictory foreign policies and behaviour by scrutinising and incorporating the country's internal and external variables into its framework.

However, the NCR literature cannot explain the KRG's international activities because NCR places emphasis on a central government's formulation of foreign policy and lacks an explanation for a non-sovereign authority's foreign policy. Aldecoa and Keating (1999) and Tavares (2016) developed the concepts of paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy. Therefore, similarly to Mohammed and Owtram (2014), the

dissertation applies the concepts of paradiplomacy to the KRG. The dissertation further applies protodiplomacy to explain the KRG's foreign relations and policy. The dissertation proposes different arguments and analysis to those within the aforementioned literature. It argues that paradiplomacy was applied in the post-Saddam period, while protodiplomacy has been applied since 2014 to the KRG's foreign policy behaviour and objectives. The author argues that the KRG's independence was a priority that emerged due to the fragmentation of Iraq and the evolution of the KRG's foreign policy. Therefore, the adoption of these two concepts presents an original analytical framework for the KRG that does not contradict the main theory of NCR.

Finally, the author has translated and analysed Arabic and Kurdish literature research studies; news articles; Baghdad's and the KRG's governments' websites, media interviews and current affairs websites to provide original insights and information that is unavailable in English literature and mainstream media. These critically important sources fill a significant gap in the English literature; for example, Khamis (2014) in an academic Arabic language journal, *Dirasat al-Duwaliya* (International Studies).

The existing literature reveals that no post-2003 research provides a comprehensive account, including a large range of primary and local secondary resources, an applicable theoretical framework that combines all aforementioned factors involved in the foreign policy making of Iraq that this thesis provides. The following section illustrates the methods the author utilised to answer the research questions.

Methodology

Qualitative methods are the most suitable for empirically investigating this topic, and are preferred by NCR. The methodology uses mixed qualitative data-gathering strategies, including semi-structured elite interviews (conducted by the author) and secondary resources including Arabic and Kurdish. The thesis examines the formulation of foreign policy; this necessitates investigating why and how Iraq acts in a particular way and – since foreign policy is largely made by elites – focusing on elites. Qualitative methods such as interviewing allow us to understand the challenges elites believe they face, which policies they perceive to be the most appropriate and how policy is made. The use of mixed qualitative methods is expanded on in the following subsections.

Considerable use was made of published material, journals, think tanks and other publications; government websites and publications; audio-visual and multimedia resources. The Arabic and Kurdish literature included: scholarly publications; academic journals; government documents and statements; and local current affairs outlets. These resources fill a significant gap in the literature, as a considerable amount of information is not available in the mainstream literature.

Elite interviews

Elite interviews make the research valuable and provide evidence for the dissertation's claims, as they are sources of first-hand information and views from 40 figures in Iraq and the KRG. In this research, the term "elite" refers to individuals that possess more influence over the process of decision making than ordinary individuals. Elites include prime ministers; presidents; ministers and their deputies; diplomats; parliamentarians; key executive policy makers, lawmakers and prominent politicians who were previously in the government and have great influence over the masses. However, the prominent religious and tribal leaders such as Ali al-Sistani will be named as key leaders or prominent figures, instead of categorising them as elites.

Elite interviews are crucial to the research for many reasons. First, elites are engaged in the process of foreign policy making in the federal government and the KRG (to different degrees, depending on their position). Second, they are aware of unannounced details relevant to the policies; the semi-structured interviews draw out some of these details. Third, apart from the significant lack of literature, other sources (such as related articles or books) might not have sufficient information or insights, or might be ignorant of elements of the story, because of researchers' constraints in accessing the people who matter or a lack of openness in Iraqi and Kurdish politics. Fourth, the rapid developments in Iraq and the KRG quickly render resources outdated; it thus becomes imperative to gain first-hand information from individuals who are part of the process and are up to date. Fifth, the federal government's and the KRG's foreign policy plans are not rigorously written, outlined or detailed for the public or for a government officer. Therefore, the semi-structured elite interviews illustrate the differences between governments' official actions and their real agenda and interpretations. Sixth, elite interviews provide information about how core executive bodies and elites function and the nature of bureaucratic actors' interrelationships (again, areas in which there is no existing literature).

Interviews should be flexible to obtain an in-depth understanding of the issues from the interviewees' perspectives. An interview – whether structured, semi-structured or unstructured – is a purposeful conversation, and forms a major pillar of qualitative research methodology (Burgess, 1984, 101). Interviewing can be an excellent method of data collection because the thoughts, attitudes and behaviours of actors can be explored using the perceptions of those involved in the process under examination (Johnson and Reynolds, 2012, 346). For this research, interviews were conducted with elites; namely, senior policy makers related to the federal government's and the KRG's foreign policies. The interviews were face-to-face and semi-structured. Interviewees were free to answer or not the questions. The author wrote a set of open questions for each participant, relating to their specific specialisms. However, some common questions were asked of all participants to gain an understanding of views on the same issues from different political backgrounds; for example: "Does Iraq have a foreign policy?" and "Does the KRG have a foreign policy?" (See appendix A for a sample of list of questions).

Interview materials are quoted and analysed to enrich the analysis. The interviewees were selected on the basis of their occupation, specialisation and knowledge of the subject. The 40 elite interviews were conducted in Baghdad, the KR-I, Europe and the UK. Altogether, more than a dozen trips were required. The interviewees included government officials, politicians and key security and civil servants of different ranks in government bodies and ruling political parties. The posts of interviewees from the federal government included the PM's office; officials in the I-MOFA (e.g. Iraq's Ambassadors to the US; UN; UK; China; Sweden, Romania and Denmark, as well as heads of departments and diplomats); Iraq's Presidential Office (such as the President's spokesperson); lawmakers and members of the FRC and the Committee of Security and Defence and Tribes Committee in the ICR; and Iraq's security officials (for instance General Director of Iraq's Military Intelligence). Decision makers from the KRG included the KRG's Presidency (e.g. Chief of Staff); the KRG's PM; Minister and Head of the Department of Foreign Relations and representatives from the DFR (for example the KRG's representative in the UK); Minister of Peshmerga; Minister of Higher Education, Deputy Advisor to the Kurdistan Region Security Council and Head of the Kurdistan Parliament. A complete list of interviewees and their posts can be found in the first part of the bibliography.

The interviewees came from different ethnic-religious backgrounds, including Shias, Arab Sunnis and Kurds, Yazidis and Christians. They were also from various political backgrounds, from the ruling parties to smaller and opposition parties. This broad spectrum provides a comprehensive range of key actors in making Iraq's foreign policies. The range of levels and functions of the interviewees is particularly important in providing a broad range of perspectives. Some foreign diplomats (non-Iraqi or Kurdish) have been interviewed (such as the Iranian Ambassador and Consulate to Iraq). Their perspectives were necessary to provide the view of a foreign power's elites to contribute to answering some of the questions on external influences and interferences and to understand their assessments of Iraq's foreign policy. None of the interviewees rejected the request to be interviewed. The researcher received support from a number of Kurdish officials from the KRG to arrange interviews with those who were hard to reach, such as the KRG's PM. A number of the interviewees, such as former US ambassador Faily, were contacted via email and phone to arrange appointments. Moreover, the author received permission to access the green zone (the governmental compound in Baghdad) and the ICR in order to conduct interviews with a number of ICR members.

The interviewees do not drive the research; rather, they develop, evidence and shape the arguments. The elite interviews presented evidence for the author's claims, arguments and key findings. Obtaining first-hand information from the field for this research was a challenging task due to security issues involved in travelling to conflict zones. However, these problems were overcome due to the author's pre-existing personal contacts and work experience. The author had aimed to interview more elites, but due to time limitations and travel timetables only 40 were conducted. However, those interviewed came from most of the key organisations and political parties engaged in foreign policy making; thus, the number of interviewed elites is adequate for the research due to their positions.

Sometimes, individual politicians who were in the government at the time of the interview avoided discussing a particular matter or withheld details; they were reluctant, or stated they were unable to elaborate, for personal reasons. The topics that interviewees were unwilling to discuss were not in common with each other. Therefore, debates and discussions were important in order to understand their stance and views and to receive as much information as possible. Confidentiality was respected by accepting interviewees' requests not to be recorded or to be anonymous. Additionally,

all audio records of interviews were deleted after the use. If something was not allowed to be quoted, there were alternative ways to gain information or insights, such as other interviewees' perspectives and/or secondary resources. Nevertheless, elites who were no longer active in the government, and officials who were active in the government but had a critical stance towards the government's policies, expressed their views and criticisms passionately and unrestrainedly. This contributed significantly to the research, as it shows the fragmentation between the elites and within foreign policy making.

The author took into consideration the interviewees' loyalties; for example, to a party's ideology or group of influential people. Nevertheless, it is important to note the interviewees' inclinations, because Iraq's foreign policy is naturally affected by elites' perceptions; interests; beliefs; loyalties; ideologies; fragmentation, friction and the hostility of the country's political spectrum.

Relevant resources, triangulation and analysis

As Love (2003, 83) noted, "documents are part of the fabric of our world". Documents consist of not only written texts but also audio and video recordings. This thesis makes ample use of predominantly primary sources; that is, original documents produced by political actors ranging from the executive, parliamentary and judicial arms of government to policy-making bodies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Marsh and Stoker, 2010, 261). Other primary resources utilised for this thesis are "materials that are gathered first hand and have a direct relation with the people, situation or events that are being investigated" (Burgess, 1984, 124) – namely, reports; statements; declarations; announcements; regulations, state laws and the constitution. Many of these are available on the federal government and the KRG official websites. Those that are not publicly available were obtained from officials the author interviewed.

All the sources underwent critical examination in light of Burgess's (1984, 124) warning that primary sources should not be viewed uncritically and should be combined with other resources. The author used other key sources, such as interviews conducted by (mainly Arabic) TV channels, which were available on YouTube or transcribed and published on news, current affairs and think-tank websites. These materials provided invaluable information that enriched the analysis, as they explored key elites' foreign

policies statements, messages and visions regarding a particular country or relationship. The author considers these resources to be reliable because the individuals who provided the relevant information are prominent figures, elites or scholars in the field. Moreover, the author compared the materials to double-check them with other existing resources (online or interviews) for confirmation.

The author used triangulation, which Denzin (1978) defines as "the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon" (Denzin in Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner, 2007, 114). Denzin describes four kinds of triangulation: first, data triangulation (use of a variety of sources in a study); second, investigator triangulation (use of several different researchers); third, theory triangulation (utilisation of multiple theories and perspectives to explain the results of a study); and fourth, methodological triangulation (use of multiple methods to study a research problem). Additionally, he describes within-methods triangulation, which refers to the use of either multiple quantitative or qualitative approaches. This research makes use of within-methods triangulation; it adopts multiple qualitative approaches, and relies on a variety of sources and theories.

To enhance the reliability and validity of the research, a multiple triangulation study of the sources was carried out by combining different types of resources (Hakim, 1987, 144) to check the validity of the inferences drawn from the data (Ritchie and Lewis, 2012, 43). Triangulation methods were utilised to answer the research questions and to better understand the thesis; for instance, by combining interview materials, literature, documents, audio-visual material and personal perspectives.

Thesis structure

Six chapters investigate the research questions and present the key findings of this research, while the final chapter presents the dissertation's conclusions.

Chapter 2 presents a hybrid theoretical framework and a formula to explain the splintered foreign policies of Iraq. First, it explains what NCR is and why it is suitable for this case. The author synthesises the writings and perspectives of key NCR scholars and applies two NCR frameworks to the federal government of Iraq. The first approach is the main variables power explanatory framework, which includes independent variables,

intervening variables and dependent variables and explains foreign policy making processes and behaviour. The second approach is Schweller's more granular NCR underbalancing theory, which applies to a broad range of states – including weak and fragmented states, and incorporates in its framework competing and divided elites and communities, and a fragile government as domestic intervening variables without ignoring the external/systemic pressures – and explains how these states respond to, and formulate policies towards, external threats or rising powers.

Second, NCR lacks an explanation for non-sovereign actors' foreign relations and policy. Thus, the thesis utilises other imperative lenses – namely paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy – to explain the KRG's de facto foreign policy, objectives and orientations. Chapter 2 thus also explains why protodiplomacy and paradiplomacy do not contradict NCR.

Chapter 3 studies key Iraqi actors (political forces and key figures inside and outside the federal government who shape foreign policy making). To understand Iraq's foreign relations and policies, it is vital to take into account the leverage these actors have over the federal government. The chapter analyses how Iraqi foreign policies are contested between the various factions and political forces outside the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I). It examines Arab-majority political forces: majority-Arab Shia, Arab Sunni or allegedly cross-ethno-sectarian parties with majority-Arab members and supporters. The chapter provides a basis for understanding how key political forces and influential figures (for example, Ali al-Sistani) view Iraq's foreign policy, or even approach the international community outside the government structure. It also identifies which actors are the most powerful in Iraqi politics, and which influence the making of Iraqi foreign policy.

Chapter 3 also underlines contradictory principles and political and personal visions, actions and agendas that are played out in Iraq's foreign policy – notably, the conflicts generated by internal politics and Iraqi actors' covert and overt external ties, which have led to incoherent foreign relations and policy perspectives and statements. The weakness of Iraq's government and the rise of other political forces post-2003 undermined the state and its ability to make and implement policy. The chapter lays out how political forces' ascendance, rivalry and projection of power have impacted on foreign policy.

Chapter 4 investigates and maps out the federal government's core executive bodies in foreign policy. It studies the roles, performance, coordination and competition of core executive bodies within the federal government of Iraq in the context of foreign affairs, and how these affect, shape and contribute to Baghdad's incoherent foreign relations and policy. It identifies which elites and political forces dominate a governmental agency and/or post, exposing their vying interests, competing and contrasting pronouncements, projections of power and approaches – both regarding foreign policy and within those core bodies. It focuses on foreign affairs post-Saddam from the IIG in 2004 until the federal government in 2016, and studies behaviour, coordination, competition and performance of PM; I-MOFA and the FM; the Presidency; the ICR and its Speaker, and the FRC in the ICR. It discusses who has superiority in its formulation, which is the PM's post. Chapter 4 illustrates and evaluates the related constitutional articles. The chapter also addresses how the post-2003 ethno-sectarian quota system for establishing governments has resulted in key elites and major ruling parties forcing their political differences and partisan and personal interests onto their counterparts, thus further contributing to an incoherent and ineffective foreign policy.

Chapter 5 investigates how and why the KRG is conducting foreign relations and having a foreign policy, and how this further splinters Iraq's foreign policies. It studies the decision-making process in the KRG's foreign policy by examining the leverage of each key elite and core body, and that of the KDP and PUK, over foreign policy and relations. The chapter maps the KRG's foreign affairs core executive bodies, including the role of the Presidency, the PM and the DFR. It studies how foreign policy is made in the KRG. It exposes the KRG's mechanisms, tools and foreign policy priorities and the de facto nature of its energised diplomacy, which often contradicts the federal government's foreign policy. The chapter discusses the evolution of the KRG's foreign policy and debates on whether or not the KRG has a foreign policy. The chapter argues that the KRG is conducting foreign relations and developing an independent foreign policy, and that although there are two separate dominant political parties (the KDP and the PUK) the PUK has its own external ties, interests and regional alliances but does not undermine the KRG's foreign relations and policy. The KDP dominates the KRG's core executive bodies that led to relatively coherent foreign policy actors. Most of the representatives and key figures of the KRG's foreign affairs bodies (such as the Deputy PM, who is from the PUK) adhere to the KRG's formal foreign policy messages and pronouncements. The chapter utilises paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy to explore different and overlapping phases of the KRG's foreign relations. It also discusses related articles in the Iraqi

constitution, the KRG's laws and how these view and shape the KRG's foreign relations and foreign policy. The chapter analyses how the KRG's and federal government's core executive bodies in foreign relations coordinate, and how their differences contribute to splintering Iraqi foreign relations and foreign policies.

Chapter 6 identifies and examines the federal government's foreign policy priorities or imperatives articulated and presented in Iraq's international activities. It argues the federal government's foreign policy actors are not agreed on how to achieve its imperatives, and that the priorities themselves are contested between Iraqi actors. The chapter focuses on three key priorities: diplomacy to recover international ties, security and economy (namely oil, gas, investment and trade) but underlines security, which has failed for many reasons. It discusses which security measures have been pursued and implemented since 2003, and their consequences on foreign policy making. The chapter addresses the differing views between Iraqi elites ruling factions about, for example, oil and gas policies between Erbil and Baghdad that have international dimension. Addressing and evaluating these priorities shows Iraq's foreign policy imperatives, necessities and challenges, and shows that the federal government's elites and political factions lack a clear agreed foreign policy. The interconnected and interdependent imperatives are necessary for elites and regime survival and this is why Baghdad pursues them without a concrete plan.

Chapter 7 researches the role of neighbouring countries in Iraq's domestic affairs, which impact and shape Iraq's foreign relations and policy. It examines their influence on and interference in Iraq's internal affairs and decision-making processes, and their bilateral relationship with Iraq. The regional powers that interfere in and influence Iraqi actors the most are Iran and Turkey; they have the most influence on Baghdad and Erbil, respectively. The KSA and Syria (before the Civil War) also influence and interfere in the Iraqi political theatre. The chapter looks at their relationships with some political elites and factions, as well as their relationship with Baghdad and how this influences Iraq's foreign policies towards them. It takes into account the geopolitical, security, economic and ethno-sectarian dimensions that shape Iraq's relationship with regional powers. The chapter demonstrates how some Iraqi actors have facilitated the interference and influence of regional powers because of mutual interests, as well as the weakness and fragmentation of the Iraqi state and government. Iraqi actors strengthen their position domestically using the external states' support; consequently, Iraqi government actors favour one or more of those countries when conducting foreign relations or formulating

foreign policy. Subsequently, as Iraqi foreign policy agencies and positions have been divided and shared (due to the ethno-sectarian quota system), there is no unified vision on how to approach each neighbouring country. This further splinters foreign policies.

Chapter 8 is the concluding chapter; it addresses the research questions, discusses the key findings and arguments and evaluates Iraq's splintered foreign policies. It concludes that the underlying reasons for Iraq's splintering foreign policies are the divergence of the key elites and their political factions; the KRG's independent foreign policy; Baghdad's weak and fragile government and poor coordination between its actors; the federal government's lack of foreign policy plan; external influences and interferences, the deficiencies of the ethno-sectarian quota system and power sharing agreement, and the different interpretations and loopholes in the Iraqi constitution. Nevertheless, Baghdad does have a foreign policy, which is incoherent and operates poorly and tries to find its political position in the international system. Besides the superiority of the PM in foreign policy making, Iraqi officials and diplomats interpret Baghdad's foreign policy according to their own understandings, loyalties and interests. Chapter 8 also highlights the dissertation's contributions to the literature, and considers potential areas for future research in the context of the trajectory of Iraq's future foreign relations and foreign policy. It also presents responses to potential objections, justifying why the research took the structure it did.

Chapter 2

Theoretical framework

Introduction

This chapter sets out the theoretical framework for the dissertation, namely neoclassical realism (NCR). NCR explains the incoherent federal government of Iraq's foreign policy making and its place in the international system because it recognises the fragmented states' weak foreign policies and incorporates domestic (led by elites) and external (power distribution in the international system) factors (variables) in its analysis, and argues the interactions of the aforementioned produce foreign policy. Without forgetting the influence of the global superpowers (for example, the US), the dissertation focuses on the regional level (sub-international) system. This is due to both methodological limitations and the thesis's argument that regional powers have increasingly shaped Iraq's splintered foreign policies. To comprehend the tenets of NCR as an explanatory and analytical framework, the chapter will first address what NCR is; second, why this approach has been applied; and third, how it applies to this dissertation.

It is difficult to explain the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) sub-state de facto foreign policy using NCR because NCR places emphasis on the central government's formulation of foreign policy, therefore, the dissertation utilises the additional concepts of paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy to explain the non-sovereign political and administrative entity's interaction with the outside world, its approaches and priorities. The chapter explores how paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy do not contradict NCR, and why and how these concepts apply to the KRG's foreign affairs.

Rose stated: "Neoclassical realists occupy a middle ground between pure structural theorists and constructivists" (1998, 152). NCR is able to address the fragmentation and vulnerability of the state, as well as internal and regional rivalries and how these shape foreign policies. This will be demonstrated through the work of Rose (1998), Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro (2009 and 2016) and Schweller (2004).

This chapter's key question is:

- Which theory or theories best explain the splintered foreign policies of Iraq – including its sub-state, the KRG?

Neoclassical realism

What is neoclassical realism?

Realism is a major theory in international relations. It is a broad, rich school of thought; its philosophical traditions stem from the writings of Thucydides and Sun Tzu in the fifth century BCE. It has three major theoretical milestones: first, classical realism originated with Hans Morgenthau; second, structural realism (or neorealism), which Kenneth Waltz developed; and finally, NCR, associated with Gideon Rose. Of course, this oversimplification excludes numerous other branches and other scholars of realism, who would classify them differently (Alexander, 2014, 33, 34; Zainul Abidin, 2016, 21); but it provides an easy-to-grasp framework that locates NCR within a wider theoretical tradition.

Realists share three unifying, core ideas: first, a pessimistic view of the human condition; second, a skeptical attitude towards the possibility of a pacific international order; and finally, a recognition that ethics and morality are the product of power and material interests (Taliaferro, Lobell and Ripsman, 2009, 14). There are also differences within realism; for instance, Stephen Brooks classifies modern realism into neorealism and post-classical realism, whereas Gideon Rose uses the categories neorealism and NCR. The terminology utilised by both are very similar; so much so, that without careful attention to the way Rose and Brooks use these terms one might conclude that their typologies are analogous (Feng & Ruizhuag, 2006, 112). Therefore, the branches of realism have more similar attributes than those of other schools of thought. NCR builds on the relationship between state and society – without ignoring the core principle of neorealism regarding the constraints of the international system (Taliaferro, Lobell, and Ripsman, 2009, 14). NCR is a branch of realism theory that focuses on states' foreign policy making, sources, choices, responses and behaviour. According to Lobell (2016), NCR is a new version of foreign policy theory, grounded in realist traditions, and is an

ongoing and developing project.[3] NCR particularly focuses on policy makers' responses to stimuli in the international system (Onea, 2012, 139).

In the post-Cold War period, Rose (for example) endeavoured to move beyond the parsimonious assumptions of realism and incorporate other factors, at the individual and domestic unit levels, into an explanation of international politics and foreign policy. The group that attempted to build a bridge between structural and the unit-level factors has been described as neoclassical realists (see Rose in Baylis, Smith, and Owens, 2008, 99). NCR was founded to fix the shortcomings of structural realism noted in Rose's article *Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy* (1998) and book *Neoclassical Realism, the State and the Foreign Policy* (2009) (Lobell, Ripsman & Taliaferro). Structural realism, or neorealism, is a theory not of foreign policy but rather of international politics; it seeks to explain the outcomes of state interactions, but does not explain state behaviour in great detail (Rose, 1998, 145). Rose emphasises the critical status of anarchy and the distribution of power in the international system, and emphasises that internal/domestic unit-level variables must be included in analyses of foreign policy making: "Neoclassical realism assumes that states respond to uncertainties of international anarchy by seeking control … The international distribution of power can drive countries' behaviour by influencing the decision of flesh and blood officials" (Rose 1998, 158). The incorporation of domestic-level factors (intervening variables) helps explain the relationship between the relative power distribution in the international system (independent variable) and a state's foreign policy (dependent variable). The second section of this chapter examines how NCR's explanatory tools work.

Rose succinctly describes the key components of NCR:

> It explicitly incorporates both external and internal variables, updating and systematizing certain insights drawn from classical realist thought. Its adherents argue that the scope and ambition of a country's foreign policy is driven first and foremost by its place in the international system and specifically by its relative material power capabilities. This is why they are realist. They argue further, however, that the impact of such power capabilities on foreign policy is indirect and complex, because systemic

[3] Steven Lobell (2016) described an ongoing project to develop the third type of NCR, which includes a broader range of states' foreign policies.

> pressures must be translated through intervening variables at the unit level. This is why they are neoclassical. (1998, 146)

NCR combines three insights from structural realism (neorealism) and classical realism: the primacy of systemic factors in determining international outcome, the existence of anarchy and the conception of international politics as a struggle for power. The distribution of power and the position in the international system are important variables in explaining political and international outcomes (Waltz, 1979, 39 and 103; Alexander, 2014, 36). NCR's key explanatory tool is systematically linking the external/international and internal/domestic-level variables in foreign policy analysis. Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell (2016) argue that NCR explains the pathological anomalies of structural realism, as well as how foreign policy decision making reflects on new political events, emerging phenomena in international politics and its outcomes, and how coherent and incoherent states' responses to threats are. Moreover, NCR tries to explain foreign policy variation in the same states over time or across different states facing similar or different patterns of external constraints. NCR might explain the diplomatic, economic and military responses of particular states to systemic imperatives.

Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell (2016) identified three types of NCR, two of which are of relevance to this research. Both of these types try to fix structural realism and its ramifications for the foreign policy choices of states in anarchic international systems (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, 2016, 16). However, the first variant sought merely to rectify structural realism by introducing domestic-level intervening variables to explain away empirical anomalies of structural realist theories (Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell, 2016, 17). In the second variant, systemic variables filtered by domestic-level intervening variables inform the approach to foreign policy, because structural realism often does not give enough information (for instance, data about the external environment, which guides policy makers' choices) to predict strategic choices (Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell 2016, 29, 30). These two variants are of most relevance to this research. Despite the relative distinctiveness between them, Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell (2016) have created a complementary framework for analysis that includes both. They stated:

> The overall mission of Type one and Type two of neoclassical realism is to add explanatory power to the structural realist skeleton by incorporating domestic,

> political and perceptual intervening processes that can more fully and accurately account for state choices. The essence of NCR to date has been to improve upon the external determinist core of neorealism by "bringing the state back in" to a realist analysis. (2016, 32, 33)

The author uses type one and type two as a hybrid framework to explain foreign policy making. Policy choices are no longer conceived as a direct product of systemic stimuli; instead, they pass through the prism of the state, and the unique institutional constraints of its domestic circumstances (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, 32, 33). Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell continue: "To understand foreign policy, therefore, it becomes essential to study the unique processes of perception, decision making, and policy implementation in individual countries, which will lead them to enact different policy responses to similar challenges" (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, 32, 33). NCR incorporates external, domestic and ideational variables/factors in its analysis. However, NCR limits the use of ideational variables to explain foreign policies and they require delicate handling (Rathbun, 2008, 304).

NCR interprets the foreign and security policies of various sizes and types of countries and examines the distinctive characteristics of great powers, regional powers, smaller powers and developing countries, as well as those of divided, warring or failed states (Lobell, 2009, 43). NCR presents the state as an intervening variable between the international system and foreign policy. For NCR, the state could be weak or strong relative to society; its critical bureaucratic actors could operate based on parochial rather than national interests; and could be driven by regime or government survival rather than national survival (Lobell 2009, 44 and 45). Iraq is regarded as a developing country and is a vulnerable, divided, warring state; as such, *prima facie Iraq* is an appropriate case for NCR.

For the purposes of this dissertation, a strand of Schweller's (2004) NCR theory of underbalancing (when a government is unable to balance or appropriately respond to external systemic stimuli) helps to understand how domestic variables moderate a fragmented, incoherent and weak state's responses to external threats, and its formulation of foreign policy, in response to external pressure. Schweller suggests that NCR aims to illustrate why systemic pressure is deflected and leads to contradictions or delayed responses in countries' foreign policies (Romanova, 2012). Schweller's formulation indicates that in some cases there is domestic fragmentation, and elites and

social groups have differing perceptions of external threats, which results in a complex policy making process. Consequently, a divided government will not be able to mobilise resources or gain support internally to form a balanced policy, and internal groups and their leaders might ally with outsiders against internal opponents. This chapter utilises Schweller's theory of underbalancing and its application to Iraq's foreign policy in the third section.

Why apply neoclassical realism?

NCR best explains this thesis's key questions – how foreign policy is made in Iraq, and what Iraq's foreign policy behaviour is – because it takes into account both external and domestic factors and variables, particularly elites' perceptions and actions. A decision maker's inability to mobilise key resources will lead to a weak and contracted foreign policy (Rose, 1998, 167).

The key questions of this thesis cannot solely be explained by realism, which treats the state as a black box, generally ignoring, for example, the influence of state–society relations' on foreign policy (Korany and Dessouki, 2008, 22). Realism generally stresses the state-centric in international relations, and bypasses critical ingredients of internal state unit-level variables. *Innenpolitik* theory underestimates the relevance of the international system and overestimates the domestic factors' determination in making foreign policy. Rose (1998, 148) stated: "There are many variants of the *Innenpolitik* approach, each favour a different specific domestic independent variable, but they all share a common assumption – that foreign policy is best understood at the product of a country's internal dynamics". Again, this theory is inadequate to explain Iraq's foreign policy making, as it ignores the influence of superpowers and regional powers in shaping Iraq's foreign policy. Rose claims *Innenpolitik* theories are inadequate in explaining why states with similar domestic systems often act differently in the foreign policy sphere, and why dissimilar states in similar circumstances often act alike (1998, 148). As realism and *Innenpolitik* are unable to fathom Iraq's foreign policy making, a modified theoretical approach is required.

This approach is NCR, which takes external factors into account, deploys unit-level analysis to explore the domestic complexity that underpins policymaking and questions why states with the same external conditions react differently. According to Romanova (2012), the answer is that internal actors have different interests and policies, and the

ways in which state institutions and organisations operate and interact with society vary. Elites' perceptions and worldviews, as well as cohesion and other domestic variables, carry equal weight to external factors (including other states' actions). These factors are considered in NCR analysis at a granular level; this is why the thesis considers key Iraqi domestic and external actors, such as neighbouring countries' policies and actions towards Iraq. This helps explain Iraq's federal government's foreign policy making and why Iraq responds in a certain way to external pressure and/or stimuli.

Another reason for using NCR is because it is a developed version of realist traditions and realism theory, which, according to Hinnebusch (2002), is particularly appropriate for understanding the Middle East. Iraq is a fragmented state in the Middle East; its main concern is survival, an issue at the core of the realist tradition. Hinnebusch argues it is plausible to apply an adjusted form of realism theory to Middle Eastern states' foreign policies (2002, 1) and Ripsman states that NCR is a logical extension of the realist tradition (2016, 17). Iraq is in the heart of the Middle East, a region which, according to Hinnebusch, has been experiencing anarchy, insecurity and an increasing struggle for power; conflicting borders and states in the Middle East feel threatened by one or more of their neighbours (2002, 1). The foreign policies of the Middle Eastern states are dominated by security and maximising autonomy.

Nibhan (2011) and the author believe that Iraqi officials' world views and foreign affairs orientations emanate from realism. Nibhan (2011) stated, "Although the new Iraq is entering a new era, changes might emerge on its longstanding vision of the realism school to the outside world, yet Machiavelli's perspectives are mirrored deeply in the new Iraqi leaders" (Nibhan, 2011). NCR is a new trend that tries to recover the wisdom of classical realism proposed by those such Machiavelli and Morgenthau (Valeriano, 2015, 27). As NCR is a modified extension of realism Iraqi elites' visions are compatible with NCR.

Ripsman (2016, 17) recognises that realism has limits when it comes to analysing foreign policy making. NCR was developed to address the shortcomings of structural realism, including its focus on explaining international outcomes rather than foreign policy due to its assumption that foreign policy is externally driven. In other words, systemic stimuli direct foreign policy. Structural realism ignores the role of domestic

politics and elites in determining foreign policy (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, 2016, 19, 20).

NCR is appropriate for Iraq because its framework has been applied to polities varying in size and cohesiveness. Although initially applied to great powers, such as the US and Russia,[4] IR scholars have also applied the theory to developing states such as Malaysia (Zainul Abidin, 2016); regional powers; small states; and Middle Eastern states such as Turkey (Tziarras, 2014), Iran (Juneau, 2016) and the Arab Gulf States (Almezaini and Rickli, 2017; Rickli, 2016). NCR is the most appropriate framework because foreign policy is made by political actors, including elites, who do not have total freedom to mobilise and extract national resources and direct them as they wish (Rose, 1998, 147). Actors' power is intimately related to their relationship with society and each other. This means exploring the workings of the 'black box' to disclose actors' preferences in the domestic setting. This does not rule out pressures from the international system, which this dissertation addresses by focusing on the regional level.

NCR makes 'power' the chief independent variable, which it defines as the state's capabilities, material and non-material resources that determine its external behaviour. Rose stated: "NCR argues that relative material power establishes the basic parameters of a country's foreign policy" (1998, 146). Iraqi elites face challenges assembling their state's capabilities to achieve security and try to influence the environment. Thus, if foreign policy lacks coherence and effectiveness, its ability to influence its environment is reduced. To understand how Iraq perceives and responds to its external environment, and how it pursues its foreign policy, we have to understand the intervening variables that process these perceptions and the constraints – both international and domestic – under which domestic policy makers operate. The effect of relative international power depends on the careful and detailed exploration of the domestic intervening variables.

Rose (1998) stresses the power of the state in relation to society and how the state extracts resources. External behaviour depends on the means at the disposal of decision makers, and is "Necessary to introduce state strength as an intervening variable between national capabilities and officials … What matters is state power, not national power … Foreign policy is not made by the nation as a whole but by its government"

[4] NCR emerged to understand the foreign policy behaviours of superpowers (such as the US), and has been expanded to include other polities. See: Rose (1998) and Lobell (2009).

(Rose 1998, 162). NCR fits with the case of Iraq, in which two foreign policies are emerging from the two governments in Baghdad and Erbil.

Schweller's approach, which is discussed in detail later in this chapter, considers that systemic pressures from the international or sub-international system are filtered through intervening domestic variables to produce foreign policy behaviour; this fits with the NCR framework (2004, 164). One of the dissertation's findings is that Baghdad's incoherent foreign policy is due to the vulnerability and fragmentation of the federal government and elite divisions, a finding that fits with Schweller's approach, which argues that fragmentation on multiple levels in an incoherent state will lead to incoherent or underbalanced responses to external threats, and even a failed foreign policy.

The role of independent variables (international system and systemic stimuli or external factors) and intervening variables (including elites' perceptions and the uniqueness of each case's decision-making process) in NCR are appropriate for this study of a *theoretically informed narrative*, which examines the factors that combine to produce a particular foreign policy. This implies a distinct NCR methodology: to understand foreign policy, we need to explore the complexity of the causal chain that connects relative power with foreign policy. This type of process tracing requires area expertise, language skills and access to key decision makers (Rose, 1998, 166).

Not all NCR theories make generalisations; however, NCR explains variations of individual states' short-term foreign policy behaviour (Ripsman, Taliaferro, and Lobell, 2016, 122). Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell recommend that each scholar utilises an individual NCR theory, which should provide the condition and scope of the theory and identify how universal it is (2016, 122). Thus, the generalisation of predictive power is dependent on the scholar, strand and scope of the theory within NCR. Schweller argues that the NCR theory of underbalancing is generalisable, as it includes states beyond the range of its cases. Rose (1998) and Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell (2016) argue that individual countries have their own attributes and characteristics, which result in different foreign policies (Rose 1998, 145; Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell 2016, 1). They therefore lay out an analytical framework, and provide the researcher with the space to match the variables (independent, domestic, intervening and dependent) therein. There are no rigid conditions regarding which variables to use in the framework.

Rose provides three predictions that are relevant to this thesis. First, an increase/decrease in relative power leads to a corresponding expansion/contraction in the ambition/scope of foreign policy; second, the appearance of the process will vary from country to country; and third, countries with weak states take longer to mobilise material power and translate it into policy (1998, 167). These predictions are applied to this case for three reasons. First, one of the research findings is that the incoherence and contraction of Baghdad's foreign policy results from the weakness of Iraq's state organisations due to state fragmentation; second, Iraq's domestic actors and external environment play a role in shaping its splintered foreign policy; and third, the weaknesses and division of the elites and bureaucratic apparatus in mobilising resources are major factors explaining policy incoherence. The next section addresses NCR's main approaches to explaining foreign policy making, behaviour and responses, including the main NCR variables framework and Schweller's NCR underbalancing approach, which are able to explain Iraq's case.

Using neoclassical realism to explain foreign policy making

This section is composed of two subsections. The first addresses the main variables framework of NCR and explains the role of the independent, dependent and intervening variables and how they shape foreign policy. The second considers Schweller's approach, which adds granular thinking to the variables framework in the case of fragmented states. The analysis relies on the work of Rose's (1998) followers, namely Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell (2016, 2009) and Schweller (2004).

The main neoclassical realism variables framework

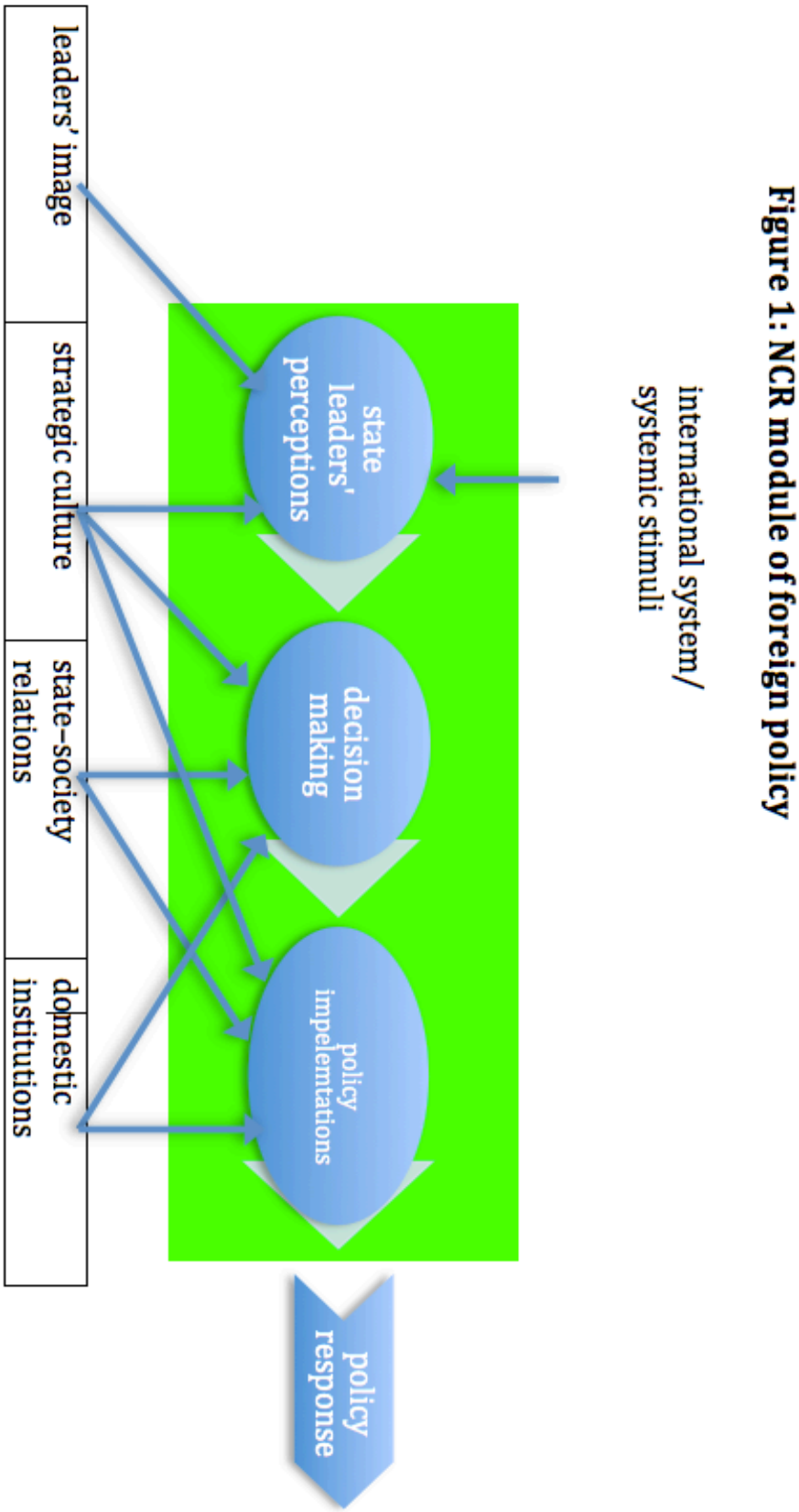
Rose argued that NCR links "clearly specified independent, intervening, and dependent variables in a direct causal chain" (1998, 167). This subsection explains each of these three variables and shows how they interact to form a causal chain.

Besides the three main variables, the NCR framework includes three intervening variable *processes*: state leaders' perceptions of the international system or subsystem, decision-making and policy implementation. Policy evolves through these processes, which, in turn, are influenced by four broad domestic intervening unit level variables; this leads to policy responses, which are the dependent variables. The nature of

systemic stimuli (independent variable) has causal importance and sends signals that pass through three processes. The independent variables and the four domestic unit level intervening variables shape the three processes, which results in the outcome (dependent variable) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 includes the variables, processes and causal chain in the intervening variables in the merged or hybrid NCR model. It sets out the chain of variables, connections between the independent variable and its effect on domestic intervening variables.

Figure 1: NCR module of foreign policy



(Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, 2016, 35)

NCR argues that the intervening variable processes should be studied for individual countries as each country has its own unique internal characteristics and different policy responses to similar challenges (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, 2016, 1; Rose, 1998, 145). To understand each variable and its place in the framework, the following paragraphs will explain in detail the independent, intervening and dependent variables.

The *independent variable* is the relative power distribution in the international system that shapes foreign policy (Rose, 1998, 147; Zainul Abidin, 2016, 27). The independent variable provides some relevant information about the nature of the international system, which has causal importance in foreign policy (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, 2016, 35-36). NCR considers the primary units in the international system to be territorial states, but also recognises variations in the resources of non-state actors in the international system, such as international organisations and institutions; international non-governmental organisations (NGOs); multinational corporations; transnational terrorist networks, transitional criminal organisations and epistemic communities (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, 2016, 36). These actors try to achieve their objectives, and many receive support from states. Thus, while states remain dominant, non-state actors should not be ignored.

The independent variable is the international and sub-international system and relationships between regional states. External threats can emerge from the international system and in a particular region, which are independent variables and functions of the relative distribution of power and resources (Taliaferro, 2009, 213 and 214). In NCR's concept of the international system, the independent variable plays a critical role in shaping foreign policies and external responses, particularly to threats and formulating security policy; it does not dictate how each state responds. Rather, the lack of guidance in the international system will result in an anarchistic self-help environment, which includes potential threats and uncertainty, according to the NCR's conception of anarchy (Taliaferro, 2009, 28). Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell (2016) argue that, in NCR's analysis, clarity of signals and information from the international system presented to states is a key systemic variable. In NCR's analysis of the international system, states present clearer signals and information than in structural realism. However, there is rarely clarity about choices, and it is difficult to estimate a clear timeframe in which leaders must gain knowledge about their adversaries' capabilities and intentions in the international system (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell 2016, 47 and 49). Through the NCR lens, in the international system there is greater

clarity regarding the nature of threats and opportunities that states face, the timeframe in which these are expected to materialise and optimal policy responses, and there should be little variance in policy choices, both across states and in social coalitions within states (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell 2016, 50 and 51). NCR argues that, when there is less clarity in the international system or subsystem, there is more space for domestic intervening variables to play a larger role, particularly for leaders and/or parties to pursue their unique solutions based on their preferences, parochial interests or strategic culture.

Rose (1998) indicated that the key distinction between NCR and structural realism is the incorporation of domestic intervening variables, which condition the foreign policy making and reactions to external systemic pressures that realists claim underlie foreign policy (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, 2016, 59; and Rose, 1998, 146). NCR identifies elites' calculations and perceptions of relative power and domestic constraints as intervening variables between international pressure and states' foreign policies (Taliaferro, Lobell, and Ripsman, 2009, 28). Relative power sets parameters for how states (or those acting on their behalf) shape their interests and pursue particular ends. Rose indicates that the domestic intervening variables are state leaders' perceptions, state structure and domestic politics (1998, 152).

NCR theorists describe a wide range of domestic intervening variables. Four classes of domestic intervening variables (leaders' image, strategic culture, domestic institutions and state–society relations) shape three intervening variable processes (leaders' perceptions, decision making and policy implementation). The former four categories include bureaucratic/organisational, societal and psychological factors, (reflecting other approaches to foreign policy analysis), which are connected with the three phases or processes of domestic intervening variables as they shape foreign policy responses (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, 2016, 58, 59 and 61).

The links between independent variables, domestic intervening variable process and domestic intervening unit variables create foreign policy responses (*dependent variables*). For example, international factors (independent variable) and leaders' images and strategic culture (domestic unit-level intervening variables) affect elites' perceptions (intervening variable process). Strategic culture, state–society relations and domestic political institutions (domestic intervening unit variables) domestically condition both decision making and policy implementation (intervening variables

processes) (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, 2016, 62. See also Figure 1). Different domestic intervening variable processes could influence and shape the dependent variable (foreign policy) to varying degrees over time. For instance, leaders' perceptions in the short run influence foreign policy decision making. This is particularly so when there are time constraints on bureaucracy and society and other domestic actors to involve. Domestic intervening variables are arranged according to their political significance in the following paragraphs.

The first, and one of the most important, is a *leader's image*; the values, beliefs and images of the individual decision makers who constitute the core foreign policy executives. These are the most critical variables when examining and explaining foreign policy and strategy adjustment (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, 2016, 62). Certainly, the elites who formulate and carry out policies are dependent on the type of executive system (presidential or parliamentary), including the President, Prime Minister and key cabinet members, ministers and advisors responsible for foreign policies. Elites' image (domestic intervening unit variable) can affect the elites' perception (first intervening variable process) of incoming systemic stimuli (independent variable). Leaders' personalities, experience, knowledge and character influence how decision makers interact and respond to external stimuli, or the outside world. Character shapes the leaders' actions: whether they are willing to take certain risks or are risk averse in their external responses (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, 2016, 65). Leaders' images are personalised and their core values are not easily changed; this results in leaders' different reactions to international challenges and opportunities.

The second domestic intervening unit variable is *strategic culture*; a country's culture influences how a state perceives and adapts to systemic stimuli and structural shifts in material capabilities (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, 2016, 67). This includes a broader notion of strategic culture: the beliefs, worldviews, ideas and shared expectations of a society, which are entrenched in its leaders, military and bureaucratic organisations (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, 2016, 68). The culture of military capabilities will affect the formulation of security policies. The strategic culture shapes the strategic understanding of political leaders, societal elites and even the general public. Although it includes collective assumptions and expectations of key domestic actors, society might constrain states' and their leaders' behaviours. The strategic culture is dynamic, not static; it could evolve according to circumstances, events and the impact of the government (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, 2016, 68 and 69). Strategic culture also

includes dominant ideologies, which affect the state's attitude towards the international theatre. NCR uses strategic culture and ideas as an intervening unit variable. For example, prevailing ideas influence foreign policy responses through leaders, institutions, expert groups and lobbies that influence the government. Strategic culture as a domestic intervening unit variable can affect all three intervening variable processes. Leaders, for example, might be unwilling or unable to generate support because some ideas will simply resonate better with the general public than others (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, 2016, 70). Strategic culture can also be affected by societal or religious leaders' or political factions' ideas. Strategic culture can provide opportunities and constraints to leaders' interests or intentions, depending on the complexity of the case study.

Third, *state–society relations*; these can be defined as the interactions between the government's central institutions and various economic and/or societal groups (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, 2016, 71). Types of relationship could include projection of state–society harmony, disagreement, support of or objections to state leaders' foreign policies. State–society relations also include competition between various communities, the level of political and social cohesion or fragmentation and distributional competition among societal coalitions. All of these influence state leaders' ability and capability to mobilise support for their foreign policy choices. State–society interaction generates disputes and differences between society and the state, and impacts on foreign policy formulation and implementation. The gap between the state's bureaucratic bodies and society, or the degree of political institution autonomy from society, will shape decision-making and policy implementation processes. For instance, if there is a large opposition to the state's foreign policy and political institutions are not insulated from society, the state will face challenges in taking the decision and implementing the policy. Thus, state–society relations as domestic intervening unit variables directly influence and shape decision making and policy implementation. As Rathbun argued, NCR simply fills out Waltz's sparse understanding of power through reference to state–society relations. Each country has different mobilisation and extractive capabilities that function on state–society relations. Therefore, states have different practices in their external environment (Ruthbun, 2008, 296).

Fourth, *domestic institutions* – formal institutions, organisational routines and bureaucratic processes – are established by constitutional provisions, and set the parameters within which competition over policy making occurs. These variables

contribute to policy formation and can determine who contributes to policy formation. NCR also recognises less formal institutions, unwritten rules and customary practices that can exert causal influence on decision-making processes and policy implementation (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, 2016, 78). In its analysis of foreign policy, NCR discloses and takes into account the state's institutional interrelationships and coordination between, and within, bureaucratic bodies and legislatures. Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell argue that strong executives can execute their policies even when confronting strong opposition, whereas weak executives will face significant challenges (from popular opposition and legislatures) when seeking an independent foreign policy (2016, 79).

The independent variables and domestic intervening variables determine the dependent variable, which is the foreign policy outcome, responses and/or strategies towards the international system. Linking the three intervening variable *processes* illustrates that each intervening unit variable varies in its influence over a particular aspect of the dependent variable at a specific time (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, 2016, 91). For example, in times of crisis, when a quick decision is needed, elites are the most significant factor in the short term because other actors will likely be largely excluded (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, 2016, 92). If more time is available, elites may lack control over policy, as more actors get the chance to be involved and shape foreign policy. Thus, key elites' images will be less relevant than other intervening unit variables, such as state–society relations and domestic institutions (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, 2016, 92). Strategic culture is a domestic intervening unit variable that influences both long-term and crisis decision-making and planning in foreign policy. Particularly in the long term, leaders are unlikely to select policies at odds with their domestic values, so as not to instigate greater opposition. Strategic culture can guide elites in their policy options and shape the dependent variables towards international events (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell, 94). State–society relations have very little influence on short-term foreign policy making or responses, but do affect long-term planning and policy making.

All four domestic intervening variable units can have an impact and certainly, all the domestic-level intervening variables are potentially consequential. A clear chain of sequence occurs, in which independent variables plus intervening variables shape and determine foreign policy (Taliaferro, 2009, 213).

Independent variables can, of course, influence domestic intervening variables. Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell argue: "It would be a mistake to assume that domestic political [intervening variables] are merely secondary and a by-product of the external [independent variables] and do not do any heavy lifting on their own'' (2016, 95). They argue that independent variables will influence the intervening variables if there is clarity in the international system and the nature of strategic system that determines which intervening variables will be the most effective. They refer to this assumption when the mature domestic institutions have been developed. However, this assumption will not apply to Iraq, in which many key actors hold misperceptions about the international system, and the bureaucratic bodies of which are not mature.

Where NCR had been applied to states' foreign policies, Tziarras (2014) was open to adding additional intervening domestic state unit-level variables that reflect the complications of each country's characteristics.[5] Newmann (2011) considers non-state actors, such as transnational Islamic armed groups, as actors in the independent variables that shape foreign policy: "The nature of the Islamic Sunni radical and other related groups' asymmetric threats are based on neoclassical realism assumptions that transnational and national movements are power seekers". Newmann has mentioned Islamic radical groups in Iraq and other countries in which their presence has affected foreign policy decision makers outside those countries (2011, 69). Newmann claims those non-state actors can independently challenge a nation state (2011, 74). Figure 2 shows the differences between independent, intervening and dependent variables.

[5] Tziarras (2014) applied NCR to Turkey's foreign policy. He indicated domestic factors such as elites' perceptions and ideology, public opinion and AKP's interest groups as critical intervening variables.

Figure 2: Independent, intervening and dependent variables

Independent variable	Intervening variable unit	Dependent variable
The power distribution in the international system. The external environment of the country. This thesis particularly focuses on the immediate environs beyond Iraq's periphery.	The whole set of factors inside a country, which could be categorised in four broad domestic intervening unit variables: leaders' image, strategic culture, state–society relations and domestic institutions. The intervening unit variables influence three major intervening variable processes: elites' perception, decision making and policy implementation.	The foreign policy or policies. States' external responses outside the state or country's borders.

The NCR framework applies to Iraq. Chapters 3 and 4 discuss the elites, key institutions, political factions and key figures (domestic intervening variables), and how they shape decision-making and policy implementation. Throughout the dissertation, the failure to implement a coherent foreign policy is discussed as a by-product of the tensions and fragmentation between and within state and society. Chapter 7 discusses the independent variables, focusing on the subsystem (namely neighbouring states) and how this affects the domestic intervening variables, which both shape the foreign policy.

Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell indicate that the four classes of intervening variables are compatible with Schweller's approach (2016, 70, 75, 79). In particular, the first intervening variable (leaders' image) is compatible with Schweller's first intervening variable (elite division and disagreement). The second and third intervening variables (strategic culture and state–society relations, respectively) are compatible with Schweller's third intervening variable (society cohesion and/or fragmentation), and the fourth intervening variable (domestic institutions) is compatible with Schweller's second intervening variable (government or regime vulnerability).

Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell's (2016) explanation provides an understanding of the role of the unit-level domestic intervening variables, as well as their performance and interaction within the three processes (perception, decision making and policy implementation) that shape foreign policy performance and outcome. Their clear organisation of an NCR analytical framework (particularly the domestic intervening variables) recognises Schweller's model of NCR underbalancing theory, with the application of domestic intervening unit variables (2016, 74, 75). The NCR variables framework and Schweller's work are compatible as they focus on the potential for elite conflict, the fragmentation of state–society relations and the roles of strategic culture and domestic institutions. All influence foreign policy and how responses are formulated and executed. Schweller's approach is critical to understanding the complexity of this case, which is discussed in the following section.

Schweller's neoclassical realism theory of underbalancing

Schweller is a key figure in NCR scholarship, and is considered one of the new-wave neoclassical realists who follow Rose. Schweller posits that, "Systemic pressures are filtered through intervening domestic variables to produce foreign policy behaviour" (2004, 164). States respond (or not) to external threats and opportunities in ways

determined by both the internal and external considerations of policy elites, who have to reach a consensus within an often competitive and decentralised political process. Schweller's work recognises the multiple levels of fragmentation and division in states, particularly among and between elites and society, and government vulnerability. This fragmentation leads to incoherent, weak and underbalancing responses, or foreign policy outcomes, towards systemic stimuli/external pressure and threats. His work is particularly relevant to the Iraqi case.

Schweller's theory is not a substitute for the NCR variables framework presented in the last section. Rather, it is an additional tool within NCR that is able to explain incoherent and weak responses to threats. Its rationale and ideas fit squarely with the federal government of Iraq's internal evolvement and dynamics in responding to external pressure. It is applicable to cases such as Iraq, which exhibits extremely divisive responses to perceived external threats or significant changes.

Schweller's theory is an example of the "transmission belt approach" that NCR scholars favour. His idea of underbalancing is particularly useful. This posits that when systemic pressures pass through states (here, a fragmented state), they find it challenging to respond, so they underreact to threats. Policy makers are unable to reach agreement on the nature of a threat or how best to deal with it, and the state apparatus lacks the necessary extractive power to secure the resources needed to address the external threat; therefore, it cannot restore balance. This dissertation focuses on the strands of Schweller's underbalancing theory that predict how states with various domestic situations will respond to threats, and why divisions within and between elites and societal levels contribute to underbalancing, policy paralysis and incoherent policy (Schweller, 2004, 162).

Although Schweller (2004) claims his model is within the realist paradigm, he also indicates problems in realism's assumptions, particularly that states are unitary coherent actors (2004, 161). Schweller also argued: "The closer the policymaking process and actual state–society relations approximate a unitary actor, the more accurate realism's predictions. In contrast, when states are divided at the elite and societal levels, they are less likely to behave in accordance with balance of power predictions" (Schweller, 2004, 161). Schweller argues that underbalancing responses are executed when a country is threatened, which is contrary to the core prediction of structural realist theory (2004, 159 and 160). This is despite elites' efforts – or failed

attempts – to build regional and international alliances and the state's military capabilities. The weakness and incoherence of Iraq's responses to external threats is due to the fragmentation and absence of domestic political equilibrium. Schweller argues that the lack of stability connects the divisions in all intervening variables with foreign policy outcomes and responses, producing incoherent and ineffective foreign policy.

Schweller posits that leaders and elites in incoherent states are less willing to pursue significant political and policy risks to balance against other coherent states (Schweller, 2004, 161). These assumptions apply to Iraq, the responses of which towards other states are weaker due to the state's division and inability to aggregate power, resources, public support and elite agreement on one policy.

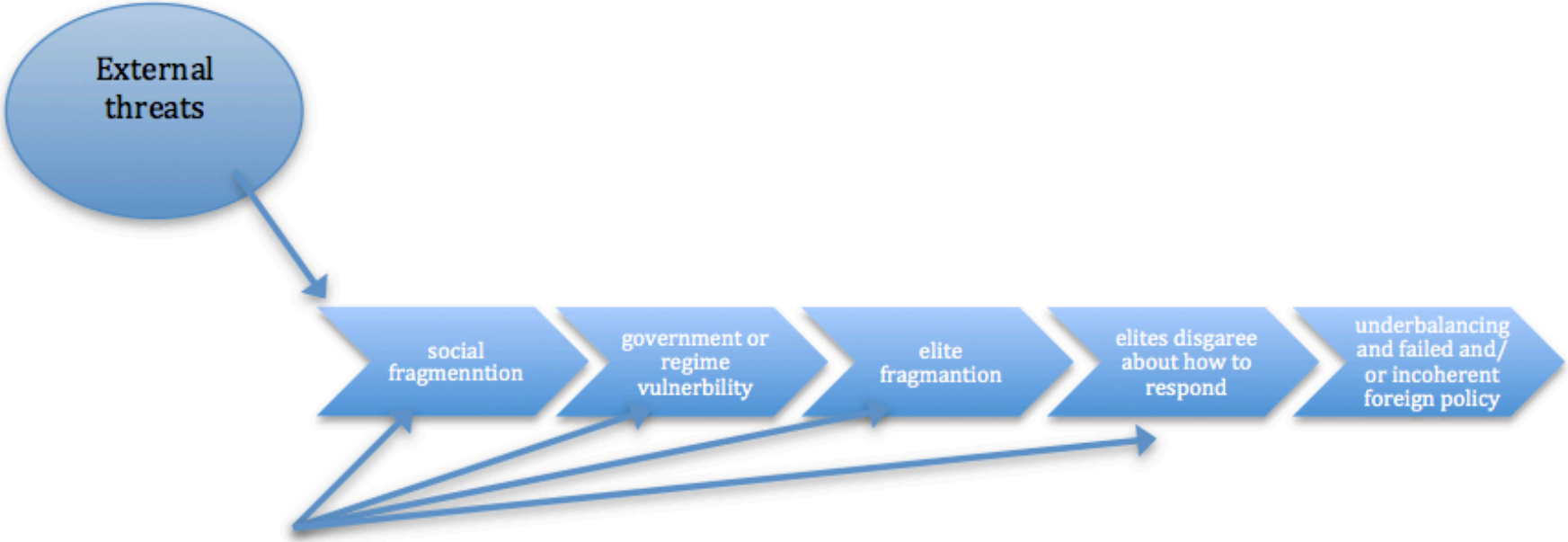
Schweller classifies four types of balancing. The first is *balancing*, which appears when a target poses a real threat, when states cannot (or should not) be appeased and when the state's capabilities to counterbalance it are indispensable. The second is *overbalancing*, which occurs when a target foreign state is misperceived as an aggressor when in reality it is enhancing its security via a defensive policy; this results in the initiation of unnecessary, costly and dangerous policies, including an arms spiral (Schweller, 2006, 10). Third is *non-balancing*, which may take the form of buck-passing, bandwagoning, appeasement, engagement or hiding. Some non-balancing policies could be considered underbalancing, such as when a state tries to avoid wars with other states, or wisely seeks to fundamentally revise its policies (Schweller, 2006,10). The fourth type is *underbalancing*. This is when the state does not balance, or does so inefficiently, in response to threats and unappeasable aggressors. Simply put, underbalancing is elites' wrong assessments or misperceptions of external dynamics (such as threats or rising powers) that lead to incoherent or unwise policies due to domestic politics and situations (Schweller, 2004, 168). Schweller's first three categories require states' actors and their elites to exercise a degree of prudence and/or unified strategies (Schweller, 2004, 167); this research shows these to be lacking in Iraq, to which the author argues that underbalancing is the most applicable.

Schweller states that internal political processes act as imperfect transmission belts that channel, redirect and mediate policy outputs in response to external pressure and forces (Schweller, 2004, 164). This is why states react differently to similar external pressures and opportunities; their responses may be motivated less by systemic level factors than internal ones (Schweller, 2004, 164). Schweller demonstrates that there are actors who

are more or less interested in preserving the state and there are those who place higher value on other matters than preserving the state, and others may seek to destroy or topple the regime (2004, 168). Thus, foreign policy executives face more domestic hurdles when pursuing their policies because there are political risks and costs that might be too high. Schweller's argument that there are various actors within the state whose interests and actions clash with the state fits squarely with Iraq. Schweller argues that elites and factions are likely to prioritise their own survival above that of the state, and that some may even try to weaken, delegitimise or topple those controlling the state; again, this matches with Iraq, in which some actors seek to maintain a weak state to strengthen their power. This situation leads to a weak response to external powers.

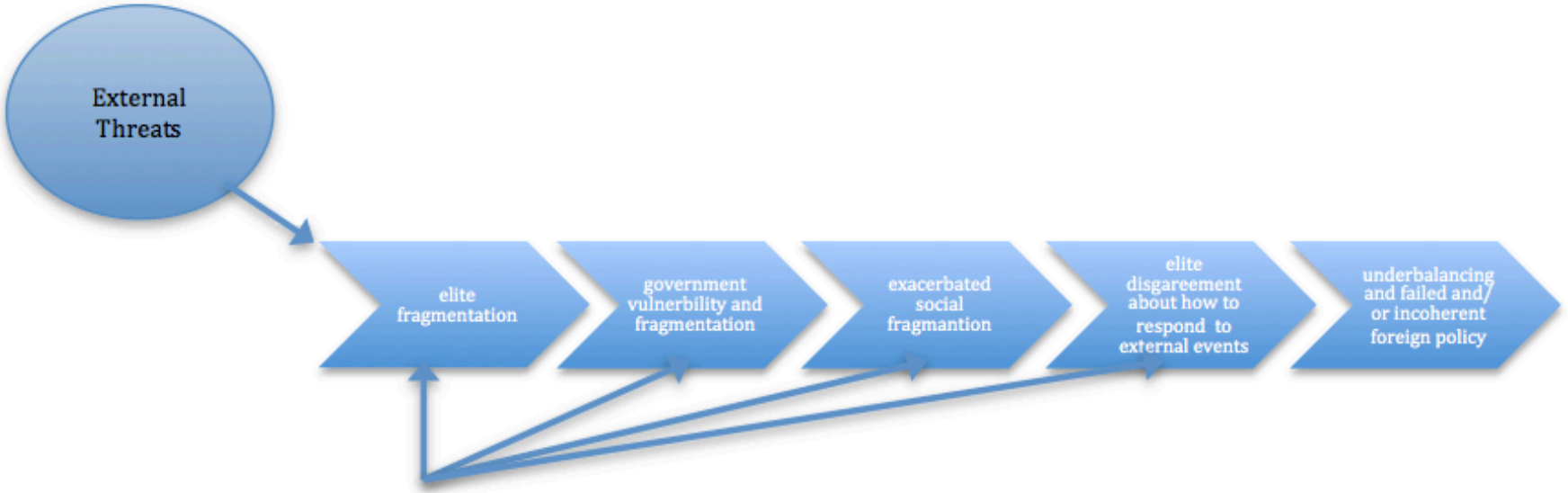
Statecraft is shaped by both external and internal considerations. It is a consequence of four elements, all of which relate to elites: first, elite preferences for and perceptions of the external environment; second, which of these preferences and perceptions matter in the foreign policy process; third, the domestic policy risks associated with foreign policy choices; and fourth, elites' risk-taking propensities. These unit-level factors can be treated as input at the structural–systemic level, which shapes state outcomes externally (Schweller 2006, 46). Schweller's theory demonstrates an elaborate causal chain of policy adjustments to changes in relative power structure, as well as why external policies and/or responses are weak and/or failing (2004, 169). Schweller presents analyses of both coherent and incoherent states; here, we will concentrate only on his incoherent state proposal. The causal scheme starts with the emergence of external threats (systemic stimuli) that exacerbate the country's fragmentation, which influences government vulnerability. Elite fragmentation leads to disagreements about how to respond, which then leads to underbalancing, or a failed and/or incoherent foreign policy response. Figure 3 shows this causal chain.

Figure 3: Schweller's causal chain response for an incoherent state



These four variables interpret Iraq's behaviour in response to threats and formulating external policies; however, the sequences in Iraq may be different to that proposed by Schweller. The author's causal scheme presents a scenario of concatenation in Iraq, which occurs in several ways and possibly in different sequences. For example, the rise or emergence of external threats or pressure worsens the already existing elite fragmentation, which then contributes to government vulnerability; these factors in turn exacerbate social fragmentation, which adds to elite disagreements about how to respond to external threats, resulting in underbalancing and a weak and incoherent response. The author argues that existing fragmentation and disagreements between elites exacerbate the already fragmented society and further weaken the government, making it even harder for the elite to respond appropriately and coherently and resulting in incoherent or even failed policies. Figure 4 presents an example of such a causal chain response in Iraq.

Figure 4: Author's example of a causal chain response assumption regarding the case of Iraq



The next section outlines how each variable of Schweller's NCR causal chain shapes and directs the ways in which states respond to their external environment, particularly threats therein.

Elite consensus and disagreement

Elite consensus and disagreement is the most proximate variable that illustrates how states respond, or do not respond, to external threats (Schweller, 2004, 170). Schweller stated that states do not make foreign policy; the government does, via its leaders. Elite consensus is a dynamic and changeable variable. When there is elite consensus among foreign policy executives, the state will balance (a policy that responds to external threats or pressure). Questions emerge in cases of elite consensus. How would the elites perform? Would they be able to meet the threats when social fragmentation and regime vulnerability create obstacles? In the absence of consensus, the state may pursue some other policy, which may not be coherent or may emerge in the course of bargaining and compromising or by default. The more ambiguous the information and differences in the aforementioned areas, the more disagreements and constraints will emerge, causing policy splits (Schweller, 2004, 171).

There are four key questions regarding elite consensus and external responses. First, do policy elites agree that there are external threats? Second, do they agree on the nature and extent of the threat? Third, do they agree about which policy remedy will be most effective and appropriate to accommodate the external threat? And fourth, do they agree on the domestic political risks and costs of balancing the threat? Elite consensus (or lack thereof) on these key questions depends on a mix of international and domestic drivers attached to different options; actors; risk-taking preferences, time horizons and methods of estimating costs and benefits (Schweller, 2004, 171). The precise mix can only be understood in reference to specific cases.

Without elite consensus on the existence of an external threat, balancing behaviour (or a coherent response) to such a threat cannot occur. Elite disagreement is an indicator of underbalancing with respect to external threats. Therefore, when there are difficulties in obtaining elite consensus, a weak and incoherent response or policy will emerge. States underreacting or underbalancing to external threats do not require an elite majority or coherent support from the elites and the masses (Schweller, 2004, 172). This is because elites can support weak and incoherent responses for many reasons, including

isolationism and pacifism (Schweller, 2006, 48). Schweller argues that in conditions of underbalancing or not having a coherent response to external threats, there will either be significant elite disagreements over threat perceptions or elites will agree about the existing threats but disagree over a policy to overcome the danger (2004, 173).

Schweller's assumptions apply to Iraq because elite consensus and disagreement have been the key determining factors in Iraq's politics post-2003. The Iraqi term *al-Tawafuq al-Siyasi* (political concord or agreement) refers to various Iraqi elites and their political factions bargaining and compromising to reach an agreement on bureaucratic positions and some fundamental issues. It is a core pillar of new Iraqi politics, and a key component in forming the federal government of Iraq. After a long and exhausting process of negotiation and bargaining between the elites and their political parties to form the cabinet, consensus on policies is equally difficult to achieve. The core elites often and continually face difficulty reaching a consensus on external responses to many issues. Besides divisions along communal lines, personal and partisan interests make consensus on policies even harder to achieve.

The author concurs that elites' perceptions, worldviews and priorities influence their consensus or disagreement. Iraqi elites disagree on who their foreign allies, friends and enemies are; their clashing statements towards foreign entities have resulted in incoherent and contradictory messages from the same government. This lack of consensus and these contradictory statements is mirrored in Iraq's foreign policy, in which responses to external threats have been weak. Regarding Schweller's four questions on elite consensus, it is clear that Iraqi elites are neither in agreement nor unified on their interpretation of external threats. For example, all Shia elites and factions in Iraq have perceived Turkish military support for a faction in Iraq as a threat, while some Sunni and Kurdish elites and factions consider the intervention to be supportive. Therefore, the response will be weak.

Government or regime vulnerability

The concept of regime vulnerability "asks the likelihood that the current leadership will be removed from political office" (Schweller, 2004, 173). Schweller asks: first, do the government elites and leaders face serious challenges from the military, opposing political parties or other powerful groups in society? Second, do such groups threaten to remove the current leaders from office? The variable seeks to understand and examine

the relationship between the rulers and the ruled (2004, 173 and 174). Schweller argues that weak and vulnerable government officials will be more constrained by domestic hurdles and less effective in mobilising internal resources. Azar and Moon write:

> As a regime attempts to ensure its survival through the use of force or by co-optation and appeasement of the opposition ... Among the serious side-effects of the erosion of domestic policy capacity are: sharp decrease in the people's loyalty and conformity to, and compliance with, government policies and decisions; a decrease in the government's ability to mobilise material and human resources in the event of [a] national security crisis ... and a serious reduction in the coordination and implementation of policies. (Cited in Schweller, 2004, 174)

Morrow (1993) observes that when the government and leaders are vulnerable, leaders and domestic groups often disagree about the appropriate response to a threat (216). Leaders choose foreign policies for the policy's ability to counter a threat with domestic support. Without the latter, security policies might fail to counter external pressure (Schweller, 2006, 50). The degree of linkage between elites and their people determines the range and viability of policy choices available to policy makers.

A weak government with shaky legitimacy has fewer policy choices and is less able to detect threats; allocate and mobilise domestic capabilities and resources; and articulate, choose and implement policies. Vulnerable regimes without wide public support are more likely to search for allies (internal or external) than to deploy forces to counter external threats, because the former is a quick and relatively low-cost method (Schweller, 2004, 173–175).

Regarding Schweller's two questions at the beginning of this section, the answer to the first would be "yes"; despite Iraq having a democratic political process, its Shia-led government is confronting resistance and clashes from many of its peers and actors inside Iraq. The answer to his second question would also be "yes", as some Shia leaders and movements (such as Muqtada al-Sadr and his followers) who are involved in the political process have sought to prematurely change the government or try to force it to implement certain policies. The federal government of Iraq cannot rely solely on itself for defense, so it cannot completely mobilise its domestic resources. However, it tries to build its military capabilities and is looking for allies internally and externally. Iraq

relies on external partners (Iran, the US and even Russia) for military and security developments; at the same time, internally it relies on non-state actors (such as the Shia militias and the Peshmerga). A vulnerable government seeks domestic and external alliances to strengthen its position.

Social cohesion and/or fragmentation

Social cohesion and/or fragmentation explains the strength of the links between individuals and groups to the core of a society. Social cohesion does not mean political unanimity; all societies are exposed to conflicts emerging from different cleavages: economic inequality, competing political goals, ethnic and other communal animosities and clashing definitions of national identity, the relationship between religion and the state and cultural wars. If societal differences are settled through state institutions, those with disputes, disagreements or grievances constitute a loyal opposition. The danger is political division within societies that do not give legitimacy to the state, and in which a segment of the society intends to topple the state (Schweller, 2004, 175).

Social cohesion indicates a feeling of solidarity wherein members of society feel interconnected and integrated; if part of the society feels excluded, social division and conflict are likely. In contrast to the logic of the diversionary theory of war, which has a "rally around the flag" effect, history has recorded many external threats that have caused in-group conflict and disintegration. To support these insights, Schweller relies on Simmel and Coser, who suggest that external threats can either increase cohesion or, if the society cannot overcome its antagonism, the breakup of the state. Coser argues a group that perceives itself to be excluded before the crisis or threat may feel it has little to lose and much to gain by siding with the aggressor (Coser, 1956, 92, 93; Schweller, 2004, 177). This suggests two propositions: first, the deeper the division within communities prior to the threat, the more likely that part of a community will either collaborate with an external enemy or remain passive than resist the aggressor; and second, the deeper the social divisions within the state, the greater the resistance to mobilising resources to repel the threats or enemy (Schweller, 2006, 53). Social fragmentation means authorities are unable to balance against external threats. In severely fragmented states, the result may be civil war and the state might seek external alliances against domestic rebellion. Highly fragmented states' reactions towards the international system or external pressure (including threats) are underbalanced; for instance, they may develop ineffective policies, defined by the lowest common

denominator because the threats are not shared or perceived by the entire masses of the country, and the elites may face major challenges (Schweller 2004, 179-180). This clearly fits with Iraq, which has experienced devastating internal conflicts that are settled not through state institutions (which segments of society do not view as legitimate) but through violence.

Schweller's assumptions apply because Iraqi communities and their political representatives have different perceptions about their enemies or allies and significant segments of communities in Iraq feel excluded by the new political authorities in Baghdad, to the extent that some resort to force and violence against the state and its bodies. Sidelined communities may either assist or not resist the aggressor interfering in Iraq. Some of them view the state as illegitimate; their tribal and political leaders have therefore sought to broaden their relationships with external powers. A number of communities would not support the federal government if Baghdad threatened their external allies, which are states.

Elite cohesion and/or fragmentation

Elite cohesion is a continuous variable that relates to the level at which internal divisions fragment the central political leadership (Schweller, 2006, 55). Elite polarisation can occur over ideological, cultural or religious divisions; bureaucratic interests; party factions, regional and sectoral interests or ethnic group loyalties. We can identify two broad elite stances: hypernationalist, and collaborationist with external powers. In this situation, there is limited or almost no room for bargaining to reach a settlement between competing political factions.

Schweller suggests three interrelated questions. First, is there a struggle among elites for domestic political power? Second, if so, are there opportunistic elites who are willing to collaborate with the enemies of other elites to advance their own personal power or gain office? Third, do elites agree on the ranking of external threats to the state's survival and key interests, from most to least dangerous? When elites are fragmented, the state is unlikely to be able to formulate a coherent and effective balancing strategy or behaviour. Besides bargaining, efforts to appease opposing elites and elite division makes achieving policy consensus insurmountable. Other opposing internal actors further weaken the core elites' ability to construct a policy, leading to half measures or risk a completely failed response. Nevertheless, a chance to balance or respond will

appear if most elites agree on a specific target that poses a threat to the entirety of the divided elites (Schweller, 2004, 181).

The findings of this research bolster Schweller's arguments regarding facets of elite polarisation in Iraq, including ideological, cultural or religious divisions; bureaucratic interests; party factions; regional and sectoral interests, ethnic group loyalties and personal interest. While there are more than two elite camps in Iraq, there is competition between so-called nationalist elites and collaborationist elites, and both groups argue that they serve Iraq's interests as nationalist and accuse the other of being collaborationist. A considerable number of elites in Iraq have strong and solid external ties with foreign powers that other elites perceive as enemies of the country. A number of Iraqi-Arab Sunni elites have ties with Turkey and Saudi Arabia, which al-Maliki (former Prime Minister and current Vice-President) and his close allies perceive as enemies of Iraq.

Schweller's three interrelated questions are at the core of Iraq's elites' divisions. To respond to them, we look to the research findings. First, there is a persistent struggle for power between Iraqi elites. Second, some elites have special relationships with foreign powers to strengthen their personal and political positions and, some would argue, to change the political authority of Iraq. (Both of these questions will be discussed from different angles in chapters 3, 4 and 7.) Third, elites do not agree on the ranking of external threats to the state's survival. Iraq's incoherent foreign policy emanates from the fragmented elites' behaviour. Each elite camp in Iraq portrays threats from different regions or countries differently. They have contrasting enemies and allies, which is also in line with Schweller's assumptions. This results in confusing messages from the Iraqi circle of power towards international or sub-international systems. Moreover, the fragmentation between the elites is so deep that even when they face danger that threatens all or most of them, they may only be able to agree on the threat, not the means to eliminate it.

NCR lenses and theories are unable to explain the sub-state KRG's international activities. Therefore, the next section explains two interrelated concepts, paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy, which can comprehensively explain the KRG's foreign relations and foreign policy. It also briefly explains how they do not contradict NCR.

Paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy

This section first explains the two key diplomacy categories of paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy. Thereafter, it discusses the concepts in relation to the realism school of thought including NCR. It then applies the concepts to the KRG's international behaviour, arguing that post-2003 until 2014 paradiplomacy applied to the KRG, whereas since 2014 protodiplomacy has applied.

What is paradiplomacy?

Paradiplomacy is a concept that situates the engagement of sub-state or quasi-state entities that control territories within sovereign states in international politics, a phenomenon that traditional IR theories have struggled to explain. Paradiplomacy reflects the effect of recent dynamics in world affairs and the increasing engagement of regional governments in the international arena. This includes changes at the state level and international system, developments in the political economy and globalisation and the emergence of quasi-states (Aldecoa and Keating, 1999, 1-3; Lachapelle and Paquin, 2005, 81). The concept captures the restructuring of territorial politics; the rise of new actors; issues of identity and nationalism within a country, the decentralisation of political power and its impact on central government policy making (Lecours, 2008, 1). These changes reshape the responsibilities of the central and sub-national governments; as such, it is important to develop new ways of understanding these developments and how they fit within the IR literature (Aldecoa and Keating 1999, 3).

Duchacek and Soldatos coined the term "paradiplomacy" in 1980, initially applying it in the context of US federalism and state powers (Soldatos, 1990, 17 cited in Tavares, 2016). McHugh (2015) argued political units or regional states within federal systems are best suited for the concepts paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy because they participate in a federal system of shared sovereignty and thus do not have sovereignty by themselves (240). Paquin and Lachapelle (2005) argue that the current practice of paradiplomacy began in the early 1960s in Quebec and that the phenomena dates back to Quebec's government in the 19th century (77). Other scholars have developed and adopted the concept to explain the international activities of subnational actors supporting; complementing; correcting, duplicating or even challenging nation states' diplomacy (Soldatos, 1990, 17 cited in Tavares, 2016).

Regional governments have representatives, missions and offices abroad and engage with states and non-state actors on various levels, including signing agreements and participating in regional and international organisations (Lecours, 2002, 92 and 94). States remain the key actors in global and international politics, but sub-national actors try to influence transnational and intergovernmental actors. Cohn and Smith claim paradiplomacy is the sub-state government's response to globalisation as well as to issues of peace, war, liberation, and international trade (1996, 30). Paradiplomacy applies to sub/non sovereign states, or state-like entities, which have some attributes of states, such as armed forces, territories, population, government and project their distinctive identity (Duran, 2015, 57 and 58). Federal regions' operations and activism on the international theatre and their independent "foreign policy" are often referred to as paradiplomacy (Aldecoa and Keating, 1999, 21 cited in Danilovich, 2014, 87). Soldatos (1990) asserts paradiplomacy has strategies; objectives; tactics; instruments; institutions, a decision-making process and a foreign policy output (Soldatos, 1990, 35 and 95). Aldecoa defines paradiplomacy as a: "Non-central government's involvement in international relations through the establishment of permanent or ad hoc contacts with foreign public or private entities with the aim to promote socioeconomic or cultural issues as well any other foreign dimension" (1999, 40).

Sub-national governments take different approaches to paradiplomacy. Lecours (2008, 2) presented three layers of motivation, which the author has adopted and adjusted by integrating other scholars (including Tavares, 2016, Paquin and Lachapelle, 2005, and Duran, 2015) to apply to the KRG's core motivations (Tavares, 2016, 38; Keating and Loughlin, 1997, 2). The first layer is economic, wherein sub-state governments interact globally with the aim of attracting trade and investment (Lecours, 2008, 2). This includes various techniques to encourage Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and trade agreements with foreign states (Tavares, 2016, 121 and 122). Ideally, subnational authorities dedicate their public policy to securing their local economies to demonstrate growth and employment (Tavares, 2016, 137). Regional governments seek to administer their economy to demonstrate their ability to develop their region independently.

The second layer is when the sub-state government engages and exchanges with other countries in areas including (but not limited to) culture; education; tourism; sport, technology and language (Tavares, 2016, 3). A critical case is when regional governments participate in international summits (Tavares, 2016, 127). Regional

authorities often have specialised departments or offices that deal with these issues. Subnational or regional authorities are proactively involved in social policy, including education and cultural exchange (Tavares, 2016, 134).

The third layer consists of political considerations, including the expression of a distinct identity from the central state, such as in Quebec, Catalonia and the Basque Country. Sub-state governments may have ambitions to influence the behaviour of the neighbouring locale (Lecours, 2008, 3). These political aspects in their external activities can be identified as paradiplomacy; when they contain a strong expression of nationalism, they can be called *maximal paradiplomacy* (Duran, 2015, 59) or *aggressive paradiplomacy*. Maximal or aggressive paradiplomacy includes all three layers, and is characteristic of the KRG. Paquin and Lachapelle address this layer and add proactive political inspirations – for example, international recognition as a distinctive nation – to its interests. Nationalism is a variable that shapes maximal paradiplomacy's ultimate aim, which is nation building. Sub-state nation-building policies are fundamental; to obtain them, objective regional leaders pursue international strategies (Paquin and Lachapelle, 2005, 82). The major difference between maximal paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy (discussed later) is that the former does not seek political independence (Duran, 2015, 59). Publically maximal paradiplomacy was applied to the KRG post-2003, specifically since the unified Kurdish government in 2006 until 2014. Since then Kurdish officials (led by Masoud Barzani) have adopted protodiplomacy.

Paquin and Lachapelle (2005) suggest two hypotheses regarding the intentions of paradiplomacy-practising subnational entities: first, paradiplomacy strengthens the central government's foreign policy; second, paradiplomacy is synonymous with mounting tensions between central and decentralised authorities (2005, 85). The first hypothesis assumes that the sub-national government's interests and objectives do not clash with the central government, and that their relationship is amicable and contains elements of mutual interest. The second hypothesis contends that the sub-national government's interests and actions clash with the central government's, and represents the variable conflict: constitutional court disputes, differences in international positions and divergent perceptions (Paquin and Lachapelle 2005, 84, 85; Duran, 2015, 60). The KRG's foreign policy is a mixture of both hypotheses. Officially, it declares that its foreign policy complements the federal government's but in reality, it reflects the tensions between Baghdad and Erbil and serves the latter's interests.

Lecours (2002) indicates that the causes, influences and sources determining paradiplomacy exist in both the domestic and international spheres: in the domestic structure and internal political system of the region or sub-state, in continental regimes and in the overall global system (Lecours, 2002, 101). Excluding continental regimes, these levels are relevant to the KRG's paradiplomacy, and each is a useful level of analysis to understand paradiplomacy activities. They provide a rational logic about regional governments' paradiplomacy, internal and external legitimacy, and from where they obtain resources to perform and exist. The international activities of regional governments utilise the opportunities provided at every level to operate and pursue their interests. The following briefly explains these levels of paradiplomacy.

First, domestically**,** the causes of paradiplomacy should focus on the constitutional framework of a country, the federal units of the political system and the degree of nationalism, and intergovernmental relations. The nationalism variable is compatible with Paquin and Lachapelle's (2005) indication of the importance of sub-state nationalism in shaping maximal paradiplomacy. The greater the extent of nationalism in the regional government, the more disparate it is from the centre. The constitutional framework provides a path for the sub-state's powers in international affairs and activities (Lecours, 2002, 102). It is an important factor in dividing the power between a sub-state and a central government, despite the fact that different sub-states can challenge some of the jurisdictions, which they could argue are within their region's matter. The constitution should provide both central and sub-state governments with rules about the responsibilities and recognition of each government's duties in foreign affairs. Another dimension in this level of analysis is the political system, which is concerned with the party system in the sub-state or specific region. The parties, their influences, and their types (nationalists, ethnolinguistics or regionalists) show their tendencies in foreign affairs and in how they distinguish their identity from the central government on the international theatre (Lecours, 2002, 101). If a nationalist party rules the sub-state government, the region has a greater tendency to seek external recognition. Another internal dynamic is intergovernmental relations between the sub-state and the central government, especially the degree of cooperation and conflict between them, which could extend to foreign policy. This level applies to the KRG and these dimensions have been discussed in Chapter 5.

The second level of paradiplomacy analysis is continental, which does not apply to the KRG. Lecours (2002) refers to continental political and economic regimes, such the

European Union (EU), and the creation of free-trade-area continental regimes, such as in North America (2002, 103). Certainly, the KRG is neither in Europe nor part of a continental agreement that includes the free market of labour movement. However, the dissertation does examine part of the geopolitical or regional (Middle East) political and economic level of analysis, which includes opportunities and resources for and constraints to the KRG's paradiplomacy. Chapters 5 and 7 briefly discuss how the KRG's economic, energy and trade relationships, especially with Turkey have helped the KRG's foreign affairs.

The last level of analysis in paradiplomacy is the global system, in which sub-state governments have four opportunities. The first opportunity is international organisations, such as *La Francophnie*, which accept membership of regional or sub-state authorities. Second is states or countries that seek diplomatic relationships and support the sub-state government. This opportunity might include mutual benefit or interests between the sovereign and non-sovereign states. Third is opportunities emerging from sub-state governments that interact and cooperate with each other, make various agreements and can count on each other (Lecours, 2002, 103 and 104). The fourth is the global economy; the region could become an economic centre and unit, including free trade agreement zones. All four of these opportunities are sources of the KRG's foreign policy. Chapter 5 shows how the KRG proactively reaches out globally, including to states and international organisations that have political, economic and security dimensions. Lecours (2002) recognises that these actors are non-sovereign entities and categorises them as hybrid non-state actors, which take a back seat to sovereign states; however, it is not possible to ignore these actors in world politics (2002, 109). The levels of paradiplomacy analysis are Janus-faced, and include both domestic and international factors.

What is protodiplomacy?

Protodiplomacy is: "The conduct of international relations by a non-central government that aims at establishing a fully sovereign state" (Aldecoa and Keating, 1999, 190). It represents diplomatic preparatory work for future secession and international diplomatic recognition of such an occurrence (Duchacek, 1988, 22 in Tavares, 2016, 38). Duchacek (1986) defines protodiplomacy as a supplementary concept to paradiplomacy, where protodiplomacy articulates the sub-state governments' stark separatist and secessionist messages in the international system (1986, 240-248; and

Kuznetsov, 2015, 27). Lecours argues protodiplomacy includes regional authorities' attempts to obtain foreign support for their declarations of independence. Protodiplomacy involves trying to influence other sovereign states and international organisations to achieve "self determination and independence" (Lecours, 2002, 107 and 108). Protodiplomacy points to a sub-government's capability to effectively negotiate, persuade, lobby and use its foreign affairs department and representation to promote a sub-state's interests. Although sovereign states constrain and restrict a sub-state's actions, some sovereign states may choose to recognise protodiplomatic activities for their own purposes in their relations with rival states (McHugh, 2015, 244). McHugh argues: "Protodiplomacy has not been as widely assessed by scholars and foreign policy professionals, most of whom indicate an assumption that both of these types fall under the same broad paradiplomatic label" (2015, 245). It can be concluded that protodiplomacy derives its opportunities and constraints from similar atmospheres and situations to paradiplomacy, with different final goals – namely independence and sovereignty.

While paradiplomacy has been viewed as normal diplomatic activity, protodiplomacy endangers the integrity of the sovereign state (Tavares 2016, 38). Not all sub-national authorities seek independence; however, a number of regional entities that practice paradiplomacy have at times practiced protodiplomacy, such as Quebec and Flanders (Tavares, 2016, 37, 38). This also applies to the KRG, which practiced paradiplomacy and now, through protodiplomacy, formally pursues independence in its foreign policy. While maximal paradiplomacy asserts a distinctive political identity, protodiplomacy aims for independence from the existing political centre. Both ambitions are projected in the international system. While paradiplomacy could be a consistent and stable international activity for a sub-national government, protodiplomacy is likely to be politically and diplomatically controversial. This research argues that the KRG officially shifted from paradiplomacy to protodiplomacy. The next section discusses how paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy fit with NCR.

Paradiplomacy and Neoclassical Realism

No existing literature discusses the relationships between NCR and paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy. However, this subsection makes the case that paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy fit with realism and neorealism, and consequently with NCR as it is largely derived from the aforementioned. Insights from scholars such as Aldecoa and

Keating (1999), Kuznetsov (2015) and McHugh (2015) provide some space for the two concepts in realism and neorealism. As NCR is an extension and adjusted modern version of realism and neorealism (and includes insights from both), this section contends that NCR does not reject paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy; that there is an interconnection between these two concepts and realism; and that this provides a starting point for indirectly connecting the two concepts with NCR.

How does paradiplomacy (and protodiplomacy) fit with realism and NCR? There might appear to be a little space in realism and NCR for paradiplomacy because realism and its branches are state-centric theories. However, Tavares writes: "One may optimistically argue that thousands of subnational governments worldwide conduct some type of foreign relations … Optimism should be grounded in realism" (2016, 29). The author's research suggests that NCR would not reject paradiplomacy simply because sub-national governments are judged as inferior to fully sovereign states. Most sub-national governments are legitimate and recognised regional governments by their sovereign states, and the paradiplomacy discussed earlier recognises both the concepts' and regional governments' limitations and constraints in the international system. Despite not being sovereign states, they operate within their limitations in the international system while trying to exploit the opportunities available in those structures. Thus, a number of scholars (for example, Der Derian (1978 cited in Alker, 1996, 161), Duchacek (1986), Aldecoa and Keating (1999), Kuznetsov (2015) and McHugh (2015)) argue that the use of protodiplomacy and paradiplomacy is not contrary to realism's tenets and it could be argued that they do not contradict its extend branch: NCR.

Aldecoa and Keating argue that protodiplomacy and paradiplomacy derive from classical political realism (1999, 83). Paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy mirror actual external relations; even though realists argue for state domination in international relations and politics and explain interstate interactions as the principal elements of international affairs, they also recognise the role of transnational actors; for example Kuznetsov (2015, 73) includes sub-states. The majority of sub-national authorities examined in the literature conduct paradiplomacy by "permission of" sovereign states. Kuznetsov argues: "For realists, the emergence of new transnational players in world politics is nothing else but the rational will of national states" (2015, 73). Gilpin (1971) states: "Transnational actors play an important role in world affairs because it has been in the interests of the predominant powers for them to do so" (1971, 54). Sub-states'

participation in international relations shows that their activities are formally or informally approved at state and interstate levels (Kuznetsov, 2015, 73 and 74).

Realists do not regard sub-regional sub-state entities as equal to sovereign states. By the same token, Lecours argued that actors that conduct paradiplomacy play a secondary role to sovereign states in world politics (2002, 109). Kuznetsov (2015) argues that realism generally views paradiplomacy as a real engagement of sub-national actors with international politics as a consequence of rationalisation of the foreign policy of the central governments, which perceive regional foreign affairs activities as beneficial to state interests (2015, 73 and 96). The only problem appears when those entities do not behave in the interests of the central governments, or act against them.

Neorealism, which NCR possesses key elements of, particularly its concern with the international system's activities provides space and an explanation for the political sub-units engaged in the international theatre. The conceptual approach of neorealism accepts the role of paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy, in relation to conventional state-based diplomacy, and as international practices in themselves (McHugh, 2015, 244). Waltz tacitly provided insights into the conditions of paradiplomacy (McHugh, 2015, 246). Waltz (1991 & 2000) suggests that "units" within the international order perform in an insecure atmosphere and lack an overarching guardian of the international system (Waltz's, 1991, 669-670; Waltz, 2000, 27-32; McHugh, 2015, 246). McHugh argues that besides states' domination of sub-states' activities there is a reflection of those sub-units' emergence as actors in an anarchic international system (McHugh, 2015, 246). Neorealism has the capacity to treat all political units (including those without sovereignty) as actors engaged in maximising their self-interests, including adopting approaches and policies to survive and prosper (McHugh, 2015, 246). However, neorealism's conceptual approach recognises that sub-states are limited in their pursuit of high political interests (for instance, defense) and that sovereign states are more successful in this regard. Finally, McHugh argues that conflicts of interest between the state and the sub-state can result in an "every man for himself" reaction (McHugh, 2015, 246).

One of the forefathers of realism, Machiavelli, acknowledged protodiplomacy as a type of diplomacy that mediates the estrangement of a city-state from empires in an extreme state of anarchy (Huysmans, 1997, 345). Der Derian treated Machiavelli as a theorist of protodiplomacy rather than diplomacy (Alker, 1996, 161). Duchacek argued that

characterisations of protodiplomacy might be consistent with "global diplomacy", because protodiplomacy seeks to persuade the international community to recognise the sub-unit or sub-state as a legitimate actor (Duchacek 1986, 241, 1990, 16). These sub-units seek to change, recognising that moving from a non-sovereign entity to a sovereign state would provide them with more opportunities in the international system. They also accept that states will remain the primary actors; they therefore resort to protodiplomacy to obtain sovereignty and legitimacy and to be part of the Westphalian world. Therefore, paradiplomacy is compatible with realism and neorealism and their extension, NCR. There is a connection between realism and its branch NCR and the concepts of paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy adopted to explain the KRG, this section has evidenced interconnections between these concepts and the realism and neorealism from which NCR emerged.

Applying paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy to the Kurdistan Regional Government

Using paradiplomacy to study the KRG's international activities is appropriate because it conforms with McHugh's (2015) argument that the sub-state (in this case, the KR-I) shares sovereignty in a federal system (2015, 240). Mansour (2013), Mohammed and Owtram (2014) and Danilovich (2014) also argue that paradiplomacy is the best solution for understanding the KRG's international activities. Furthermore, the KRG case fits with the concepts; attributes; characteristics, motivations and causes of paradiplomacy.

Aldecoa and Keating (1999), Lecours (2008) and Lachapelle and Paquin (2015) argue that paradiplomacy reflects the weakness of the state. The weakness of the Iraqi state consolidated the creation of the KRG, providing it with an opportunity to develop domestically and internationally. The rise of Kurdish political identity and nationalism and new political structures (the post-2003 federal system, with one federal region for the KR-I) also provided important reasons for the emergence of paradiplomacy. The KRG is compatible with Duran's and Lecours' aforementioned attributes of paradiplomacy. It is a non-sovereign entity, but has de facto sovereignty (Hawler Times, 2014) reflected in the legislative and executive branches of the KR-I and rules a large segment of the Kurdish population; it has key specialised institutions, representations and missions abroad, namely the Department of Foreign Relations (DFR), which projects the region's identity and interests; it has signed agreements with sovereign states and non-state actors, including transnational corporations; it has participated in and been

represented at international and regional events; and it is aware of its limitations in the international system (because it lacks sovereignty), but tries to influence external actors. The KRG has aims; motivations; structure; institutions; laws; instruments and a decision-making process and concerns in many areas, including peace, war and trade; these characteristics are compatible with those delineated by Aldecoa and Keating (1999, 21), Cohn and Smith (1996, 30) and Soldatos (1990, 35 and 95).

Lecours' (2008) three layers of motivation for paradiplomacy match the KRG's foreign affairs activities. On the first layer, the KRG is pursuing aggressive economic international and regional activities. On the second layer, the KRG exchanges culture with foreign entities and participates in international and regional events. On the third layer, the KRG follows a strategy of political engagement and projects its political identity in the international arena, while taking a political position on international and regional matters. This includes extensive lobbying for the region's interests via the KRG's political bureaucratic bodies and representations. Therefore, the KRG's paradiplomacy can be categorised as maximal (or aggressive) paradiplomacy. Chapter 5 discusses this.

Paquin and Lachapelle (2005) suggest two trajectories for paradiplomacy: the first is for the central government's benefit; the second reflects fundamental differences between the sub-state and the centre. The KRG has adopted both. Officially, its foreign policy is in line with the federal government's; the KRG's officials publicly make this argument. Practically, however, its foreign relations contest aspects of federal policy. Although the KRG did not openly contradict official foreign policy until 2014, the author's research shows that it has a distinctive foreign policy agenda, objectives and interests that clash with Baghdad's. The KRG could not develop its foreign relations and expand its international activities without the formal approval and permission of the federal government. This is consistent with paradiplomacy's sources of existence.

The elements (Lecours, 2002) of the domestic and global levels are discussed in Chapter 5. The domestic level scrutinises the internal politics, structure and constitution of the sub-state and the entire country in relation to foreign policy by examining all the elements of this level. It argues that the internal dynamics have provided resources and opportunities to conduct paradiplomacy. The global level applies to the KRG because the KRG is engaged with transnational organisations and IGOs; has diplomatic relationships with dozens of sovereign states, namely Turkey and the US; is building relationships

with other sub-national states, such as Catalonia, and is increasingly becoming an economic hub. As well as opportunities, the KRG faces challenges on the global level. In short, foreign states, and particularly Western superpowers and non-state actors (multinational corporations) that have dealt with and respected the KRG. This has provided the KRG with ample opportunities, which have shaped its independent foreign policy. The constraints of being a non-sovereign sub-state have reflected negatively on the KRG's ability to maintain a good performance, provide services for its people and project its strength to the outside world, due to the many shortcomings discussed in Chapter 5.

The KRG's paradiplomacy is a consequence of the KRG's de facto foreign policy. Mansour (2014), Mohammed and Owtram (2014) and Danilovich (2014) argue that despite the KRG's engagement in international relations, and given the limitations of the Iraqi constitution, the KRG's practice of paradiplomacy does not indicate an intention to secede from Iraq. This research takes a different perspective: that secession has always been a tacit and – until very recently – undeclared objective. This is a state-building project that mirrors a nation-building effort in paradiplomacy (see Paquin and Lachapelle 2005, 82), and is one of the strategies of maximal paradiplomacy.

Applying the concept of protodiplomacy to the KRG requires not only a general prediction of the concept's hypotheses but also a specific examination of the cases' motivations, characteristics, sources and influences. The main difference between paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy is that the latter aims to achieve independence; this is the KRG's present strategy. Since the KRG's leaders have officially declared they are seeking independence and have lobbied externally, they have now moved into protodiplomacy. The KRG aims to be treated equally and for other states and IGOs to recognise it as an independent state or country.[6] Its leaders have expressed their dissatisfaction at being a non-sovereign entity and seek to meet their region's aspirations, which justifies their claim to independence.

McHugh (2015, 244) argues that sovereign states might support and/or recognise sub-units that resort to protodiplomacy because of the former's competition with other states. Although since 2014 the KRG's protodiplomacy has not been welcomed by de jure states, McHugh's assumption might be suited to the KRG, as many states are rivals

[6] Paradiplomacy includes international activities between unequal partners, taking place outside of the international political sphere (Grydehøj, 2014, p.10).

and the KRG tries to exploit that. Reflecting on Lecours' (2002, 107-108) argument regarding persuasion tools, Chapter 5 demonstrates how the KRG utilised representations and the DFR to create a relatively successful lobby in Washington DC, London and Brussels for gaining some of its objectives such as support for its Peshmerga. According to Tavares (2016, 38), protodiplomacy will lead in one way or another to the breakup of the state, or at least the areas that claim independence. The shift from paradiplomacy to protodiplomacy was formally announced in mid-2014, when President Barzani announced the push for independence as Iraq further disintegrated and Daesh rose. Certainly, if the KRG continues in its independence campaign Iraq's territorial integrity will be questioned and threatened.

Conclusion

NCR has been applied to the federal government's foreign policy because it focuses on domestic policymaking, including key actors, mechanisms, constraints and opportunities. Additionally, it incorporates external factors, namely the distribution of power in the international system to explain foreign policy making and behaviour. Moreover, a strand of Schweller's NCR adds fragmented and weak states to its analysis and explains how they produce foreign policy responses that could be incoherent or even fail. Therefore, the main theoretical framework applied to this dissertation is from the core strands of NCR in Rose, Lobell, Ripsman and Taliaferro's main variables framework, as well as Schweller's NCR underbalancing theory. These are complementary frameworks for understanding the dilemma of decision making in the federal government, and provide a comprehensive analysis of Baghdad's incoherent and weak foreign policy behaviour and responses.

It can be concluded that Baghdad and Erbil cannot be viewed and understood with only one theory or theoretical approach, due to the complexity of the case; IR theories are inadequate to wholly explain the intricate case of foreign policy making in Iraq. Due to the scholarly and theoretical limitations (lack of insights on non-sovereign states' international activities) of NCR in explaining the KRG's foreign policy and international activities, the secondary conceptual approaches utilised are paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy.

The main framework that Rose's followers (Ripsman, Taliaferro and Lobell) developed provides an explanatory tool with which to scrutinise both the independent variables (external factors) and intervening variables (domestic factors) that interact to shape the dependent variable – foreign policy. This framework matches with Iraqi foreign policy making, as Iraqi decision makers are shaped by the signals and information they perceive from the international system. Simultaneously, critical domestic actors influence and shape their decision making which leads to foreign policy outcomes. The second framework is Schweller's NCR underbalancing theory, which maintains elements of neorealism elegancy. This theory provides more nuanced explanations of the "transmission belt" that connects changes in the international environment to domestic policy changes. It explains why states sometimes fail to follow the dictates of international structure in a timely manner, as well as how they formulate policies and respond to external pressure (Rathbun, 2008). Both NCR theories illustrate that states try to survive, with classical realism's focus on elites, society relationships, and the degree and capacity of leaders to extract resources and material for foreign policy. Both the main theory and Schweller's NCR theory recognise the vital importance of the international and sub-international system, but they assert that internal intervening unit-level variables must also be included to produce an accurate analysis of foreign policy.

The theories incorporate sets of domestic intervening unit-level variables, which determine state behaviour over the short and medium term and demonstrate the possession of state power. Each framework has its own broad categorisation of unit-level material and non-material variables; in many instances, they are similar. For instance, both NCR theories emphasise the decision makers (elites are the primary domestic unit-level variable in external behaviour), but the other unit-level variables are different in their arrangement. The author proposes that each theory should be applied to a particular international phenomenon rather than merging both theories, as the unit-level variables have been organised and arranged for each model. The main variables framework could be utilised to explain foreign policy making in Baghdad, and Iraq's short- and medium-term external behaviour and orientations. Schweller's theory demonstrates that underbalancing could be applied to Iraq's responses to external and/or potential (perceived) threats. For example, Schweller's model can explain why Baghdad is underbalancing, which is an incoherent response to Turkey's military interference in Iraq, as the Shia-led government view it as a threat.

Schweller's theory can also explain the domestic complexity and competitiveness of Baghdad's foreign policy processes; it enables analysis of fragmentation on all levels, focusing on elites, regime vulnerability and society division. Schweller's assumption that the domestic political process is often decentralised and competitive is in line with the thesis' findings (Schweller, 2004, 164). Schweller's framework is original in its assumptions about domestic actors siding with foreign powers rather than their own government; this enables understanding of some of Iraq's internal actors' external ties in the context of foreign policy.

The concepts of paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy simply explain the KRG's foreign policy. These approaches rely on the explanations of Aldecoa; Keating; Lecours; Duchacek; Soldatos; Tavares, Paquin and Lachapelle. Paquin and Lachapelle (2005) explain different types of paradiplomacy: one of them is maximal paradiplomacy, which the KRG adopted for a long time until shifting to protodiplomacy in 2014. Lecours (2002 and 2008) delineated paradiplomacy's motivations, sources and causes and presented two complementary approaches to explain paradiplomacy. In his first study, he identified three broad sets of motivations: economic, cultural and political. In the second, he identified the sources and causes of paradiplomacy, which are in two main spheres: domestic and global. Lecours' work is able to explain the KRG's paradiplomacy motivations, sources and causes. In the process of the KRG resorting to protodiplomacy, the latter repeatedly matches with the KRG's increasing disparate international activities. These two concepts have a place in realism and neorealism (in which NCR originates) if scholars examine the sub-state's international behaviour within the Westphalian worldview, and interpretation of the two concepts takes a secondary role to the sovereign state in world politics. The theoretical analysis includes variations of NCR and paradiplomacy to explain Baghdad and Erbil's foreign policies respectively. The author has adopted this hybrid framework so that contradictory theoretical overlaps are avoided.

Chapter 3

Major domestic actors in foreign policy post-Saddam

Introduction

We cannot understand the incoherent and weak foreign policy of Iraq without addressing all key Iraqi political forces' external perspectives and ties that seek to influence Iraq's polity. This chapter examines the influential key figures and political parties in the government and ICR including those non-governmental figures who can mobilise significant public support, for instance in foreign policy. This chapter consists of two main sections: first, it discusses the Shia key factions and key figures, and second, the Iraqi Arab Sunni political factions and key figures in foreign policy.

The chapter provides an understanding of political factions' and key figures' visions and approaches that are directly and indirectly contributing to Iraq's intricate and fragmented foreign policy making. The complexities are reflected in self interest, political diversity between key figures and major factions, their exercise of external relations and their vying for influence over the federal government. According to former Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, Dr Barham Salih: "The real foreign policy of Iraq was conducted through the bilateral arrangements of Shia political parties, Arab Sunni political parties, and Kurdish political parties with the Iranians, the Turks, the Arabs [Arab world]" (Author's interview with Salih, 2014). This chapter is primarily concerned with Shia, Arab Sunni, and those who are purportedly cross-sectarian political figures and forces. The Kurdish elites and factions are covered in Chapter 5. Additionally, this chapter identifies the continuities and discontinuities in foreign policy making: its shift in characteristics, the environment and the process.

This chapter's key question is:

- Which political forces and key figures have been involved in conducting foreign relations and shaping Iraq's incoherent foreign policies post-2003?

This is a sub-question that is essential for answering the main research question "How is foreign policy made in Iraq" because it gives an understanding of the political factions'

and key prominent leaders' visions, agenda and ties that extend beyond Iraq's soverign borders.

Lukman Faily, Iraq's former Ambassador to the US, indicated the differences and the incohesiveness between key influential figures and political factions, including those inside and outside the government, which makes it difficult for diplomats to represent a clear picture externally (author's interview with Faily, 2016). Amer Hassan al-Fayad [7] stated: "Iraq's foreign policy since 2003 is not considered to emanate from a state named Iraq. Rather, in its best times it is a political entity and at its worst many Iraqi political entities" (Bayt al-Hikma, 2014). Qahtan Ahmed Suleiman al-Hamdani (2014)[8] argues: "Iraqi foreign policy mirrors domestic politics, which imposes on Iraqi diplomacy … This [foreign policy] reflects the relationships between political forces, parties and movements, as well as their disputes and alliances including the use of violence" (Bayt al-Hikma, 2014). According to Hussein Sinjari (a Kurdish Yazidi), Iraqi Ambassador to Romania and formerly to Portugal, "Iraq has a foreign policy but there is not coherence in Iraqi foreign policy … Therefore, foreign countries will not take us seriously or with respect … Iraq's different religious and ethnic groups make it difficult for a coherent foreign policy" (author's interview with Sinjari, 2015).

This chapter examines various political factions via their ethnic, religious, political, ideological and personal differences and their competition for resources and power, all of which have contributed to an incoherent foreign policy. Dhafer al-A'ni, an Arab Sunni MP in the Iraqi Council of Representatives (ICR) and in the Foreign Relations Committee (FRC), stated:

> "There are multiple or numerous levels of Iraqi foreign policy … Firstly it is based on ethnic or sectarian foreign policies; Shiite, Sunnis and Kurdish foreign policies … Secondly there are different foreign policies from decision makers' level, such as the President, Prime Minister, and Minister of Foreign Affairs where each have their own perspective and they are not compatible … Thirdly, there are foreign policies that emanate from various political parties, which are different from each other; for example, the external relations of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan are different from those of the Kurdistan Democratic Party." (Author's interview with al-A'ni, 2014)

[7] Al-Fayad is a professor and the Dean of the College of Political Science in al-Nahrain University, Baghdad.
[8] Al-Hamdani, PhD is a Senior Lecturer in the Political Science Department at the University of Baghdad.

These levels are interconnected, and there is room for cooperation between decision makers to cut deals that reflect their personal or partisan interests. This chapter exposes the limited bargaining space and the actors' differences by examining their aims and objectives, and the actions taken to realise these.

Labeed Abbawi, Iraq's former Undersecretary at the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs (I-MOFA), said: "Iraq's diplomatic ties with the outside world have become politicalized and political groups, especially Islamic parties, have an influence on how the country conducts foreign relations" (Rudaw, 2017). One of the dissertation's key findings is that the influence of Shia actors is materialising in official actions compared to that of Arab Sunnis and, to a considerable degree, the Kurds, who have no significant influence on Baghdad's foreign policy. Iraqi Arab Sunnis and Kurds do not have the power to drive the official state apparatus in Baghdad, but they are able to disrupt and fragment the process of exercising Iraq's foreign relations and foreign policy. The Iraqi state's weaknesses and the new political system (e.g. al-Muhasasa) have contributed to the rise of political figures and parties.[9]

The elites and bureaucratic bodies (extensively discussed in Chapter 4) are supported and constrained by political parties and their leaders and prominent figures who are part of the process of making foreign policy. These are all considered domestic intervening variables in NCR and this chapter examines them. Both NCR's main variables and Schweller's underbalancing frameworks fit with this chapter. The former matches because the actors (political parties and their leaders) try to shape the decision making process in line with their interests. This is because the actors in this chapter fall in the four categories of domestic intervening unit variables. First, the leaders of the political parties fall into "leaders' or elites' image". Those prominent figures who are not in the government such as religious leaders (for example al-Sistani) fall into "strategic culture" or "state-society relations" because they can mobilise the masses, which in turn can shape the prevailing ideas in the communities and government's leaders and their affiliated armed groups. Moreover, non-bureaucratic leaders can shape the state-society relationship. Political parties and their militias fall into "strategic culture" and "state-society relations" and "domestic institutions" as some political parties dominate some

[9] Post-2003, the electoral system in Iraq became proportional representation (PR), and the federal government is a coalition government based on the ethno-sectarian quota system *al-Muhasasa al-Taifiya.*

domestic institutions through their elites and employees in the government, and the Shia militias in the PMF are currently part of the state's military structure. Therefore, the actors in this chapter are able to shape the three domestic intervening variables processes and consequently foreign policy outcomes and/or responses. Rose (1998, 167) predicts that many of the internal actors could cause a weak foreign policy as they pose hurdles to key elites to mobilizing material power and this is compatible with the chapter's findings and arguments.

Schweller's domestic intervening variables are compatible with Iraqi domestic actors because the two domestic variables elite disagreement and elite fragmentation are driven by the elites' and their parties' differences, competition, and failure to have real consensus on fundamental issues including how to view certain relationships. The chapter's findings also match with this variable's assumptions that there are some elites who have relationships with foreign powers that might not be in line with the central government interests. The government vulnerability variable fits with the Iraqi case as some Iraqi actors try to weaken or even to change the regime for their interests. The social fragmentation or cohesion variable demonstrates that domestic parties and groups try to extend their relationships beyond the central government and even occasionally against it, partially because they are marginalized by the central government.

Schweller argues that powerful domestic actors do not agree who is an enemy or friend and further disintegration might lead to complete policy making failure or even civil war. All these domestic variables form a causal chain that leads to an incoherent and weak central government's foreign policy and this is compatible with this chapter's findings.

The next section considers the role of Shia actors in foreign policy making, the Shia parties, their members in government, their foreign policies approaches and views, and their external ties.

The Shia political factions and key figures in foreign policy

This section explores the direct and indirect influence that key Shia actors have on the government in foreign policy making; the nature of the Shia parties, their members that

hold key positions in the government, the foreign policy visions of the parties and their leaders and the external ties. It focuses on the Islamic Da'wa Party; the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI); Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani; Muqtada al-Sadr and his movement and the Shia militias.

The Islamic Da'wa Party

The Islamic Da'wa Party (*Hizb al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya*) has been the major ruling political party involved in formulating Iraq's foreign policy in the post-Saddam era. The party's leaders have had the preeminent role in conducting Iraq's foreign relations and drawing up its policy. Since 2005, figures in the Da'wa Party have held the top executive position of Prime Minister (PM): Ibrahim al-Jaafari (former Da'wa leading figure, now leading his own party), Nouri al-Maliki and Haider al-Abadi. Chapter 4 discusses each PM's performance with respect to Iraqi foreign affairs and their policies.

Da'wa's origins lie in a Shia Islamic political party created in 1957 in the holy city of Najaf. Muhammad Baqr al-Sadr, inspired by the ideas of *Wilayat al-Ummah* doctrine (the rule of community or people) (Latif, 2008), was the architect of the oldest currently active Iraqi Shia Islamist party in modern history.[10] The party that began as a clandestine network became known outside Iraq and members were often exiled or executed as a result of Saddam's persecution. Some of those who escaped were exposed to different ideas, cultures and to education; some became less conservative than others. The Da'wa Party has experienced major ideological, theological and political transformations and internal political differences[11] – the party lacks cohesiveness to this day – that have resulted in the formation of splinter groups. The latest was the current FM, al-Jaafari, in 2008. Dai (2008) argues that the Da'wa Party experienced three major shifts before 2003.[12] Eventually, this factionalism moulded the party's flexible formula, which blends Iraqi nationalism with a Shia Islamic doctrine while attempting to formulate an independent policy. Islamic Shia theology matters in Da'wa politics; currently, the party and a large number of its members adhere to Sistani's doctrine

[10] Sayyid Jawad al-Khoei said: "This doctrine supports the idea that people should be responsible for electing their representatives" (American University of Iraq-Sulaimani, 2016).
[11] For example, influential member in the Da'wa party Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Fadlallah, changed from promoting the Iranian doctrine *Wilayat el Faqih (*the concept of governance or rule by Islamic jurists) to announcing his doubts about it (Sirri, Stansfield, Kinninmont, 2013).
[12] "First, it shifted from a reformist Islamic organization to a revolutionary movement in the mid-1970s; second, it had to evacuate from Iraq to Iran after the Iranian revolution 1979; thirdly, it distanced itself from the Iranian authority in the late 1980s" (Dai, 2008, 238).

rather than the Iranian Khomeini's.[13] Post-2003, pragmatism has mattered in the parties' political attitudes and within the government. A prominent Da'wa member in the ICR, Sadiq al-Rikabi, said:

> "The centre of Shia Islam is in Najaf rather than Qom. As Iraqis, we believe we are the real and historical leaders of the Shia rather than the Iranians, but maybe the West accuses us of following Iran for political reasons. Iran welcomes these accusations so they can use the Shia of Iraq as another card on the table in their dealings with the West." (Quoted in Sirri, Stansfield and Kinninmont, 2013).

Al-Rikabi's views represent the pragmatic attitude of Da'wa senior officials. Although the party is indirectly influenced by Najaf's Hawza, some key figures (such as al-Maliki) and members in the party have close ties with Iran. Salim Hussni, a senior leader and Da'wa Party historian, said: "Iran deals with and has a close rapport with part of the Da'wa Party, known as al-Maliki's group" (Fayad, 2011). Hussni acknowledged the close relationship between Iran and the Da'wa Party but asserted some differences between them: the Iranians have had closer historical relationships with other parties, such as the ISCI (Fayad, 2011), and its splinter, Badr.

In 2013, the Da'wa Party's electoral manifesto briefly pointed to foreign policy and focused on three main areas: first, promoting economy, trade and tourism as a policy of economic cooperation and regional interdependence and a tool of peace, by increasing Iraq's oil production and GDP growth; second, promoting a moderate interpretation of religion and countering violence and sectarianism; and third, not repeating Saddam's mistakes in foreign affairs, and supporting international peace and security while protecting Iraq's borders and sovereignty (Chatham House, 2013a). The Da'wa Party portrays itself as defending Iraqi national interests. However, when the party's leaders assumed office, its priorities were rearranged and focused on restoring foreign relations, security and the economy (see Chapter 6).

The Da'wa Party's domestic and international opponents accuse it of aligning with Iran and failing to build ties with Gulf countries because of sectarian prejudice (Sirri, Stansfield and Kinninmont, 2013). Although the party has been relatively sympathetic towards Iranian interests, it has been pragmatic in its approach to collaborating with the

[13] In July 2014, the Da'wa Party confirmed adherence to Ayatollah al-Sistani's guidance and called on other parties to do so (Al-Alam, 2014).

US during its occupation (Van Veen et al, 2017, 48 and 49). In practice, the divisions between the Da'wa Party's key members are reflected in their approaches to foreign policy, which are mirrored in their personal, ideological, geo-political and international perspectives. Its recent two main wings, which surfaced in 2014, are those of al-Maliki and al-Abadi, which offer different approaches to Iraq's foreign affairs. The latter is considered to be more open to Western engagement in Iraq. Al-Maliki has been the party leader three times: elected in 2007 (replacing former PM al-Jaafari) and re-elected in 2009 and 2013 as Secretary-General of the party. He gained considerable but not unanimous support from his party (Al-Mada Press, 2013a). Al-Maliki's approach involved controlling the party to expand his personal leverage over the government. Regardless of his authoritarian tendencies and the party's fragmentation, the party supported al-Maliki when he was PM and currently, to a certain extent, backs al-Abadi's stance on foreign affairs – particularly on supporting the Shia masses regionally.

The fragmentation in the Da'wa Party is reflected in its foreign relations. This can be seen in a group within the party shifting their support from al-Maliki to al-Abadi in 2014. A few days before PM al-Maliki's resignation, a number of Da'wa Party members visited Iran to persuade Iranian decision makers not to support al-Maliki (Geranmayeh, 2014). However, Iran continued supporting al-Maliki in other positions and supported his allies' Shia militias. Al-Jaafari, al-Maliki and al-Abadi's positions in and approaches to foreign affairs are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

The United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) was formed in 2005 and is the most powerful Shia political coalition, consisting of Da'wa and 19 other Shia Islamic parties.[14] In its 2004 programme manifesto, it promised to adopt an independent foreign policy, to continue to be part of the Arab League and the organisation of the Islamic Conference and to focus on internal security and welfare – without referring to any particular details (Cole, 2004a). The UIA has brought the Da'wa Party to power since 2005. In the 2010 Iraqi election, Da'wa led in formulating the State of Law Coalition (SLC), which included a section regarding foreign policy in its programme. It praised al-Maliki's first government's achievements in foreign relations, stating:[15]

> We were able to make great achievements in Iraq's foreign relations with world states. This was mirrored in the opening of 86 diplomatic missions from Arab and foreign states in Iraq. Eighty-five Iraqi representations in the

[14] Iran played a significant role in assembling the UIA (Cordesman and Khazai, 2014a, 92).
[15] The SLC, led by al-Maliki, formed the government in 2010 and 2014. Shia parties, especially the Da'wa Party, dominated the coalition; but it also included some Kurdish Faily, Turkman and Arab Sunnis.

> form of consulates and embassies exist in 35 states around the world. We are seeking to increase these numbers to develop our international relations. (Al-Jaredah, 2010)

The SLC's electoral manifesto emphasises that: foreign policy has to be under the authority of the central government; Iraq should have bilateral security agreements and cooperation with its neighbours to control the borders and fight terrorism, Iraq's previous problems that were created by Saddam's regime need to be solved and strategic relationships should be formed with states such as Egypt, Jordan, Turkey and Iran (al-Jaredah, 2010). The second term of al-Maliki's tenure witnessed very limited progress in Iraq's relationships with its neighbours (excluding Iran), and tensions re-emerged. For example, the marginalisation of Iraqi Arab Sunnis and the persecution of their elites reflected on Iraq's foreign relations with its neighbours and the wider region.

Led by the Da'wa Party, the SLC's campaign for the 2014 elections again had similar foreign policy objectives to the parties within the SLC; but differences within the Da'wa Party surfaced over al-Maliki's approach in governance. These were especially prominent when al-Maliki was sidelined for the post of PM in 2014 and al-Abadi took office. Al-Maliki's wing and PM al-Abadi's opposing elements in the party, as well as in the SLC, tried to influence foreign policy. In October 2015, a number of members of the SLC formally requested that PM al-Abadi invite Russian military intervention (via airstrikes) in Iraq against Daesh. Al-Maliki promoted this, while al-Abadi ignored it (Al-Mukhtar, 2015; Reuters, 2015a). This demonstrates the different approaches within the Da'wa Party to foreign policy.

The Da'wa Party has reached out abroad to build relationships with the Iraqi diaspora and to represent their vision through clusters of its members and supporters. Some of the party's representatives include Ahmad Hisham in the US and Dr Zuhair al-Naher in the UK; the latter is a supporter of al-Abadi (Segell, 2005, 226). Beyond their media engagements and religious, cultural and socio-political gatherings and activities, there have not been extensive endeavours to expand or support the party's cause abroad. In short, the new era of the party began post-2003, when it transformed from opposition party to one of the leading ruling parties in Iraq. Therefore, it has been more or less realistic in its foreign policy approach. The Da'wa Party has a relatively close relationship with Iran and a pragmatic one with the US in the context of benefiting from the US. The party's leaders, such as al-Maliki, utilised the government's facilities and resources to reach out and lobby in the West, which is discussed in the next chapter.

The next party to be examined was long considered the second most powerful Iraqi Shia force.

The Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI)

The ISCI (*al-Majlis al-A'ala al-Islami al-'Iraqi*) was founded in Iran in 1982 by Baqir and Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, the sons of the Iraqi Ayatollah (Juneau, 2015, 109). The ISCI was created, funded and equipped by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as an umbrella for the Shia resistance to fight Saddam's regime in the 1980s via its military wing, the Badr Corps.[16] Its first chief was the Iraqi-born Ayatollah Mohamad Hashemi Shahroudi, who went on to become advisor to the Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei (Brennan, et al, 2013). The ISCI was renamed in 2007; it was formerly known as the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) (*al-Majlis al-Ala lil-thawra al-Islamiya fil Iraq*). It was intended to be a coalition of Shia Islamic parties and briefly included part of the Da'wa party (Shanahan, 2004; Kadhim, 2017). Its leader, Ammar al-Hakim, who is the founder's nephew, has ties with Khamenei (Brennan, et al, 2013). The ISCI post-Saddam supported the new political system in Iraq and endorsed the idea of federalism (Juneau, 2015, 109). It has demonstrated some pragmatism in the new Iraq, and the US paved the way for its engagement just before the invasion. However, ISCI had dual policies before the split of Badr it was engaged in state building and had a sectarian militia (Visser, 2012, 101). The ISCI has been involved in all phases of government since the Governing Council and holds numerous governmental portfolios. Da'wa and ISCI have benefited from the state's resources, and ISCI has also gained revenues from the Shia shrines in the south.

The ISCI promotes Islamic Shiism and relies on its Shia grassroots. Post-Saddam, and particularly after the assassination of Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim – its Supreme Leader – in Najaf on 29th August 2003, the ISCI has lacked a clear ideological position and struggled to convey a clear message on religious ideological loyalties to Iraqis and the outside world. On the surface, it distanced itself from Iranian doctrines and symbolically aligned itself with Ayatollah al-Sistani's doctrine in Najaf (Visser, 2012, 102).[17] This became clearer after it modified its name in 2007 and its armed wing, the pro-Iran Badr Organization, split from the ISCI. On the one hand, the ISCI had a historic opportunity to influence the new Iraq; on the other, being too close to the occupying

[16] Badr Corps started as a brigade in 1983, and developed into division and then into a corps. Its fighters were mainly Iraqi defectors and prisoners of war recruited by Iran. In 2012, it split away from ISCI to operate as a political party, maintaining its militias (Gulmohamad, 2015a; Counter Extremism Project, 2015).
[17] Al-Sistani adopts a quietism tradition in which clerics should be independent from politics and provides only guidance, known as Silent Hawza (*al-Hawza al-Samita*).

forces reduced its popularity (Corboz, 2015, 155). Therefore, it denounced the occupation and requested the acceleration of the transition to Iraqi rule (Corboz, 2015, 158).

The party seized the opportunity to participate in the new political process, and Abdul Aziz al-Hakim built up a relationship with George W. Bush (Cordesman and Khazai, 2014a, 156).[18] Al-Hakim was briefly appointed Head of the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC); he managed to balance Iranian and US interests, and distanced the party from Khomeini's doctrine. Abdul Aziz al-Hakim succeeded in forming and heading the powerful Iraqi Shia alliance (UIA). He supported energising foreign relations and received many foreign delegations. He died in August 2009; the young cleric Ammar al-Hakim, the son of Baqir, succeeded him. ISCI faced difficulties in regaining its place and strength, and fragmentation emerged between the moderate young leader and conservative senior members.

The ISCI has officials in the government who have influenced policies. For example, Adel Abdul al-Mahdi former First VP and former Minister of Finance and Oil, enjoyed excellent relations with the Kurds, particularly with the Talabanis. Despite Iran's close ties with and influence on the ISCI, Ammar al-Hakim has had a somewhat strained relationship with Iran, partially due to his initial rejection of al-Maliki's second-term selection in 2010 (Eisenstadt, Knights, and Ali, 2011). However, the party views Iran as a strategic ally for Iraq. In 2010, the UIA electoral manifesto – which was a leading party in the ISCI, alongside 16 other parties – stated it would develop Iraqi relationships with both the Arab and Muslim world and international community on the principles of mutual interests and peaceful neighbours, would not interfere in domestic affairs and would respect international conventions. In addition, it stated it would support the Palestinians and not have an official relationship with Israel (Buratha News, 2014). In 2014, the ISCI manifesto on the party's foreign policy agenda promised it would: first, have good relations with the international community and respect for all international conventions, such as human rights conventions; second, cooperate with international organisations such as the UN; and third, engage in cultural and economic cooperation (Iraqi Parliament info, 2016).[19] The ISCI programme has no significant differences with the Da'wa Party programme, and both lack details about their position on foreign policy.

[18] He succeeded his brother Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim, the SCIRI Supreme Leader, who was killed on 29th August 2003 in Najaf.
[19] In 2014, the ISCI formed a citizen's alliance (*al-Muwatin*) of majority-Shia factions.

The ISCI's leader, Ammar al-Hakim has received considerable international attention and visits from foreign leaders and diplomats, officials and UN and EU delegations. These visits are mainly to discuss domestic politics and the ISCI's role in Iraq. Ammar al-Hakim is trying to turn a new page regarding regional powers, particularly in the Sunni states. He has visited Qatar, Kuwait and Turkey several times and met with their officials. He visited the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in 2010 where he met the now deceased King Abdullah Aziz, and Amman in 2015 where he met King Abdullah II. Allegedly, these visits were to improve bilateral relationships between the countries and to show the reconciled face of Iraqi Shias; but they had an internal dimension, too: to reconstruct the party's ties with regional powers and strengthen al-Hakim's domestic status politically as a Shia Islamist regional peacemaker. However, the senior members of ISCI disapprove of Ammar bringing the youth into the party's inner circle and his open and independent foreign relations vision (Al-Journal, 2017; Sattar, 2017). Al-Hakim's actions officially represented his party and a segment of the Shia community, not the federal government of Iraq – although his party is part of the coalition government. His behaviour towards and speeches to foreign entities project his attempt to contribute to Iraqi foreign relations and to seek personal, partisan and Iraqi interests.

The Syrian Civil War, the Saudi-led war in Yemen and instability in Iraq have strained the development of both the ISCI's and Ammar al-Hakim's relationships with regional powers. For example, in May 2015, al-Hakim announced that the Saudi-led military intervention was not the right course of action in Yemen and would have dangerous consequences; in October 2015, he supported the intelligence cooperation between Baghdad, Russia, Iran and Assad's regime (Al-Sharqiya, 2015; Al-Rafidain, 2015). The party's foreign relations have shown solidarity with Shia issues and parties in the region. For example, in March 2016, the ISCI strongly denounced the Arab League's categorisation of the Lebanese Hezbollah as a terrorist organisation, and praised its heroic role in the region (al-Ahed News, 2016; Masrawy, 2016). The ISCI's position is similar to that of the Shia-led government, which has not given support but has rather expressed reservations and denounced the statement of the Arab League (Hashisho, 2016). However, Ammar al-Hakim acknowledged the importance of the US-led global coalition in fighting Daesh (Al-Rai, 2016). This contradicts the Badr Organization's rejection of US involvement in Iraq.

The ISCI shows some pragmatism in its foreign relations and policy views that do not significantly contradict PM al-Abadi's foreign relations trajectory. The ISCI, similarly to

other Iraqi political parties, has representation offices for public relations. For example, its representative in the UK is Ihsan al-Hakim. The ISCI's role in external relations can be seen outside governmental institutions' foreign relations; it relies on its political weight, the leader's [Ammar al-Hakim] status and the party's government officials. During the rise of Daesh, the ISCI acted in a similar fashion to the other Shia Islamic factions (excluding the ruling Da'wa Party). It responded to the Hawza's leader's call to engage with the masses of volunteers, and thus created several armed groups.[20] This can be portrayed as part of the militarisation of the Iraqi Shia factions. Ammar al-Hakim continues to be proactive in foreign relations, indicating the space the weak state of Iraq provides for powerful non-bureaucratic actors to have external ties and/or relations.

The next subsection discusses Muqtada al-Sadr, his movement al-Tayyar al-Sadri and its views and engagements about Iraqi foreign relations and foreign policy.

The Sadr Movement (al-Tayyar al-Sadri) and Muqtada al-Sadr

Muqtada al-Sadr, an Iraqi-born cleric, has drawn global attention. He enjoys popular support from a considerable segment of Shias, as he appears to be a defender of rights and services for poor Shia communities in neglected Shia areas (Tripp, 2007, 280). His radical attitude and populist rhetoric is blended with Iraqi nationalism and Shia Islamism (Luktiz, 2011, 66). Muqtada inherited his father Ayatollah Mohammad Sadiq al-Sadr's movement and the doctrine of Shia activism (Ehrenbery et al, 2010, 317).[21] Like his father, he believes in *al-Hawza al-Natiqa*, in which a cleric can be politically involved with and outspoken on politics and governance (Mansour and Clark, 2016). He has led the resurrection of the movement since 2003.[22]

Muqtada's actions post-2003 resulted in further fracturing the Shia House; instability threatened the nascent political process, particularly until his self-exile to Iran in 2008. However, upon his return his populist politics remained. Muqtada's loyalists followed his militant populism and resistance to the US occupation, as he called for fighting the US-led forces (Ehrenbery et al, 2010, 317). His move against the US-led occupation was mainly through his followers and Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM), which emerged in 2003. Some US officials in Baghdad have perceived him as a "mafia don" and a "dangerous fire brand" (Luktiz, 2011, 66). Newly-appointed Iraqi officials in Baghdad and the major Shia

[20] Pro-Hakim militias include Saraya Ansar al-Aqeeda, Liwa al-Muntathar and Saraya Ashura (Gulmohamad, 2015a and 2016b).
[21] Sadiq Al-Sadr Shia's activism included writing on the "usurpation of power" from the secular Baathist adversaries. He believed in revitalising the role of Ayatollah, and called on Shias to participate in political life (Ehrenbery, 2010, 317).
[22] Muqtada set up his own newspaper, also called *al-Hawza al-Natiqa.*

political factions shunned Muqtada, which resulted in his marginalisation from decision making for a period of time. However, Muqtada's movement entered electoral politics after 2005, as they feared being sidelined in the new politics and polity of Iraq. Muqtada proved his popularity when the Sadrist movement won 30 seats in December 2005.[23] Although Muqtada joined the UIA and took part in the coalition government, his radical and controversial statements on foreign policy were neither represented nor articulated by the Iraqi government's key agents in foreign relations.[24]

Historically and today, the relationship between Iran and Muqtada is complex, fluctuating and not as close as that of the Badr Organization, the ISCI or the Da'wa Party. Nevertheless, post-Saddam, Iran and Muqtada had common interests against the US. Between 2006 and 2007, Muqtada received some assistance from Iran. For example, JAM fighters went to Iran for training (Juneau, 2015, 129), and sometimes Muqtada took advice from the Iranians (Baram, 2011, 119; Al-Tamimi, 2014a). Al-Maliki's government and the US-led coalition forces clashed with Muqtada's militias; he was defeated in 2004 and again in 2008 (Younis, 2016). In the meantime, his militia fractured, and in 2008 he went to Qum in Iran for around three years for religious studies. The relationship between Muqtada and Iran is characterised by mutual distrust; *Ulama* (religious scholars) in Iran have become uneasy about the cult of personality surrounding the young cleric (Baram, 2011, 120). Al-Sadr's family remained in Iraq because Muqtada's father emphasised Iraqi nationalism, Arabism and tribalism as defining attributes for the Iraqi Shia.

Al-Sadr opposed the idea of Iranian clerics ruling Iraqi Shia and the Hawza in Najaf (Katzman, 2010; Krohley, 2014). Muqtada also posed a challenge to Iranian allies in Iraq for instance the Iraqi Shia, ISCI and the Da'wa Party, and he largely disbanded JAM – which Iran played a key role in fracturing – in 2008. Iranian interference resulted in the establishment of multiple splinter groups, such as Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) in 2006. Many of Muqtada's destabilising actions were not under the control of Iran, and rather disrupted Iran's agendas and interests in Iraq.

[23] The Sadrist movement was part of the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA). In 2009, it ran in the election as Independent Free Movement in provincial balloting, winning 43 seats and securing 6.1% of the vote.
[24] Muqtada's recent controversial statements include threatening the US troops' presence in the US-led anti-Daesh military campaign in 2014 and 2016 (Al-Sumaria, 2014; al-Arabiya, 2016)

In 2014, the Sadrist had its own bloc (the Ahrar Alliance, the Elites Gathering and the National Partnership Gathering) that won 34 seats in the ICR.[25] In al-Abadi's cabinet, the Ahrar bloc temporarily obtained the position of Deputy PM, and Baha al-Araji was appointed. The most influential movement in the Sadrists is Ahrar, and all the parties and their key figures adhere to Muqtada's instructions in domestic and foreign affairs issues. The foreign policy position in al-Ahrar's 2014 electoral programme differed from that of ISCI and Da'wa. Although it included some of the shared principles of the other programmes, it also stated that Iraq should reject and confront superpowers' hegemony and the country's occupation by foreign states (including the US), demonstrating its firm position towards the US.[26]

Muqtada has transformed from someone who vehemently rejects the entire political system, to a sceptical participant therein, to someone who wants to change it. Muqtada has attempted to defy decision makers on issues concerning both domestic and foreign policy. Although his movement had ministerial portfolios outside of foreign affairs in the cabinets of 2006, 2010 and 2014, he tried to influence foreign policy via his popular movement and masses of supporters. For example, Muqtada fiercely rejected the strategic agreement with the US and used his weekly Friday sermons to mobilise thousands onto the streets against the agreement (Cordesman, Ramos, and Burke, 2008). He objected to the modified SOFA, and demanded the withdrawal of US troops before the end of 2011. Muqtada can be considered as a tactless interventionist in state, politics and foreign affairs. The few years he spent in Iran, as well as his announcement of withdrawal from politics in February 2014 (which only lasted a few months), have shown him to be a highly unpredictable figure in Iraqi affairs.[27]

Muqtada has a rigid, centralised vision for Iraq. He is against a federal or decentralised Iraq, and has rejected the new Iraqi constitution (Marr, 2007; Al-Ali, 2014, 100). He has staunchly and consistently expressed his stance against US involvement in Iraq both during and after the occupation. One of his key statements after 2011 (when he came back from Qum) was about corrupt officials, the failed political system and external powers' (regional and Western states') interference in Iraq. He called to fight or eject these powers from Iraq. Muqtada said: "We reject the presence of the US army in Iraq and we view it as an occupying force" (France 24, 2015). This stance contrasts with

[25] The Sadrist Movement won 39 seats in 2010 as part of the National Iraqi Alliance (a majority Shia faction coalition, which does not include the Da'wa ruling party).
[26] These principles were in numbers 22 and 23 of the programme, according to Ahrar's candidate Mohammad al-Lami in 2014.
[27] He returned to politics and remobilised his militia, relabelled "Peace Brigades".

Iraq's official foreign policy towards the US. Muqtada claims that many (if not all) Iraqi elites and political factions are, or will become, clients of the US and/or regional powers.

On Syria, however, his views waver: he initially claimed to have sympathy for the Syrian rebels, but later argued they were contributing to the destruction of Syria. For a period of time he favoured maintaining the Assad regime, as he claimed Assad opposes the US and Israel (Al-Arab, 2011; France 24, 2015). However, he later asked Assad to resign and relinquish power (The New Arab, 2017). This position could be partially attributed to Muqtada's rival pro-Iranian factions in Iraq becoming increasingly powerful. And while some Sadrists joined the Shia jihad in Syria – including individuals from his rebranded militia (Peace Brigades), alongside Iraqi pro-Iran Shia militias and the Syrian regime – Muqtada did not fully support the campaign to rally Shia fighters to join the civil war in Syria (Smyth, 2015). Muqtada also deprecates the Saudi-led war in Yemen: "We cannot accept the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen on any terms" (France 24, 2015). His written declaration not only states he is outraged by the KSA's execution of Shia cleric Nimr al-Nimr but also claims the KSA's actions were backed by the US, Israel and the UK (Sadr, 2016). Muqtada's stance is more or less compatible with the Shia-led government's official statements towards the war in Yemen and Bahrain. However, his positions contradict Iraq's bilateral relationship with the US and the West in general, as he is fiercely anti-Western.

The next subsection discusses the main religious Shia figure's influence on Iraqi foreign relations and foreign policy.

Grand Ayatollah al-Sayyid al-Husseini Ali al-Sistani

Grand Ayatollah al-Sayyid al-Husseini Ali al-Sistani is the highest religious authority for the Shiite in Iraq and some Shia population around the world. He holds substantial political power in Iraq among the Shia community and in the Shia-led government – without holding any official governmental position. Al-Sistani remained in Iraq during Saddam's rule and maintained a low profile (Cordesman and Ramos, 2008). In the wake of Saddam's fall, al-Sistani did not call his followers to fight the US-led occupied forces, and rather embraced the democratic process. However, he has condemned the US occupation in Iraq and blamed the US for its tragedies (Sistani, 2006; Cordesman and Ramos, 2008; Riggs, 2012, 308). The Shias call al-Sistani's approach *al-Hawza al-Samita* or al-Sakita ("Silent Hawza or seminary"), he follows what is known as the "quietist school" (which calls for non-interference in governance) and the role of the *marjia e-*

taqleed ("source of emulation"), and has increasingly become engaged in political affairs (Rahimi, 2007). According to Sayad Jawad al-Khoei, in Shia theological and political philosophy al-Sistani "supports the *Wilayat al-Insan w Shahadat al-Anbiya*, which grants responsibilities to human beings for an individual's actions" (American University of Iraq – Sulaimani, 2016). Haider al-Saa'id argues that al-Sistani has adopted the latter as well as the *Wilayat al-Ummah.* These doctrines result in civilian governance with religious guidance, which has been established since 2003 in Iraq (Al-Jazeera Arabic, 2016). These doctrines are compatible with each other but contradict the Iranian model (Khomeini's doctrine).

Besides other *marjias* in Iraq and beyond, al-Sistani is considered the head of all main Shiite clerics in the Shiite orthodox establishment, known as *Hawza al-Ilmiya wa al-Madrasa al-Taqlidia* in Najaf. The most prominent of these are Ayatollah Mohammad Saeed al-Hakim, Ayatollah Sheikh Mohammad Ishaq al-Fayyad and Ayatollah Sheikh Bashir al-Najafi (*Ayad Jamal al-Din*, 2015; Rosen, 2006, 24; Luktiz, 2011, 71). These clerics do not adhere to Khomeini's model *Wilayat el-Faqih* ("the rule of the jurisconsult", or "clerical rule"); rather, the senior Iraqi-based clerics expect to be consulted and to provide advice to politicians, which can be understood by a phrase al-Sistani used to justify their involvement in politics: *Irshad wa tawjeeh* ("guidance and direction") (Norton, 2011; Gvosdev, 2016, 254).

Post-2003, many have considered al-Sistani to be one of the major pillars in Iraq's state-building project. Post-Saddam, al-Sistani shifted his role in politics from engagement to temporary reservation (he distanced himself from day-to-day political matters).[28] Iraqis and outsiders alike see him as a peacemaker, mediator and stabiliser of the various Iraqi factions. In 2013, Turkey's PM Davutoglu called him "safety valve" of Iraq and a "global man of peace" (Cordesman and Khaszai, 2014a, 149). Although al-Sistani holds no government powers, he influenced the new Iraqi officials – and, gradually, US foreign policy – in favour of Iraq.[29] This is despite the US's initial underestimation of his leverage over Iraqis and the political process.

Al-Sistani's statements and responses were heard not only by his followers in the Shia Islamic world – including Lebanon and Shias in Arab Gulf States – but also globally.

[28] Visser (2006) divided al-Sistani's engagement in politics into three phases, such as from quietism to activist modus.
[29] Besides the disagreement, the US administration followed al-Sistani's general map for the future of Iraq. This indicated good indirect cooperation between the US and Najaf seminary post-2003 (Washington Institute, 2017).

Under the occupation, al-Sistani put pressure[30] on the US, the Head of the CPA (Paul Bremer), the IGC and the UN presence in Iraq regarding drafting the constitution, national elections and accelerating the process of transferring power and sovereignty to elected Iraqis (Bobrow, 2008, 24, 25 and 29). The end result was that al-Sistani proved his impact on the foundation of Iraqi state building. His credibility and ability to mobilise the Shia masses demonstrated his influence on both Iraqis and external powers, particularly the US. Al-Sistani's interaction with international powers, organisations and occupiers (through intermediates) has indeed contributed significantly to the political process. In 2008, al-Sistani had a remarkable impact on the negotiation process of the SOFA between the US and the Iraqi government. He rejected the first draft of the pact (Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, 2009). However, after talks with PM al-Maliki, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim (ISCI) and Iraq National Security Advisor Muwafaq al-Rubaie, he laid out four conditions for accepting it (Cordesman and Ramos, 2008; Gvosdev, 2016, 260).[31] Sky (2015) a political advisor to the US in Iraq stated it was important to get the agreement through the ICR with enough support so that al-Sistani would not issue a fatwa against it (2015, 265). Therefore, al-Sistani has clearly influenced Iraq's bilateral relationship with the US.

Al-Sistani has engaged in some domestic issues with a regional dimension and vice versa. Regarding the Syrian Civil War, in May 2013 al-Sistani refused to issue a fatwa to support Iraqis going to Syria for Shiite jihad.[32] Clerics close to al-Sistani considered Shias travelling to fight in Syria as "disobedient" (Smyth, 2015) – but this did not restrain some Iraqi Shias from joining pro-Iran Iraqi Shia militias operating in Syria. There is competition between Sistani and the Iranian Supreme Leader (Khamenei) in Iraq, in respect to political and security areas. Al-Maliki was ousted (his removal backed by Sistani) and al-Abadi took power (allied with and supported by al-Sistani) – but he is tacitly challenged by Iraqi pro-Iran Shia militias. This and Iran's attempt to meddle in Najaf will be discussed in Chapter 7.

Al-Sistani tries to avoid the rivalries between Iran and other regional states, such as the KSA. In contrast to Khamenei, al-Sistani also tries to ease the tensions between Shia populations and their Sunni rulers. However, in 2011, in the wake of the tensions

[30], In the first year of occupation Al-Sistani put pressure on the CPA to form a transitional government by forcing a compromise on the constitutional process when calling for a popular vote on the constitutional draft (Luktiz, 2011, 72).
[31] Al-Sistani's conditions were safeguarding Iraq's interests, national sovereignty, national consensus, and for the SOFA to be approved by the ICR (Cordesman and Ramos, 2008).
[32] In contrast, an Iranian *marjia* in Qum authorised travelling to Syria to take part in Shiite jihad. The fatwa that permitted Shias to go to Syria and to allegedly defend Shiite shrines was put forward by Ayatollah Sayed Kazem al-Haeri (Mamouri, 2013; Arab News, 2013).

between Bahrain's Shia population and the Sunni monarchy, al-Sistani appealed to the Bahraini authorities not to use force against its people (al-Kofie News Channel, 2011).[33] The Bahraini authorities expelled al-Sistani's representative, Sheikh Hussein Najati, in April 2014 (Fars News Agency, 2014). Nevertheless, al-Sistani has not spoken out against the KSA, Arab Gulf States or Sunni Salafism. Al-Sistani encouraged the Shias in those states to engage in the political system and not to support any kind of revolutionary attitude. He also tries to play the role of mediator between the Shia populations and their rulers in Arab states (Washington Institute, 2017).

Al-Sistani seeks to play a conciliatory role on a regional level. For instance, he called on Baghdad to improve relations with the KSA, and backed the limited efforts that had been taking place. He condemned the execution of the Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr (Reuters, 2016).[34] Al-Sistani's letter was compatible with PM al-Abadi's statement, which condemned the KSA's action while managing not to cut diplomatic ties. With the rise of Daesh, al-Sistani issued a fatwa – *Wajab al-Jihad al-Kafai* – to defend Iraq, urging all able men to take arms and volunteer in the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). However, Iran has exploited the fatwa through pro-Iran Iraqi actors in Iraq, which led to the rise of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) and its pro-Iran factions (Gulmohamad, 2015a). Al-Sistani and his supporters, led by the PM al-Abadi, have created armed groups of al-Hashd al-Sistani within the PMF, but they are not loyal to Tehran. This illustrates the competition between pro-Sistani and pro-Iran militias in Iraq (Gulmohamad, 2016b).

Al-Sistani's statements and fatwas constitute turning points that influence domestic and foreign policy issues that many Iraqi Shias perceive as divine law. In foreign affairs with a domestic dimension, al-Sistani's statements also included support for al-Abadi's government for condemning Turkey's military deployment close to Mosul.[35] Al-Sistani rejected the US Congress's proposed Bill to directly arm the Kurds and Sunnis to fight Daesh (Sistani, 2015).[36] The Kurds and some Sunni political factions welcomed the US Bill proposal, and boycotted the ICR vote in which the ICR's Shia factions rejected the US proposal (Salih, 2015; Al-Hashimi, 2015).

[33] Al-Sistani has a considerable number of followers and funded a religious school in Muharraq via its representatives (Albinkhalil, 2013, 34).
[34] Al-Sistani addressed a letter to the population of Qatif in the KSA, saying: "We have received with much sorrow and regret the news of the martyrdom of a number of our brother believers in the region whose pure blood was shed in an unjust aggression" (Reuters, 2016; Sistani, 2016).
[35] Through a representative, al-Sistani said no country should "send its soldiers to the territory of another state under the pretext of supporting it in fighting terrorism without the conclusion of an agreement... between the governments of the two countries" (The National, 2015a).
[36] In April 2015, the House Armed Service Committee introduced a Bill calling for arms to be directly given to Kurdish Peshmerga and Sunni tribal forces (Salih, 2015). In December 2015, the House Committee on Foreign Affairs passed a bipartisan Bill that would authorise the US to directly arm the Kurdish forces against Daesh (The Hill, 2015).

Post-Saddam, al-Sistani has been the highest source of political legitimacy in the country, and he strongly asserts Iraq's identity despite being born in Mashhad, Iran (Khadim, 2012). Iraqi officials have drawn al-Sistani even further into Iraq's foreign affairs to provide them with validity. The President, Fuad Masum, and the Speaker of the ICR, Salem al-Jabouri, met al-Sistani before their visit to the KSA in November 2014 (Sarhan, 2014; Baghdad Akhbaria, 2014; Mamouri, 2014). Al-Sistani's statements reflect his increasing engagement in politics, and if al-Sistani's statements are in line with the Iraqi government's foreign policy they provide legitimacy for policy makers' attitudes.

Al-Sistani has developed a global network of offices and individual representations (*wakils*) that his mentor, Ayatollah al-Khoui, started. There are more than 600 representations in Iraq and around 1,000 around the world (Norton, 2011, 132; Washington Institute, 2017; Katzman, 2006). Besides al-Sistani's representations, offices, institutes pertaining to culture and religious affairs and those that provide humanitarian aid in Iraq, his establishment also has affiliations in the Middle East and beyond. In the US, his representative Hujjat Islam Sayyid Murtadha al-Kashmiri announced the founding of the Imam Mahdi Association of Marjaeya in April 2013, which is the liaison office of al-Sistani in North America (Imam, 2013). It is a religious organisation and a point of contact between the Shia Muslims and their spiritual religious leadership (Imam, 2013). In 1994, al-Sistani established the Imam Ali Foundation in London and Qum Institutes in Iran (Sistani, 2016; Washington Institute, 2017).[37] His representatives and the institutes are actively engaged in different levels of public relations, and project the *marjia* (a religious reference) image globally. These representations and institutes in Iraq and globally are advocating al-Sistani's stance and positions, both religiously and politically. In addition to al-Sistani's status and admiration in Iraq, it is impossible for any policy maker to ignore him. Al-Sistani has substantial influence on Iraq's politics and foreign affairs, but he can be reserved and refrains from interfering. Therefore, his engagement in politics is inconsistent as intervention depends on whether he deems it necessary to intercede.

The next subsection examines the emergence of the Shia factions.

[37] The branches are in places such as Lebanon and in Europe, e.g. Germany, Belgium, France, Denmark and Holland. The institutes are engaged in religious, educational and cultural activities, as well as collecting donations as part of their religious duties (*Khums*).

The rise of the Shia militias

The Shia militias have become increasingly prominent and influential political forces; they have external ties and try to interfere in and influence Baghdad's foreign policy making. The staunch pro-Iran the Badr Organization and AAH have political bodies, too, and yield popular support from Iraqi Shia communities – particularly since the rise of Daesh and the creation of the PMF (an umbrella for dozens of Shia militias and now part of the government's apparatus). In al-Abadi's government, Badr controls the Interior Ministry; the current and former ministers, Qasim Mohammad Jalal al-Araji and Mohamad al-Ghabban respectively, are from Badr. Badr has obtained substantial military hardware from Iraq and the Iranian regime, controls Diyala Governorate and leads the Shia jihad against Daesh. Badr and AAH, alongside dozens of pro-Iran Shia militias, are not only equipped and funded by the IRGC but also ideologically adhere to Khamenei and receive their instructions from Tehran (Gulmohamad, 2015a and 2016b).

Iraqi pro-Iran Shia political forces with powerful militias are hostile to the West, Turkey and the KSA. The Shia militias are not politically monolithic; other militias follow Iraqi-based religious figures, such as those affiliated to al-Sistani and al-Sadr. Not all the pro-Iran militias have an influence on Iraq's politics and foreign policy. Beyond their seats in the ICR (AAH has one seat and Badr 22 seats), they exert influence over the Iraqi government through their armed groups; al-Maliki; ministerial portfolio, and interferences in the government and public sector. The pro-Iran Shia militias have a defiant stance on some of the federal government's foreign policy issues, try to redirect foreign policy towards their and Iran's interests, and conduct their own de facto foreign relations. Their interference in foreign affairs has grown since 2014. Lukman Faily (2016) backs up the author's arguments that the pro-Iran Shia militias have undermined Iraq's foreign relations and official foreign policy:

> "There is no cohesiveness of stakeholders in Iraq towards unity of foreign policy objective. For example, Iraq is not a threat and someone [some Iraqi Shia militias] in Iraq who says that we should send troops [militias] to Syria and Yemen contradicts Iraq [formal position] … Iraq wants to have a good relationship with the US, someone [Iraqi Shia militias] in Iraq should not say we threaten the US soldiers." (Author's interview with Faily, 2016)

Numerous statements by pro-Iran Shia militias have threatened the KSA, Qatar and the Bahraini Sunni monarchies, partially for their suppression of the Shias. They have demanded that the Iraqi government severs their relationship with them, for example, after the execution of Nimr al-Nimr. AAH has, for example, threatened the KSA. The PMF spokesperson and the militias threatened to attack Turkish troops if they participated and did not withdraw from the vicinity of Mosul (Rudaw, 2016a; Reuters, 2015b). Although the federal government and the ICR have a firm stance towards Turkey, the pro-Iran Shia militias make radical statements in foreign affairs. They are working to distance Iraq from the US, the West and the Sunni Arab Gulf monarchies. Meanwhile, the pro-Iran militia leaders have expressed their support for close ties with Russia. AAH and Badr leaders, back Russian involvement because they believe the US-led coalition is not serious in its military campaign against Daesh (al-Ssafir, 2015; I news Arabia, 2015; Mustafa, 2015a).

Since the rise of Daesh, the PMF has also tried to infiltrate and influence foreign policy agencies. The Director of the Baghdad Center for Studies and Media in Cairo, Sulaiman, stated that the PMF influence Iraqi foreign policy as they interfere in the I-MOFA; they asked Minister al-Jaafari to include members of the PMF in his foreign delegation (Qanat al-Tasi'a, 2016). The spokesperson of the PMF, Ahamd al-Asadi, was a key presenter at an I-MOFA chaired by FM al-Jaafari in 2016. One of the main purposes of the conference was to indicate that all Iraqi diplomats should openly support the PMF (I-MOFA, 2016).

The pro-Iran militias seek to influence the Iraqi government by flaunting their power (armed groups) against al-Abadi's government if the latter acts against them or Iran. Shia militias under the PMF fiercely reject US engagement and many call for attacks on the US Forces (Sanchez, 2016). The pro-Iran militias' interference in foreign affairs has shown a different image of Iraq's foreign policy that is further tilted towards Iran.

To summarise, the Shia coalitions or blocs are fragile. They merge and split depending on fluctuating interests, such as obtaining governmental posts. These coalitions do not have a coherent foreign policy programme; they are predominantly formed between political parties from the same sect, mainly to attract voters in order to have a bigger share in the government. There are some differences between the factions in the coalition regarding their political agendas, both domestically and externally. Therefore, their foreign policy perspectives vary and even clash. The former UIA reluctantly came together as a Shia umbrella to keep a Shia PM and other issues vital for Shia survival.

These coalitions, though weak, have been addressed because they are the leading Shia political coalitions that represent Iraq's majority to the international community. And, although ethno-sectarian communal quotas (*Muhasasa al-Ta'ifiya) divide the* government, the state has been projected as having a Shia-leaning government in its foreign affairs. The next section discusses the major Sunni political factions and key figures in foreign affairs.

The Arab Sunni political factions and key figures in foreign policy

This section discusses Iraqi Sunni political parties and key leaders in foreign relations and foreign policy. It focuses on the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP), Iraqi National Accord (INA), and al-Nujaifi brothers.

Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP)

The IIP *(al-Hizb al-Islami al-Iraqi)* was founded in the 1960s, and is a major Iraqi Sunni Islamic political party that remerged post-2003. Its ideas, objectives, agendas and actions reflect the international Muslim Brotherhood's ideology (Sabir, 2012, 140). After the toppling of Saddam its former Secretary-General, Muhsin Abdul Hamid, was given a seat in the IGC. The IIP boycotted the January 2005 election and wanted to secure concessions from the IGC and Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) (Frankel, 2010). Despite this, the IIP led the *Jabahat al-Tawafuq* (Iraqi Accord Front; IAF), a coalition of Sunni political parties,[38] and participated in the December 2005 election,[39] in which it became the third largest bloc after the Kurdistan Alliance. The alliances between the Sunni political parties fractured, which has since become a frequent occurrence. Beyond their diverging views, they have had some common foreign policy perspectives; for example, viewing Iran as a threat and a destabilising force in Iraq.[40] Meanwhile, they have sought close ties with Turkey and the Arab Gulf States. Despite the defections of key figures from the IAF, they continued to hold positions in al-Maliki's first government, such as in the ministries of higher education and planning. One of the two former VPs was Tariq al-Hashimi, fugitive and former IIP leader. Iraqi IIP officials did

[38] *Jabahat al-Tawafuq* entered the December election in 2005, won 44 seats, gained positions in the government and became the largest Sunni parliamentary bloc.
[39] Led by the IIP, the IAF included the General Council for the People of Iraq and Iraqi National Dialogue Council. The IIP held held 26 of the IAF's 44 seats in the ICR (Dougherty and Ghareeb, 2013, 315) and gained positions in the government.
[40] Adnan al-Dulaimi from the IAF and Leader of Ahl al-Iraq, often called Iran to stop interfering and destabilizing Iraq (National Council of Resistance of Iran, 2007).

not have significant influence on the government; nor did the IIP agree with the Shia-led government's domestic and foreign policies – yet they still conducted external relations.

Both of the current key figures of the IIP – Iyad al-Sammarai (Secretary-General and former Speaker) and Salim al-Jubouri (Deputy Secretary-General, current Speaker and a moderate politician) have more or less balanced between domestic politics and foreign relations. During the US occupation, the IIP strongly denounced the US but participated in the political process, in which – similarly to other engaged political factions – it became a target for jihadists (Dougherty and Ghareeb, 2013, 315). Post-2003, despite relying on Iraqi Sunni grassroots, the IIP's popularity declined.

Al-Maliki clashed with and persecuted IIP key figures in the Iraqi government and escalated his anti-Sunni strategy after the US's withdrawal. This threw the political process in Iraq into peril. For instance, Al-Maliki accused VP al-Hashimi, and former Finance Minister Rafi Issawi IIP member of treason, issued arrest warrants and sentenced them in absentia. Al-Maliki's attitude sparked regional resentment and internal instability, and damaged Iraq's image. Al-Hashimi fled to Turkey, which refused to hand him to al-Maliki, and bilateral relations worsened. The IIP quarrelled with the Shia-led government on domestic and foreign affairs matters, and withdrew from the government in protest.

High-profile conferences were held by regional powers such as Qatar, which resulted in angry responses from Baghdad and the I-MOFA as the conferences voiced anti-Shia-led government statements and included fugitives (senior official and former IIP members such as al-Hashimi and al-Issawi) (Middle East Monitor, 2015).

The IIP's vision of foreign affairs starkly contradicts that of other major Shia factions, especially in their views on regional powers. In its November 2005 manifesto, the IIP advocated a relationship with the KSA and voiced concerns for increasing Iranian influence and interference in Iraq. In its manifesto, the IIP blamed the US entirely for Iraq's security deterioration and instability. Furthermore, allowing any foreign military bases to remain and normalising a relationship with Israel is not acceptable to the party. The IIP seeks a foreign policy in harmony with the doctrines of Sunni Islam, and takes into account its Arab and Islamic ties (Glenewinkel, 2005). After the US's withdrawal from Iraq, the IIP and its key figures changed their view towards the US, especially since al-Maliki's crackdown on Sunni officials. The same Iraqi officials who denounced the US before the withdrawal now urged the US to maintain its influence in Iraq, to counter

Shia Iran-backed militias and save Iraq from Daesh.[41] However, the IIP's view of the US prior to the withdrawal was short-sighted, and for domestic and political consumption. The IIP wanted a close relationship with the US; its leaders (such as al-Hashimi) visited Washington DC in December 2006 and met with George W. Bush (BBC News, 2006). Meanwhile, the US was interested in the IIP becoming part of the political process as a leading and relatively moderate Sunni power. The IIP's Committee for Foreign Relations researched and prepared a plan to enhance its relationship with the US in 2006. In the meantime, al-Hashimi and the IIP pursued lobbying in the US. In September 2006 the IIP hired an Iraqi American expert in the US to advise them on how to influence Washington DC policy makers (Radio Sawa, 2007; Buratha News, 2009a, Wikileaks, 2007).

The party's leaders have close relationships with Sunni-majority states, especially Turkey and the KSA, and have connections with Sudan (Luizard, 2007). Turkey has influenced the Iraqi political process through, for example, the AKP's close ties with and backing of the IIP. Davutoglu (former Turkish PM) played a role in mediating between Sunni parties to form the IAF, which consisted of the IIP, Ahl al-Iraq and the Iraqi National Dialogue Council (A. Stein, 2014, 23). Meanwhile, the AKP favoured the IIP's politics of advocating for a unified and centralised Iraq based on an Islamic identity; it was a major Sunni political bloc that engaged in electoral politics and a counterweight to the Kurds, and it balanced against the Shia political factions and Iran (A. Stein, 2014, 23). The IAF political manifesto for the 2010 elections referred to Iraqi foreign affairs only briefly: "We seek a balanced foreign policy and partnership regionally and internationally that serves international security" (Al-Tawafoq, 2010). The manifesto shows similarities between mainstream parties on theoretical principles, but differences regarding practicalities, regional alliances, and lack of details remain.

The Shia-led government and ruling Shia parties are concerned about the close ties between Turkey and Sunni-majority parties, as Baghdad and Ankara's relationship is unstable and fragile. Turkey, Qatar, the KSA and the United Arab Emirates were interested in strengthening Iraqi Sunnis through the IIP and other Arab Sunni parties and their leaders. The IIP and its leaders encouraged a close relationship between Arab Gulf States and Iraq. The current IIP Secretary-General, Ayad al-Samarrai, said: "They [the KSA] are strategically important for us. He [the King Salman] is leading the Arab and Islamic world … We believe they are playing a vital role in Iraq to overcome its

[41] Post-US withdrawal, Al-Hashimi, al-Issawi and Salim al-Jubouri (on different occasions and in different circumstances) urged for further US involvement in Iraq. Al-Hashimi said in 2010: "We want to be assured that the relationship with the US will continue" (Murphy, 2011; Kerr, 2014).

challenges" (Beth News, 2016). The Speaker of the ICR and Deputy Secretary of the IIP, al-Jubouri has preserved a good rapport with the KSA externally and also enjoys good domestic relations with al-Abadi and al-Sistani. The IIP tries to project its and the Arab Sunnis' distinctive interests and indicate that the Shia-led government does not fully serve these.

The next political party to be discussed is another Sunni leading actor: the INA.

Iraqi National Accord (INA)

The INA (*al-Itilaf al-Watani al-'Iraqi*) is an Iraqi nationalist and secular political party that was founded in 1990 and led by Ayad Allawi.[42] Since its inception, it has had solid ties with the West, Turkey and Sunni Arab states, especially the KSA. The INA had links with some intelligence agencies, mainly the CIA and MI6 (Prados, 2006, 600; Allawi, 2007, 52). It was composed of secularists, defectors from the military, intelligence, security forces and former Ba'athists. Post-2003, Allawi obtained a seat in the IGC. The latter disbanded and nominated Allawi as interim PM, with the backing of the US (Alkifaey, 2015, 469). [43] During Allawi's premiership, Iran and Iraq's bilateral governmental relationship experienced tension, particularly when the Iraqi Interior Minister Falah Hassan al-Naqib and Defence Minister Hazem Sha'alan under Allawi accused Iran of exporting terrorists (Rafat, 2004; Ayman, 2004). Several times during his premiership Allawi admitted there were problems with Iran (Mahdi, 2004), for example Allawi agreed with the KSA's accusations of Iranian interference by saying: "I think that what brother Saud al-Faisal, Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs, said [about Iran's interference] was not based on illusion" (Glenewinkel, 2004). As he distanced himself from Iran, he obtained political support from the US, the UK and the KSA. This period witnessed Allawi's open-door policy towards the Arab states. Allawi called to Iraqis to "Take a clear stance that projects Iraq's Arab and Islamic relationship" (Glenewinkel, 2004). (PM Allawi's role is discussed further in the next chapter).

Part of the INA Charter focuses on foreign policy, and points to four related issues: first, the adoption of a foreign policy based on non-aggression, dialogue and the respect of international law; second, the creation of an environment that enhances the relationship and cooperation between Arab and foreign countries; third, the development of friendly relations with Islamic countries that serve mutual interests; fourth, the formation of a

[42] A secular and Arab nationalist politician of Shia origin, a former Ba'athist.
[43] The UN respected the choice, but there was debate as to the extent to which the UN backed Allawi's appointment, as they announced they were not aware of his selection (BBC News Channel, 2004; Harding, 2004).

new Iraq that respects the UN Charter, seeks to comply with all its resolutions and cooperates with other members to keep security and peace in the world (Al-Bab, 2015). The principles of the INA Charter reflect the importance of respecting the international community and the significance of the Arab world to Iraq. In theory, its foreign policy programme – which is not unique to among major mainstream political parties – aims to help Iraq regain its place, both regionally and internationally. Indeed, Allawi and his political party, bloc and supporters have lobbied in Washington DC. In 2003 and 2004, an Iraqi doctor living in London paid USD $340,000 to Preston Gates Ellis (a lobbying firm) to promote and elevate Allawi's profile in Washington DC. In 2007, news emerged that Allawi had hired the GOP firm Barbour Griffith and Rogers to lobby on his behalf – and had paid hundreds of thousands of dollars for the privilege – as he, his party and the Sunnis were sidelined from power (ABC News, 2007). One of the firm's strategies was to promote Allawi as an alternative to al-Maliki in the US capital (CNN, 2007).

The weak state of Iraq paved the way for the party and its leader to forge external relationships, including financial aid and funds, from states such as the KSA (Daragahi, 2014). In 2009, Allawi formed the Iraqi National Movement (*al-Haraka al-Wataniya Al-Iraqiya*) known as *al-Iraqiya*, which includes mostly Sunni key figures and factions; [44] however, it is the major secular, moderate, non-sectarian political movement in Iraq. It was a powerful alliance, and included strong political personalities.[45] Regional Sunni-dominated states such as Turkey, KSA, Qatar and the UAE explicitly supported the formation of *al-Iraqiya* (A. Stein, 2014, 25). Allawi and other leaders of *al-Iraqiya* lobbied regionally by meeting with some of the regional state leaders to promote and support the political campaign. Allawi visited KSA and Turkey, where he met Saudi King Abdullah and Abdullah Gul respectively (Reuters, 2010; Kuwait News Agency, 2010). Allawi rejected the Shia-led government's accusations of *al-Iraqiya* being a client of regional Arab Sunni states and Turkey, as well as its foreign policy agenda of trying to destabilise Iraq. In contrast, *al-Iraqiya* said its primary objectives were to improve relationships regionally with Turkey and consolidate ties with the Arab world (Ma'd, 2009).

Al-Iraqiya won in the 2010 election, after which its leaders continued to lobby regional and international powers to influence other Iraqi powers to give it the opportunity to

[44] Prior to *Al-Iraqiya*, Allawi formed the Iraqi National List (INL) – a secular coalition of parties and tribal leaders – in December 2004. They won 25 seats and 8 percent of the votes in the December 2005 election. The INL dissolved in 2009.
[45] The most prominent figures in al-Iraqiya are: Ayad al-Allawi from the INA; Saleh al-Mutlaq (Sunni) from the Iraqi Front for National Dialogue; Tareq al-Hashemi (Sunni) from the Renewal List; Saad al-Janabi (Sunni) from the Republican Gathering ; Usama al-Nujaifi (Sunni) from the al-Hadbaa Party.

form the government. However, this failed. Salih al-Mutalaq, a leader in *al-Iraqiya,* said in an interview in 2010: "If *al-Iraqiya* had been given the chance to form the government, Iraq's external relations with countries around us would be different [better], Iranian influence would be limited and we would be part of the civilised world" (Al-Jazeera English, 2010). In this phase, the major Iraqi political elites and factions welcomed the US President and VP's involvement with the major political parties' elites in finalising the formation of the government. Meanwhile, Iran unified the fractured Shia factions to form the government, and al-Maliki, with the support of the Iranians, outmanoeuvred Allawi (Dawisha, 2012). Despite Allawi's appointment as Head of the new Council of Strategic Policies – a paper organisation created to give him a post with a vague mandate and powers – he was sidelined from decision making, and in 2011 he resigned from the body. Meanwhile, the INA and Allawi continue to have a close relationship with regional Sunni states and fiercely criticise Iran's interference. The *al-Iraqiya* bloc hired Sanitas, a Washington DC public affairs firm, to illustrate al-Maliki's increasingly authoritarian attitude (Mardini, 2012). This showed Allawi's eagerness to return to power and his party's strategic interests in receiving political support from Washington DC.

After *al-Iraqiya* split into several coalitions, Allawi formed the *al-Wataniya* bloc, which is far less popular or powerful than *al-Iraqiya* was. *Al-Wataniya* coalition's manifesto for the 2014 election campaign stated: "Iraq had conducted an illogical contradictory foreign policy by creating trouble with the regional states" (al-Watani, 2016). This statement is partly correct: Iraq did indeed have a contradictory foreign policy, but this was also because the elites, government and society were fragmented. Iraq had extremely weak institutions, and elites and partisan interests overshadowed the state. Chapter 9 of *al-Wataniya's* manifesto focused on foreign policy; it indicated that Iraq should play a more important role in the Arab League, UN and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, and that Iraq should be a stabilising and developing factor in the region, respecting other countries, nurturing mutual interests, fighting terrorism and not interfering (al-Watani, 2016).

Al-Wataniya's programme has shown its repeated objective to be closer with the Arab world, but included criticism of al-Maliki's foreign policy. In 2014, Allawi won 21 seats in the ICR – compared to 91 in 2010. This placed it in a poor position; nonetheless, Allawi became VP. In respect to foreign policy and regional calculations, its stance did not alter. After PM al-Abadi abolished VP positions, which were later restored by Iraq's

Supreme Court, Allawi continued to criticise the government's foreign policies, particularly Iraq's close ties with Iran. Allawi and his party remains a strong ally of the Arab states and Turkey. Allawi continually projects to international and regional powers that Iraqi Shia policy makers are sectarian and dysfunctional. This has contributed to international and regional states losing trust and respect for the federal government in Baghdad, particularly al-Maliki's. Therefore, Allawi as an opposing political force has added to the incoherence of Baghdad's foreign policy.

The al-Nujaifi brothers

The al-Nujaifi brothers have political forces, some local supporters (mainly Arab Sunnis) and regional allies. This makes them relevant actors among Sunni factions in Iraq and for regional states. Usama is one of the top Sunni politicians in the post-2003 era; he has played a role in Iraqi foreign affairs by representing the Sunni constituency, particularly in Ninewa Governorate, alongside his brother Atheel al-Nujaifi. Usama was a prominent figure and MP in the Iraqi National List (INL) and served as Minister of Industry in 2005.[46] Atheel leads Al-Hadba,[47] which was founded in 2009 and became part of the *al-Iraqiya* coalition in 2010, which Usama endorsed. Atheel has close ties with Turkey, and Turkish support was vital for him to become the governor of Ninewa in 2009 (Martin, 2015).

Usama's emboldened external relations can be traced to when he became the Speaker of the ICR at the end of 2010. In 2012, he formed Uniters for Reform Coalition, a Sunni electoral bloc known as *Muttahidum* that includes more than a dozen Sunni factions. Usama built bridges with the US; he met with the senior US officials in Baghdad. In 2011, he visited the US and met Hillary Clinton, and in 2014, he met President Obama and gave a speech at the Brookings Institute (Abdelamir, 2014). In US visits and those with the EU's former High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in Brussels in 2013 Usama voiced his discontent with the Shia-led government – particularly al-Maliki's authoritarian behaviour, the marginalisation of the Sunnis and the crackdown on demonstrations in Sunni areas (Al-Mada Press, 2013b). Usama's foreign affairs messages and statements often contradicted those of the Shia-led government. He appealed for external forces to rescue Iraq from the alleged grip of

[46] He was an MP representing INL from 2005–2010.
[47] A party popular among the Arabs in Ninewa, which adopts an Islamic and Arab nationalist identity and used to hold an anti-Kurdish sentiment for Ninewa.

tyranny (al-Maliki and Iran). He became VP in 2014, where he continued on the same trajectory.

Usama and Atheel lobbied domestically and internationally for a Sunni federal region – or several regions in western and north western Iraq, including Ninewa and maybe Anbar or another Sunni-majority governorate – that would have similar powers to the KRG.[48] Atheel lobbied in and received support from Ankara to build military forces to combat Daesh in Mosul, known as *Hashd al-Watani* or *Haras Nineveh*. Usama has also met with US officials to have concrete support on the ground, and tried to establish a lobby for Sunni Arabs in Washington DC (Mansour, 2016a). In 2016, Atheel said: "We started to open a representation office for the Arab Sunnis in Washington DC that has begun its work. It includes myself, Rafi al-Issawi, Khamis Khanchar" and some Sunni tribal figures (Elaph, 2016). Atheel hired the Chartwell lobbying and consultancy firm for lobbying in the US Congress, the Pentagon, the US Department of State and the National Security Council. The lobby aims to support al-Nujaifi's efforts to reclaim the land from Daesh, and backs Haras Nineveh (Sneed, 2014). This demonstrates al-Nujaifi and his allies' imperative external goal to have a presence in the US and to try to influence the US's decision in their favour.

According to leaked documents, Usama was accused of receiving more than five hundred million dollars from the KSA's government in June 2014 (Fars News Agency, 2015; Saleh, 2015). He denies this, and on multiple occasions has called for the KSA to have a greater role in Iraq. His *Muttahidum* bloc called for Iraq to enter a military coalition with the KSA (CNN Arabic, 2015). Usama openly referred to his close relationship with the KSA and Turkey, where he announced he could assemble support in the fight against Daesh (Tohme, 2016). Usama's and Atheel's external efforts and lobbying have had an outcome: their regional allies, led by Turkey, have provided their militia with material support, including military logistics, training and funding.

The al-Nujaifi brothers have influence on the ground and are able to forge ties with regional states. Their external efforts in lobbying for an autonomous Sunni region within the framework of the Iraqi state and gaining support for their forces are strategic and consistent – this contradicts the Shia-led government's foreign policy. Another result of their lobbying is that they have managed to unofficially represent a segment of the Arab

[48] Creating a Sunni region or regions is not a concept exclusive to al-Nujaifi. Some Sunni politicians call for an exclusively Sunni region. This crystallised the deteriorating relationship between al-Maliki and Sunnis (Haddad, 2014).

Sunni society, at least externally. Dhafer al-A'ni, a Sunni political leader and MP, who joined the *al-Iraqiya* coalition in 2009, and in 2013 joined the *Muttahidum* coalition and became its spokesperson said:

> "The Shia politicians have special [close] relationships with Iran, Syria and Russia … The Arab Sunnis – and I am one of them – have special relationships with Arab states, and the Kurds have special relationships with the international community … Therefore the US call or discuss Iraqi issues with three separated delegations from the Iraqi government who represent the Shias, Arab Sunnis and the Kurds." (Author interview with Dhafer al-A'ni, 2014).

Al-A'ni demonstrated the divergence of positions of all major Iraqi components and the stance of the (Sunni) coalition to which he belongs.

Conclusion

The new politics in Iraq's foreign policy post-2003 is not entirely unfamiliar. Tripp (2002) and Dawisha (2002) stressed problems in Iraqi foreign policy before 2003, and illustrated how the following factors shaped it: first, competing identities; second, the fragmented nature of Iraqi society and territory; third, the Iraqi state as a controversial project; fourth, the regional environment that undermines Iraq as a state; and finally, its people's religious, ethnic, tribal and political ties beyond its borders. This dissertation shows that all these factors have exerted even more influence on foreign policy making since 2003. For example, post-2003, multiple identities have been presented in foreign relations based on personal and sectoral interests driven by ethno-sectarian communal political parties and elites. Foreign policy makers have voiced different Iraqi political identities. The author, inspired by Tripp and Dawisha, believes one of the continuities in Iraqi foreign policy is that Iraqis have been unable to determine their own identity. For example, Dawisha described a large segment of Iraqi Arabs including Shia and Sunnis have different definitions of Iraqi identities whereas Iraqi Kurds have Kurdish or Kurdistani identity (2002, 135).

Examining Iraq's major political actors post-2003 shows that many of the current Iraqi actors existed before 2003 (for example, the Da'wa Party, ISCI, IIP and INA), many of

which enjoyed external ties with regional and international powers that have continued to shape Iraq's foreign policy to this day. Continuity can also be seen in the fragmentation of the state, divergence of identities and scale of external interference. The post-2003 phase, however, primarily demonstrates the incoherence of the government's foreign policy-making process and outcomes. Post-Saddam, various Iraqi actors have been emboldened and have filled the vacuum created by a very weak state. They have been able to conduct de facto external ties, project their own interests and identity and forge alliances beyond the country's borders and the state apparatus, while many of them are simultaneously part of the domestic political process. These developments represent a discontinuity, as various actors in the Iraqi government have different interests and foreign relations objectives and exercise these accordingly. Therefore, many Iraqi officials act as self-serving political entities rather than for the state of Iraq. Another discontinuity is evident in the intervention of the Shia religious establishment, led by al-Sistani, which has had a major influence on state building and foreign affairs. A key discontinuity is the ethnic–sectarian quota system, which has led elites and factions to compete for the ministerial portfolio for interest and benefit, and has weakened the overall performance of the country's bureaucratic bodies.

When examining Iraq's foreign policy holistically, there are elements of continuity as well as discontinuity compared to Saddam's era. In an interview in 2010, Tripp argued:

> "There are more … feuding parties in parliament and outside it and a more fragmented government, not one voice like in Saddam's regime … after 2006 … in Iraq the dominant tendencies for certain players are to reinforce the center and enforce the old ways to organise the power... of course it is still fragmented instead of one dictator at the top you may have an oligarchy grouping of several very powerful individuals who control their sector of Iraq." (Watson Institute, 2010).

Tripp indicated several continuous and discontinuous factors in Iraqi politics, and it could be argued that the aforementioned factors reflect on Iraq's new foreign policy. The powerful political elite, with its divergent views and different political backgrounds, seldom has the chance to cut deals regarding foreign policy, and its members often fall out. This can therefore be seen as a massive discontinuity, because before 2003 the internal process of making foreign policy decisions mainly came from Saddam Hussein and his entourage.

This chapter demonstrates that foreign relations are not limited to state organisations. Iraqi political elites and entities try to pursue their own interests, partly through linkages with foreign states or officials outside Baghdad's government structure and/or through their official posts. This chapter has presented the major Iraqi Shia and Sunni actors that have an influence – alongside some of those who are trying to play a role – in foreign affairs. Each political entity seeks their own relationships, possesses external ties and has distinctive interests and agendas. This has led to competition between different actors in foreign policy making, further supplementing Baghdad's incoherent foreign policy.

This chapter's key finding is that the influence of the Shia factions and figures on Iraq's foreign policy has been more tangible than that of the Arab Sunnis – and, to a certain extent, the Kurds. The majority of critical decision makers belong to a Shia-dominated party. There are clear differences between the Shia elites and factions in terms of how to view regional and international powers. Thus, not all the Shia elites and factions are pro-Iran, and both al-Sistani and Muqtada seek to limit Iranian leverage while maintaining a competitive relationship with Iran. Despite the significant divisions between the Iraqi Arab Sunnis, they have maintained affinities and/or alliances with Arab Gulf States and Turkey. This chapter has mentioned their political parties' manifestos regarding foreign policy, which are extremely brief and primitive – some are almost non-existent. The lack of a clear plan from all parties is therefore reflected in poor policy-making performance when politicians assume office.

Weak state institutions have led to non-state actors having their own external relationships, which has weakened Iraq's foreign policy. Many Iraqi officials do not adhere to the official Iraqi foreign policy. There is no consensus on Iraq's national interests, national security, sovereignty, or political identity. There is no agreement on a foreign policy between and within the coalitions and major parties and their leaders. This shows that elites interests and partisan politics overshadow Iraq's foreign policy. Iraqi politics have witnessed a plethora of coalitions and political parties, which have splintered and merged – but this did not fundamentally alter the parties' and their leaders' external ties, interests, and relationships. As such, each political force has pulled Iraq's foreign objectives in a different direction, while external forces have exploited these differences to advance their own interests.

There are contradictory visions of Iraq's foreign policy. The Arab Sunnis want a distant relationship with Iran, while the Shia (albeit not all of them) want close ties. Al-Sistani, who backs al-Abadi's government, and Muqtada al-Sadr are not in line with the powerful pro-Iran Iraqi Shia militias, who want a strategic relationship with Iran and strongly project the latter's interests in Iraq's foreign policy. However, led by al-Hakim, ISCI is closer to al-Sistani and al-Abadi – but at the same time seeks a closer relationship with Iran. Moreover, Iraqi pro-Iran figures and militias, as well as Muqtada and his factions, are anti-Western (particularly US), while Da'wa and the ISCI are not anti-US. This shows the division in the Shia camp. The leading Sunni actors – IIP, INA and their leaders, as well as the al-Nujaifi family – play a role in portraying a different picture and representation to those of other Shia leaders in the federal government. The contrast is strongest between the major Sunni and Shia elites and factions, in which Sunnis lobby regionally and internationally against the Shia-led government.

The next chapter discusses foreign policy institutions. These have been divided along personal and partisan interests characterised by political, ethnic and sectarian communal attributes, which further contribute to Iraq's splintered foreign policies.

Chapter 4

The federal government's core executive bodies in foreign policy making

Introduction

The post-2003 incoherence in the federal government's executive bodies contributed to Baghdad's foreign policy dilemma. This chapter identifies and examines the core executive, the elites (particularly the officials) that dominate them, their roles in foreign policy making since June 2004 when the sovereign Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) was established, of which Ayad Allawi was Prime Minister (PM). While some characteristics of Iraqi foreign policy began to appear during this time, Baghdad's foreign policy has been more or less on the same trajectory since the elected Interim Transitional Government (ITG) of al-Jaafari, who was from the Shia Islamic Da'wa Party.

This chapter maps and studies the PM; Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs (I-MOFA) and Foreign Minister (FM); the Iraqi Presidency, the Foreign Relations Committee (FRC) in the Iraqi Council of Representatives (ICR) and the Speaker of the ICR in foreign policy. The PM, FM, President and Speaker posts, as well as their deputies, are "sovereign posts" (*Al-Manasib al-Siyadiyyah*); in terms of parliamentary seats, these are worth considerably more than cabinet seats, as it is a coalition government (Osman, 2015, 151).[49]

One of this chapter's arguments is that the elites who are controlling a key government position their political parties and the post-2003 quota system (*al-Muhasasa*, or *al-Muhasasa al-Hizbiya wa al-taifiyya*) have contributed to a fracturing of Baghdad's foreign policy.[50] The quota system has resulted in Shias, Arab Sunnis and the Kurdish leaders and political parties in the ICR dominating particular posts.[51] Post-Saddam communal sharing of sovereign positions has become a common norm or principle; the PM is a Shia, the President a Kurd and the Speaker of the ICR an Arab Sunni. In other key posts, there is more possibility of rotation between ethno-sectarian groups.

[49] "Sovereign posts" (*Al-Manasib al-Siyadiyyah*) is a common term used in politics in the Arab world to identify the most critical positions in the state.
[50] The quota system is the ethno-sectarian distribution of powers and posts that the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) and the US introduced (Osman, 2015, 149).
[51] Osman demonstrates the percentage of shares of each Iraqi component in the government. For example, al-Maliki's first Government 2006–2010: Shia 50%; Arab Sunni 22.5%; Kurds 20%; Turkmen 2.5; Christian 5% (2015,149, 151, 153).

Scholars such as Danilovich (2014, 60) and Ishiyama (2012, 183) argue that, post-2003, Iraq opted for a parliamentarian system. This is not incorrect; the Iraqi system provides limited power to the presidential council, in which the President is usually symbolic and is elected by a two-thirds majority of the parliament. The powerful PM heads the Council of Ministers. The President selects the PM and then requires parliament's approval. The PM's authority to dismiss ministers also requires parliament's approval. This shows the importance of the parliament. Iraq is a multiparty, representative system. The proportional representative (PR) of the electoral system and the parties that form a majority coalition in the parliament – with the principles of the quota system and political consensus or accord (*al-Tawafuq al-Siyasi*) – shape the core executive bodies.[52] Iraq is a shared rule that has a consociational flavour.[53] The federal executive is a hybrid or mixed presidential–parliamentary executive, in which the Council of Ministers (led by the PM) holds most of the executive powers (McGarry and O'Leary, 2007, 692; Ahmad and Sabi', 2010, 41).

The governmental portfolios that represent the ethno-sectarian shares of the posts demonstrate the federal government's failure to develop an effective and coherent foreign policy. Salih, Iraq's Former Deputy PM, said: "In Iraq we have three main foreign policies. We have a Shia policy or policies, a Sunni policy or policies, and a Kurdish policy or policies and this is one level" (author's interview with Salih, 2014). Within each ethnic-religious political group there is more than one foreign policy vision, often representing personal or political differences. One of this chapter's key findings is that Baghdad's incoherent foreign policy is the result of a temporary and fragile compromise between its core executive bodies and the political elite that controls them. Another finding is that despite the incoherence in the federal government, the PM has the ultimate power to direct the official federal government foreign policy.

NCR is perfectly suited for this chapter as the NCR theories posit that a government rather than an entire nation makes foreign policy (Rose 1998, 162). The elites and bureaucratic bodies scrutinized in this chapter match with the main NCR classification of elite's image and the domestic institutions as domestic intervening variables. The chapter's structure is compatible with the main variables framework work *processes*

[52] A version of PR was applied based on the Sainte-Leguë method: A mathematical formula utilized to count votes and ascertain representation. This system allows smaller parties to be represented in the parliament.
[53] Consociational is an idea and/ or a theory for governance designed to support political stability in deeply divided societies but only at the elite level (Bhandari, 2014, 191).

about the elites perception, decision making and policy implementation as the chapter analyses the officials' views and approaches, the bureaucratic bodies' structure and their coordination and performance, as well as their execution of policies. Schweller's NCR underbalancing assumptions about the divided elites and vulnerable government including its bureaucratic bodies and the lack of agreements between elites results in weak foreign policy responses match with the argument of this chapter.

This chapter's question is:

- What is the role, performance and contribution of the various core executive bodies in making foreign policy? Where there are multiple executives, which, if any, enjoy superiority? Are they coordinating?

This subsidiary question is a key part of addressing the main research question "How is foreign policy made in Iraq" because it illustrates the key bureaucratic and core executive actors' role and contribution to the making of Iraqi foreign policies. The chapter consists of four main sections, which are introduced by mapping the core executives in foreign policy: first, the role of the PM in foreign policy; second, the FM and the I-MOFA; third, the role of the President; and fourth, the roles of the Speaker, the Iraqi Council of Representatives (ICR) and the Foreign Relations Committee (FRC) in the ICR.

Mapping the core executives in foreign policy

The Undersecretary of the I-MOFA, Hammoud (2015), identifies some Iraqi foreign policy sources: first, the Iraqi constitution; second, Council of Ministers' orders relating to foreign relations including the I-MOFA's proposals and laws proposed by executives and voted on by the ICR; and third, Iraq's international agreements that apply to the international community (Hammoud, 2015). Some of these sources are legislative, some are obligatory and some are guidelines for actors conducting foreign policy. However, not all Iraqi officials completely adhere to them.

Salih (2014) stated: "Since the elected government of PM al-Jaafari, the Prime Minister has been a very important player in deciding foreign policy but also the Foreign Ministry, and the President because he came from a different political background [Jalal Talabani, the Kurdish leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)], and the Speaker

of Parliament". He further elaborated: "As the government was not strong and was composed of different political rival entities we had a very confusing and unclear arrangement". Salih indicated to the US's previous significance in the state-building project, in which it engaged in reconstructing state institutions (including the I-MOFA) and assisting the PM. Salih also illustrated that: "The real foreign policy was a reflection of the political arrangement between mainly the Shia, Kurdish and Sunni political parties who are involved in the political process [*al-A'malia al-Syasiya*]" (author's interview with Salih, 2014).

Mohammad Sabir Ismail – Iraqi Ambassador to the United Nations Office at Geneva, who was interviewed by the author in 2015 – agreed with the author's analysis: after initially toppling Saddam, the US assisted in drawing up Iraqi foreign policy. The author believes that, after the first elected ITG in 2005, the US's influence on Iraqi politics and foreign affairs slowly began to decline and for the most part remained dormant. Salih and al-A'ni argue that there are three levels on which foreign relations and policy in Iraq are shaped: an ethnic and sectarian level, a governmental level and a rival political parties level. Both of these politicians agree that these levels overlap and include regional states' involvement (see Chapter 7).

Abbas al-Bayati (Shia and pro-Maliki) – an MP from the State of Law Coalition (SLC), who was a member of the Committee of Defence as well as the FRC – shed an important light on policy in 2014:

> "The making of Iraqi foreign policy is from the Council of Ministers. According to the Iraqi constitution, the Council of Ministers draws the general policy that includes internal and foreign … and the FM is representing, executing, implementing and portraying the foreign policy … The Foreign Minister comes to the Council of Ministers to announce and discuss his results and vision … The decision will be taken by the Council of Ministers … Therefore, the FM and Ministry of Foreign Affairs mirrors the Iraqi Council of Minister's foreign policy … The President is conducting foreign relations … the parliament [ICR] and the FRC have legislative work and they monitor the performance [of executive bodies]." (Author's interview with al-Bayati, 2014)

At that time, as an al-Maliki supporter he refrained from mentioning PM al-Abadi (al-Maliki's rival), who has a key role in directing foreign policy. In interviews, Baker Fatah (2015; Iraqi Ambassador to Sweden) and Ismail (2015) identified several bodies that contribute to and make foreign relations and foreign policy: the Council of Ministers led by the PM, the FM and the Iraqi President, particularly former President Jalal Talabani, the ICR and the FRC. Fatah (2015), Ismail (2015) and al-Bayati (2014) argue that the FM provides a proposal and discusses the policy with the Council of Ministers. The role of the National Security Advisory and Agency is complementary to the discussion as it influences the federal government's foreign policy imperatives – particularly security, where the advisory advises the PM.[54] The next section discusses the PM's role in making foreign policy.

The Prime Minister's role in foreign policy

The section first briefly discusses the PM's basis of power and the ancillary bodies at his disposal in foreign affairs. Thereafter, the section focuses on Ayad Allawi, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, Nouri al-Maliki and Haider al-Abadi.

In the post-2003 political system, the PM has the highest executive power in the federal government. According to Article 78 of the Iraqi constitution, the PM is responsible for general state policy and directs the Council of Ministers. A significant part of the foreign policy-making process goes through the Council of Ministers. The PM is the Commander-in-Chief of Iraq's Armed Forces, which also provides the PM with authority on domestic and foreign policy in security and defence. The international community looks to the PM to understand the federal government's official position and image.

The organisations available to help and support the PM are as follows. The Office of the PM contains the Media Office, Office of Information and Security and the Implementation and Follow-up Committee for National Reconciliation. This Committee is composed of several offices. For example, al-Abadi's office has ten offices (*Makatab*) within the Committee, each of which deals with different issues – such as the office of Coordination with International Organisations (Prime Minister's Office, 2015; PMO, 2015; Knights et al, 2011). Another is the General Secretariat for the Council of

[54] The now abolished post of Minister of State for Foreign Affairs was allocated to satisfy political factions as part of the quota system and was allocated to Arab Sunni factions. This post did not have any influence on foreign relations or policy.

Ministers, the main administrative duties of which are to assist the PM (including in foreign affairs) and to coordinate the PM with the Council of Ministers and the ministers' policies (The General Secretariat for the Council of Ministers, 2014).[55] The PM has the authority to appoint a director, usually one who is loyal to the PM. The PM has a cluster of advisors, who are supposed to be specialists on various issues related to governance, including foreign policy. Since 2003, the PM has had deputies appointed from different political parties as part of the quota system and consociationalism. This was until al-Abadi stripped these deputies and other positions in the government as part of the reform plan. The following subsection focuses on the role of Ayad Allawi – the PM of the IIG – in foreign affairs.

Ayad Allawi (June 2004–May 2005)

Ayad Allawi is a secular Iraqi nationalist of Shia origin and the co-founder of the INA. He was a member of the IGC, and was chosen by the US and voted for by the IGC to become the first PM of the IIG (CPA Regulation 10, 2004). Occupying powers, in consultation with the IGC, appointed the IIG (Otterman, 2004).[56] Some of Allawi's policies were reflected in the INA's political programme. He aimed to build security and defence apparatus by reintegrating – with limited success – some of the Iraqis dismissed by the US-led coalition. Allawi enjoyed close ties and was friendly with many of the Sunni community leaders and neighbouring countries, the Arab states, Turkey and the West. Allawi's policies were modest and reflected his political and background and external ties.

The IIG maintained some of the IGC's political configuration, which first introduced the ethno-sectarian distribution of portfolios and powers (Raphaeli, 2004). The cross-sectarian PM had relatively good relations with various Iraqi elites and factions and especially close ties with the Arab Sunnis. In spite of Bremer's formal blessing of Allawi's appointment, Symonds (2004) noted that UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, was more reluctant because the UN was sidelined from his appointment. US leverage was superior at this time. Allawi had, at least theoretically, both legislative and executive powers (Allawi, 2013).

[55] Founded in 2003, after the announcement of the formation of the IGC as the official representative of the Iraqi government, to take on the administrative reorganisation of Iraqi state through its departments.
[56] The IGC consisted of prominent individuals from Iraqi political factions. The CPA established it to facilitate the administration of Iraq and to present the voice of Iraqis to the CPA (Buchan, 2013, 404).

Allawi is a liberal figure and was active in presenting and giving interviews and speeches in good English on international platforms and media. Notably, on 23rd September 2004, Allawi said to the US Congress: "A message from my people to you: Thank-you, America". As PM, he was warmly welcomed by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and other Arab states (Al-Mada Paper, 2004). Allawi lacked Iran's support, which he consistently accused of interference. His previous career with the Ba'ath Party and close ties with the US security circles made him an unpopular figure in a segment of the increasingly religiously conservative Iraqi Shia community.

The Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), announced in March 2004 and effected in June 2004, had a temporary effect for the transitional period for approximately one year. Its laws were in effect for the IIG until a permanent constitution was confirmed (CPA, 2014). Article 25/A granted the ITG (the successive government, consisting of the National Assembly, the Presidency Council, the Council of Ministers – including the PM – and judicial authority, according to Article 24/A) exclusivity in formulating foreign policy and diplomatic representation; negotiating, signing and ratifying international treaties and agreements; and formulating foreign economic and trade policy and sovereign debt policies. The TAL guided the governmental bodies and set out the Iraqi constitution, which was voted for in a referendum in 2005. Article 25 of TAL granted the ITG the power over the country's foreign affairs but lacked clarity on the distribution of responsibility.

Allawi granted himself credit for supervising the revitalisation of Iraq's diplomatic and foreign relations; Allawi led the Sharm el-Sheikh international leaders conference (November 2004) on Iraq's future, which included leaders of the UN, Arab League and regional and international FMs. Within a month, Allawi gave a speech in the European Union headquarters regarding the stabilisation of Iraq (Allawi, 2013). This showed the first Iraqi PM's proactive behaviour, post-Saddam, on the international scene. He stated his intentions to integrate Iraq with the international community and the family of nations, to build state institutions (Council on Foreign Relations, 2004) including security apparatus and revive the economy.

Compared to Iraqi Shia Islamists, Allawi took a divergent stance on regional issues. While Allawi was very cautious about improving Iraq and Syria's bilateral relations, he bluntly stated the tensions between Iran and Iraq, which are between him and Tehran. In September 2004, Allawi said foreign fighters were coming from Iran and Syria. He

said, "There are tensions and problems between us [Iraqi government] and you [Iran]" (Council on Foreign Relations, 2004). He became known for his critical anti-Iranian rhetoric, which escalated after he left office and when Iran favoured al-Maliki in 2010. He turned down numerous invitations from Iran and in August 2004, rejected Iran's call for a regional summit for the stabilisation of southern Iraq (Berenson and Filkins, 2004). In the meantime, the Shiite leader, Iraqi VP Ibrahim al-Jaafari, visited Iran to mend the bilateral relationships (Iran Focus, 2004). This was the beginning of Baghdad's foreign policy incoherence between one of the VPs and the PM. Post-Saddam, the only period of time in which the Iraqi and Iranian governmental relationship was not at its best was during Allawi's government.

Allawi's government focused on emerging from isolation by building diplomatic relationships; setting up foreign affairs bodies, with the US-led coalition's assistance; opening up Iraq for foreign investment, approaching international and regional organisations and states and promoting security and military cooperation. The IIG was figuring out how to reach out to the world. These three areas (diplomacy, security and economy) are still present in Baghdad's foreign policy priorities, which are discussed in Chapter 6. The next subsection discusses former PM al-Jaafari's role in foreign policy.

Ibrahim al-Jaafari (April 2005–May 2006)

In January 2005, the first election resulted in the first post-2003 elected transitional government. The former Islamic Da'wa Party Spokesperson,[57] al-Jaafari, served as Iraq's first democratically elected PM for the ITG. Previously, in 2003, al-Jaafari had been the first President of the IGC; he then became the VP from 2004 to 2005, and was a leading member of the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA).

Sectarian violence rose during al-Jaafari's time as PM. Al-Jaafari had close ties with Tehran and welcomed their advice. He turned a blind eye to Iran's increasing financial, military and training assistance for the Shia militias (Yaphe, 2011, 45; Lukitz, 2011, 60; Sullivan, 2010). Washington and the Arab Gulf States were dissatisfied with al-Jaafari's appointment, as he had close ties with Iranian decision makers and he tolerated the anti-US led coalition Muqtada al-Sadr's militia, Jaish al-Mahdi (JAM). His deputies – Rosh

[57] The Spokesperson was the top position in the party until the re-election within the party in 2007, when the Secretary-General position replaced it. Al-Maliki has held the Secretary-General position since 2007 (Mahdi, 2007).

Shawis, from the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), and Ahmad Chalabi, a secular Shia favoured by the US have significantly different, moderate views.

There were contradictory visions for Iraq's future between Iraq's interim President Jalal Talabani (A Kurdish leader) and al-Jaafari. The latter gave lip service to federalism and autonomy, but advocated for a strong centralised regime (Eppel, 2011, 121). In al-Jaafari's article "My Vision for Iraq" for *The Washington Post* in March 2006, he focused on security, backing Muqtada al-Sadr's integration into the political system and economic rehabilitation (al-Jaafari, 2006). The US, some Shia factions and the Kurds were disgruntled by al-Jaafari's approach. Al-Jaafari was overwhelmed with instability and passing the new constitution, which was voted for by referendum in October 2005. This period marked the emergence of a disagreement between Iraqi elites and factions regarding the Iraqi constitution, which reflected the divergent views projected to the outside world.[58]

The new Iraqi constitution granted the PM domestic and foreign policy powers, such as in Article 78.[59] While al-Jaafari was drawn into domestic challenges, he pushed for a strategic relationship with Iran; in July 2005, he was the first Iraqi PM to visit since the fall of Saddam (Obaid, 2006),[60] and the era of close ties between Iraq and Iran began. Al-Jaafari had a tense relationship with the KSA, which he accused of not coordinating with Iraqi pilgrims for *Hajj* in the KSA. The Saudi government rebuffed al-Jaafari's accusations, which it described as: "A political ploy to improve his flagging political image in Iraq" (Saudi Embassy, 2006). This demonstrates the schism between the Shia-led government and Riyadh.

The Islamic Da'wa Party nominated al-Jaafari, but discussed neither the governance and administration programme nor how their relationship would evolve after he presumed the premiership. Husseini (2014) stated that the Da'wa Party viewed al-Jaafari to be taking a different direction from the party, and the link between them became very feeble. His efforts in foreign relations and diplomacy were compatible with the party's, but were translated by his personal expertise rather than the party's agenda. He was

[58] Sunni negotiating figures such as Salih al-Mutlaq urged the UN, EU and Arab League, the KSA to intervene and reject the constitution.
[59] Article 78: "the Prime Minister is the direct executive authority responsible for the general policy of the State and the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. He directs the Council of Ministers, presides over its meetings, and has the right to dismiss the Ministers, with the consent of the Council of Representatives". (Iraqi Constitution, 2005)
[60] Al-Jaafari was exiled in Iran for approximately a decade, and has close ties to the Iranian leadership.

sidelined in the party because of his poor relationship with the rest of the party leadership, and formed his own party in 2008.

Although the UIA won the December 2005 election, the Kurdish and Sunni political blocs lobbied for al-Jaafari's removal and the US no longer backed him (Yaphe, 2011a, 45; Lukitz, 2011, 60; Sullivan, 2010). [61] He stepped down in May 2006 in favour of Nouri al-Maliki. Although the US still played a role, this period witnessed the further gradual decline of US influence on Iraqi political configuration and policy making. Iranian influence continued to increase in Iraq's politics. The next subsection examines al-Maliki's role in foreign policy.

Nouri al-Maliki (May 2006–2010 and December 2010–September 2014)

Al-Maliki became PM in 2006, and was depicted as a compromise for al-Jaafari. Ali Khedery, a senior advisor to the US ambassadors, argued that he introduced al-Maliki to the Americans, who were looking for a leader to crush the Shia militias (namely JAM) and al-Qaeda and unify Iraq. The US Ambassador, Zalmay Khalilzad, contributed significantly to the negotiations leading to al-Maliki's appointment (Khedery, 2014). Initially, US officials did not disapprove of al-Maliki, and the new PM was warmly received when he addressed the US Congress in 2006 (C-span, 2006).

On 22 April 2006, the President, Jalal Talabani, designated al-Maliki to form the government. Al-Maliki was elected the leader (Secretary-General) of the Islamic Da'wa Party. He won three successive party elections as Secretary-General: in 2007, 2009 and 2013. Al-Maliki sought to appease the Da'wa Party more than al-Jaafari had. From 2006 on, al-Maliki's goal was dominating vital governmental bodies by appointing Da'wa members, cronies and loyalists.

In 2006, Sdqian[62] stated that al-Maliki accepted his idea to make his first visit as PM to the KSA (Sdqian, 2014), where he met King Abdullah and top officials. They discussed border security, trade and investment. The KSA leaders were cautiously optimistic, and waited for the Iraqi government to engage (KUNA, 2006; Wikileaks, 2006). However, al-Maliki's visit was fruitless; the relationship did not develop. Sdqian argues that the deterioration of Iraq's regional relationships with the Arab world was not al-Maliki's

[61] The US Ambassador to Iraq Khalilzad stated that Bush: "Doesn't want, doesn't support, doesn't accept al-Jaafari as the next PM" (Cordesman & Davies, 2008, 260).
[62] The Director of the Arabic Center for Iranian Studies in Tehran, and closely connected to al-Maliki.

fault; rather it was the turbulent regional dynamics and US occupation (Sdqian, 2014). Without dismissing the latter two aspects, al-Maliki's rigid and sectarian policies also contributed, as well as his reactionary and undiplomatic statements – especially towards the Arab Gulf States and Turkey. The latter countries also held irreconcilable perceptions regarding the new Iraq and al-Maliki (see Chapter 7).

Al-Maliki clearly favoured a strong, centralised state in Baghdad. He carefully balanced the need to preserve US support with concessions to national sentiments (Henry and Springborg, 2014, 152). Al-Maliki asserted the independence of the federal government's authority in formulating and conducting foreign relations and policy. He articulated this in 2007: "Iraqi foreign policy is designed and executed by the Iraqi federal government". He further said: "Our official foreign policy stance is having good relations with the neighbours and not intervening in their domestic affairs, and not allowing them [e.g. Turkey] to interfere in Iraq's internal affairs". This comment was a response to statements from President Masoud Barzani and Turkish authorities from which he was excluded (Now, 2007; al-Mustaqbal, 2007). Furthermore, in the same statement al-Maliki grudgingly underlined foreign policies that emanated from the KRG.

During al-Maliki's term, the Status of Force Agreement (SOFA) between Iraq and the US faced opposition from many Iraqi Shia and Sunni elites and factions. Despite his inclinations, Al-Maliki was unable to secure a small remnant of the US forces in Iraq.[63] At the end of 2007, al-Maliki asked the Security Council to extend the mandate for the last time. On 26th November 2007, al-Maliki and Bush signed a Declaration of Principles for a Long-Term Relationship of Cooperation and Friendship Between the Republic of Iraq and the United States of America (US Department of State Archive, 2007; Mason, 2012). Neither al-Maliki nor Allawi were ready to provide definite support (Jeffrey, 2014). Kurdish leaders and their MPs in Baghdad supported providing immunity for residual US troops. Although the Bush administration agreed to the total withdrawal of US troops from Iraq by the end of 2011, negotiations for a number of US troops to remain in Iraq failed in 2011. Al-Maliki played a part in obtaining the support of some Shia elites for an agreement with the US – the Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA)[64] – which was signed in November 2008 and covered political; diplomatic; security, economic and

[63]They were negotiating for the SOFA to replace the UN mandate that authorised foreign forces to remain, as it was set to expire at the end of 2008.
[64] The SFA was a result of the continuation of the Declaration of Principles.

cultural spheres (Mason, 2008, 17: Bruno, 2008; The White House, 2014). [65] As immunity was not granted for the residual forces and the entire force had to withdraw, in November 2008 the ICR voted in favour of the SFA pact 149-35, despite opposition from Muqtada al-Sadr's bloc.

In this period, al-Maliki – who appeared to be becoming a strong politician – preserved a balanced relationship with the US and Iran, despite the rise of critics (Alsis, et al 2011, 22). A few days before al-Maliki's visit to Iran, the Iraqi Defence Minister and his Iranian counterpart signed a Memorandum of Understanding to develop defence cooperation (Relief Web, 2008; Global policy Forum, 2008). Al-Maliki met President Ahmadinejad and the Supreme Leader, who he reassured that the US agreement would not harm (Iran Focus, 2008). Al-Maliki played an intermediary role in bringing the Americans and Iranians into direct talks in his office in Baghdad in 2007. These meetings focused on the security situation in Iraq, and aimed to create a common interest in supporting the new Iraq (Soffar, 2010, 226). Therefore, al-Maliki achieved the support of the US and Iran to cement his position, despite his differing agenda (Dodge, 2012, 183).

Al-Maliki's military campaign countered the growth of the Sunni jihadists and Al-Qaeda in Iraq in 2007 with the US-backed Awakening movement (*Sahwat*) of local Sunni tribesmen.[66] In addition to his military campaign against JAM, al-Maliki's position was strengthened domestically and abroad; his key support came from the US and Iran. Al-Maliki started to rely on Iranian support to counter JAM when Iran began to splinter Muqtada's militia (JAM) into many militias, such as Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) and Kataib Hezbollah (KH) (Mansour and Jabar, 2017). In his first term as PM, al-Maliki favoured Tehran's interests, as they were convergent to his. From the end of al-Maliki's first term, authoritarian tendencies began to appear; he and his loyalists sought to control the key pillars of the Iraqi state security and oil revenues (Rayburn, 2014, 55). Al-Maliki interfered on a granular level to cement his grip over the ISF and intelligence services. He established two extra-constitutional organisations, which spanned Iraq's military and security forces (Dodge 2012, 127, 128). His approach to foreign policy was similar to his approach to other areas in governance, concentration of power and the micromanagement from the PM's office of all internal and foreign policy making (Sirri,

[65] In November 2008 Iraqi FM, Hoshyar Zebari, and the US ambassador to Iraq, Ryan Crocker, signed two documents regarding the SOFA and SFA.
[66] This is known as the "surge" in, in which the US funded and backed Arab Sunni tribesmen who pushed AQI away from their territories (Herring and Rangwala , 2006,177).

Stansfield and Kinninmont, 2013, 12). Al-Maliki drew up a subjective foreign policy, and had the support of the Da'wa Party.

Al-Maliki's accumulation of power and sidelining of adversaries was a gradual strategy. He sought to project himself as a strong leader, able to formulate foreign policy. His first term witnessed a deliberate diversifying of Iraqi foreign relations to include France, Eastern Europe and Russia – for security and investment (France 24 Arabic, 2009). Al-Maliki preferred to have allies who would not place restrictions or conditions on buying weapons. Additionally, having more allies provide him with the space to outmanoeuvre the US if necessary.

Al-Maliki's State of Law Coalition (SLC) was second to Allawi (*al-Iraqiya*) in the 2010 election. Al-Maliki's controversial second term in 2010 was secured after eight months of bargaining between the major elites and factions. Iran engineered al-Maliki's reinstatement to power by persuading other elites and factions – particularly his rival, al-Sadr (Nussaibah, 2014). Al-Maliki became more indebted and akin to Iran, which also coincided with the US-led forces' withdrawal from Iraq. Al-Maliki is an Iraqi nationalist, not an Iranian puppet. His interests converge with Tehran's; both have a proximate worldview of Western conspiracy against the Muslim world.

The government meeting al-Maliki headed, on 22nd December 2010, discussed the priorities of his new government: developing foreign relations, and the security file (Al-Arab, 2010). Al-Maliki wanted to show his ability to draw up an independent and centralised foreign policy and foreign relations. However, fragmentation in the federal government foreign relations and foreign policy persisted, including between him and his deputies. Al-Maliki's agenda originated from drivers such as: strengthening his constituency's impact on domestic politics, and creating a new foreign policy that would help him in his political struggle internally (Bacik, 2012, 1). Al-Maliki's foreign policy tendencies and statements reflected his political campaign to attract wider segments of the Shia community. His close inner circle included Falah al-Fayad, who al-Maliki appointed as acting National Security Minister in June 2011; his advisor on foreign relations, Ahmad al-Sa'dawyi; and political advisor on domestic and foreign affairs, Sadiq al-Rukbi. Some Iraqi newspapers have portrayed the latter two as incompetent and unqualified (Al-Sumaria, 2008; Elaph, 2006). Al-Fayad played the major role in assisting al-Maliki on Syrian issues. Al-Maliki had more than a dozen advisors in different fields, many of whom were from the Da'wa Party. FM Zebari, from the KDP, had

less say in shaping al-Maliki's perspectives on foreign relations than his advisors or inner circle.

In the new Iraqi constitution, Article 78 confers the PM's legitimacy to draw and steer the policies of the state. There are no clear rules on how exactly the foreign policy should be carried out or what the norms of executive practice are. The constitution has been subject to various interpretations, although it lies under the power of the Federal Supreme Court**,** which is a victim of political manipulation. Al-Maliki was accused of subjecting many institutions to his domination, including the Iraqi Judiciary (Yaphe, 2012).

A key feature of al-Maliki's second term was internal conflict. In December 2011, Obama praised al-Maliki for leading the most inclusive government yet (The White House, 2011). On 13th December 2011, Iraq's Deputy PM, Saleh al-Mutlaq, told CNN he was "shocked" by Presidents Obama's remarks.[67] He said: "Washington is leaving Iraq with a dictator who [al-Maliki] has ignored a power-sharing agreement" (Beinart, 2016; Damon and Tawfeeq, 2011). The Iranians supported al-Maliki, notably when they convinced Jalal Talabani to reject demands for a vote of no confidence (Ali, 2014, 6; Pollack, 2014). However, Talabani and al-Maliki had an affable relationship. Al-Maliki's foreign policy perspective was increasingly coloured by the conservative Shia Islamic and sectarian vision. He displayed increasingly authoritarian tendencies and favoured Iran's interests regionally, such as removing Sinan al-Shabibi, Governor of Iraq's Central Bank, as Iran desired. Al-Shabibi and his deputy blocked the smuggling of hundreds of millions of dollars from Iraq into Iran. Al-Maliki's loyalist replaced al-Shabibi, to financially support Assad's regime (Latif, 2012). Al-Maliki expanded hegemony in all vital sectors, including finance.

Al-Maliki prosecuted his opponents – such as Iraqi VP, Tariq al-Hashimi (now based in Turkey) on terrorism charges. This case had regional and international repercussions, and Iraq's relationship with Turkey, Qatar and the KSA deteriorated as they received al-Hashimi as VP and refused to hand him over (Reuters, 2012; Alwasat News, 2012). This harmed Iraq's already damaged image, and further distanced al-Maliki from the aforementioned states. This illustrates al-Maliki's disenfranchised approach to the

[67] Al-Mutlaq is the leader of Iraqi National Dialogue Front (INDF), founded in 2005. The INDF joined larger coalitions, such as *Tawafuq* in 2005 and *al-Iraqiya* in 2010. Al-Mutlaq and his party adopted Iraqi-Arab identity and are against the devolution of powers.

Sunnis in the government and in Iraq, which had regional ramifications. While Iraq and the KSA had a poor relationship, al-Maliki's attitude worsened it (Stansfield, 2010).

Al-Maliki's deputies had different visions and statements relating to foreign policy. His deputy, Salih al-Mutlaq, presented a picture of Iraq's politics, security and economy to the outside world that completely differed to al-Maliki's. Al-Knani (2012) argued that al-Maliki's government faced challenges in formulating a united foreign policy with which all participating (in the government) political parties agreed. Al-Maliki's offensive on Sunni politicians escalated; former Deputy PM and Finance Minister, Rafie al-Issawi's house was raided. This can also be portrayed as al-Maliki's politicisation of security. The Minister of Communications, Mohamad Allawi (from the *Iraqiya* alliance) published a letter detailing al-Maliki's interference in the ministry and eventually resigned (Al-Ali, 2014, 152).

Al-Maliki appointed himself Acting Interior Minister and Defence Minister and Acting Minister of State for National Security in 2010, with the premise of remaining until he found suitable candidates. Al-Maliki had a different vision of foreign policy than Ayad Allawi; Masoud Barzani; Ahmad Chalabi, and other leaders. Al-Maliki usually accused the politicians who disagreed with him, including the aforementioned, of conspiring against Iraq and having special links and interests with external states.

Likewise, the chasm between al-Maliki and FM Zebari widened. Adel Murad, Iraq's former Ambassador to Romania and a Kurd, said: "I have suffered from the hatred of the Shia-led government to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where the structure of the ministry was not dominated by Shia party affiliated members" (author's interview with Murad, 2014). The PM's national security advisor, al-Fayad, confirmed the gap between the Shia-led government and the FM:

> "Political and social strife, a weak national identity and disunity still influence Iraq's representatives abroad. … With respect to the Foreign Minister, we have yet to craft a political policy that reflects the identity of the new Iraq… Another factor is the fact that the administration is preoccupied with domestic issues and internal security, which in itself is a serious structural flaw." (al-Kadhimi, 2013)

Al-Fayad described Iraq's foreign relations dilemma by showing the I-MOFA's shortcomings. The gap between the I-MOFA and al-Maliki will be discussed further in the next section.

The collision of interests within governmental bodies has been noticeable. During the upsurge of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS/Daesh), al-Maliki's Deputy PM, al-Mutlaq, said: "During my work in the office we [Arab Sunnis] were almost isolated from decision making especially in all security issues, military, interior, and intelligence … They were run by al-Maliki or his party … we call on the US to change the political process in Iraq" (CNN, 2015). Al-Mutlaq's statement shows the marginalisation of Sunni elites from decision making in the Iraqi government, and was critical of al-Maliki's government even on official visits to foreign states. Al-Maliki's supporters have accused al-Mutlaq of receiving funding from Turkey, KSA, Jordan and Syria (Daudey, 2006).

Despite these allegations, al-Mutlaq fiercely rejected Iran's role in Iraq, and welcomed pro-active engagement from Arab Gulf States led by the KSA in Iraq (al-Fayad, 2014). He denied the KSA interference in Iraq and accusations of receiving money from the KSA. Al-Mutlaq argues that Iran's decision makers created the Shia-led government in Baghdad and interfere in policy making (Al-Kadhimi, 2014). This is one of many significant contradictory foreign policy messages from a senior Iraqi official. Al-Mutlaq lobbied in Washington DC to try to influence US decision makers. He met senior US officials, including the President and House Foreign Affairs Committee, and addressed academic circles in the US (Lake, 2014). One of his efforts was an attempt to influence the US not to sell fighter jets to the Shia-led government; this involved hiring independent consultant Sam Patten in January 2014 for USD $20,000 per month and a USD $100,000 "win" bonus (Johnson, 2017, 401). Meanwhile, al-Maliki was lobbying to receive these weapons; he hired the Podesta Group lobbying firm, which has close relationships with the Democrats, to repair Iraq's damaged image in Washington DC and relationship with the Obama administration (Palmer, 2013; Ditz, 2014). This is a clear clash of foreign relations within the key circle of senior officials.

One of al-Maliki's alleged foreign policy trends – observed by Tareq Najem, a political advisor to al-Maliki, and Thamir Ghahban Chairman, of the Advisory Commission to the PM – is not interfering in other countries' domestic affairs. Al-Maliki has adhered to the principle of non-alignment of state policy in regional and international politics. Najem and Ghahban stated that al-Maliki was not involved in any regional axis (Sirri, Stansfield,

and Kinninmont, 2013, 13). Al-Maliki also stated he was against any political axes or geopolitical camps in formulating Iraq's foreign policy (Al-Bawaba, 2010). During his tenure, there was a two-faced foreign policy – an official and an unofficial policy – with the latter constituting the real foreign policy. Al-Maliki's regional policies are biased for example, superficially, he showed a relatively unbiased stance by announcing he was not taking sides regarding the Syrian Civil War. However, Iraq abstained on voting to suspend Syria's membership from the Arab League. In December 2011, al-Maliki sent his trusted ally al-Fayad to Syria to meet President Assad (Al-Jazeera, 2011; Sirri, Stansfield and Kinninmont, 2013, 14). Furthermore, al-Maliki turned a blind eye to Iran sending logistic support to Syria via Iraqi air space, and the Iraqi Shia militias that went to Syria to fight alongside Assad's army. While al-Maliki's government played a role in making a historic leap in Iraq's relationship with Iran, a further policy repercussion was the undermining of the Arab Gulf States' interests.

Al-Maliki has, in multiple speeches, accused the KSA and Qatar of interfering in and destabilizing Iraq. At the beginning of 2014, he said the aforementioned were waging war on Iraq. Al-Maliki's foreign policy caused a backlash from regional powers; the Saudi and Qatari media fiercely attacked his position towards Syria. The fragile and low level of rapport between Iraq and the Arab states was demonstrated in 2012 in the first Arab League summit in Iraq since 1990. Although the summit showed progress in Iraq's foreign relations, many Arab states (excluding Kuwait – the Emir Sheikh, Sabah al-Sabah, attended) deliberately sent low-level representatives to convey to al-Maliki's government their frustration with his policies. Qatar's former PM, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem al-Thani, said: "By sending only an ambassador (KSA also sent an ambassador) to the summit, Qatar was sending a message to Iraq" (Wicken, 2012b; al-Jazeera, 2012). Al-Maliki accused the KSA of destabilising Iraq: "Saudi Arabia supports terrorism in the region including in Iraq … We are at war with Saudi Arabia but not with armies." (Al-Manar, 2014) Furthermore he said: "Qatar and Saudi Arabia are agitating and supporting the sectarian violence in Iraq … They declared war against Iraq similarly to their war in Syria … Both countries are primarily responsible for Iraq's insecurity" (France 24 Arabic, 2014). These accusations notably increased the strain and isolated al-Maliki's foreign relations regionally. Tension was also evident in the relationship between Iraq and Turkey. This was partly caused by the KRG's and Turkey's rapprochement and Turkey's stand on the Syrian Civil War, and certainly by the sectarian depiction. The strained relationship moved to a personal level between Recep Tayyip Erdogan and al-Maliki. However, in 2013, former British Ambassador to Iraq,

Simon Collis, said: "Nouri al-Maliki told me that he seeks to tackle Iraq's domestic challenges by engaging with regional leaders and other leaders inside Iraq, and the international community" (Chatham House, 2013b). Despite al-Maliki's failed attempt and ignorance, he showed very little and undiplomatic engagement.

One of his foreign policy objectives was to revive a relationship with Iraq's old ally, Russia. When he visited Moscow in October 2012, their relationship focused on, but was not limited to, defence and security cooperation and buying heavy weaponry. Only a few months earlier, the Iraqi Defence Minister had visited Moscow and signed a military deal valued at USD 1 billion. The revival was partly due to the US's delay in the delivery of F16 jets to Iraq, Iranian encouragement and the Iraqi and Russian governments' similar stances on the Syrian conflict. Sunni politicians and religious figures raised concerns about the weaponry deals with Russia and Eastern Europe (Al-Hashimi, 2012; Usama, 2015; Al-Arabiya, 2015).

In 2013, al-Maliki argued that Iraq's independent foreign policy would not repeat Saddam's policy with its neighbours. He stated that Iraq was a sovereign partner of the US, but that they did not see eye to eye on the Middle East's challenging issues such as supporting the Syrian rebels and opposing Assad (al-Maliki, 2013). Although the language might appear diplomatic (because it was published in *The Washington Post*), the article shows that al-Maliki was gradually drifting away from the US (Gulmohamad, 2014b).

Any other PM would face similar challenges to finding consensus among elites and political factions and to unify Iraqis in foreign policy. However, al-Maliki's policies further divided the Iraqi state. He projected a narrow and rigid perspective in foreign relations and policy, relying on conspiracy theories to explain his views. He securitised Iraqi politics and foreign relations by portraying any adversaries as conspirators aiming to destroy Iraq, and making them an agent of external actors. He depicted the Sunni Arab world and Western states as seeking to weaken Iraq. Al-Maliki's policies contributed to Iraq's failure in approaching regional powers such as Turkey, Jordan and the Arab Gulf States. Although al-Maliki curbed insurgents and Shia militias, JAM, he presented himself as the leader of the Iraqi nationalist campaign, SLC, and slowly reversed his stance to support pro-Iran militias to serve his and Iran's interests. This was particularly the case at the end of his second term, when he moved away from the

Da'wa Party's tradition of not having, and opposing, armed militias.[68] Moreover, in 2014, al-Maliki became the godfather of the Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) (Gulmohamad, 2015a).

Finally, the continuous increase of Iraqi Sunnis' grievances against the Shia-led government, and al-Maliki's harsh responses to Sunni demonstrations across Iraq at the end of 2012, widened the gap between them. Consequently, the Sunni areas became a fertile ground for Daesh to grow and seize a third of Iraq's territory. This had global consequences and caused a failure in al-Maliki's domestic and foreign policy outcomes. The US signalled they would not provide support unless a new government was formed without al-Maliki as PM. Thus, the US played a role in forcing al-Maliki out of office, despite his first election victory in 2014 (Al-Qarawee, 2016, 1). Regional powers, namely Iran, approved of the changes in Baghdad. Despite this, post-2014, al-Maliki had limited alternatives; this led to him further consolidating his ties with Iran and its allied proxies, such as AAH and KH. Al-Maliki's role as VP is briefly covered later on, in the Presidency section. The next subsection analyses PM al-Abadi's role in foreign policy.

Haider al-Abadi (September 2014–present)

The current PM, al-Abadi, is from the Islamic Da'wa Party. He is a moderate and pragmatic politician among the Shia elite with a Western educational background; his PhD is from the University of Manchester, and he has worked in the UK. In August 2014, the new President, Fuad Masum named al-Abadi PM and requested that he form a new government. After ICR approval in September 2014, al-Abadi was voted into power as head of the fifth cabinet.

Following internal, regional and international pressure, al-Maliki was sidelined. In a continuation of external involvement, rival powers (the US and Iran) backed al-Abadi's appointment. Al-Abadi received al-Sistani's blessing; Muqtada al-Sadr, most Kurdish and Sunni political elites and parties, and regional and international powers welcomed him. The scale of internal and external support of this Iraqi PM was unprecedented in Iraq's history.

[68] He utilised the pro-Iranian armed militias as early as 2013 to suppress Sunni rebellion and the emergence of Daesh (Mansour and Jabar, 2017).

Sdqian (2014) argues: "Abadi's government's foreign relations challenges with its peripheral Arab and Islamic world is not very far from its domestic ones". Al-Abadi inherited Iraq's political, security, economic and foreign relations challenges, which al-Maliki had exacerbated. Sdqian (2014) further stated: "Unfortunately, the previous government [al-Maliki] did not project the real picture of Iraq to neighbouring states, especially Arab states" (Sdqian, 2014). Another internal obstacle has been the division within the Da'wa Party, in which two camps have formed: al-Abadi's (rational and moderate wing) and al-Maliki's (pro-Iranian and radical wing) (Gulmohamad, 2015b). This new rift has had internal and external ramifications; the fragmentation within the party, rise of the pro-Iranian Shia militias and division within the Shia house (al-Bayt al-Shi'i) have weakened al-Abadi's position on internal and foreign affairs. Nonetheless, compared to al-Maliki, al-Abadi represents a new page in Iraq's foreign relations and foreign policy; one composed of progressive and friendly engagement.

Al-Abadi's cabinet received global attention, as the Iraqi state was on the verge of complete collapse and Daesh threatened Baghdad. In al-Abadi's first speech as PM in September 2014, he said: "The Iraqi government will focus more on Iraq's foreign policy, particularly security" (Sky News Arabic, 2014). Given that Iraq lost a third of the country to Daesh, the security context of foreign policy is a logical priority for this government. Al-Abadi shows a new cordial face, at least diplomatically, in his foreign relations. He is open to the Arab states and has been viewed as close to Western countries, while also preserving close ties with Iran and Russia. Ford stated: "Abadi does not want to be in the middle of the United States and Iran's disputes … Iraqis need good relations with Iran and with the United States … the best outcome for them is to benefit from both" (Middle East Institute, 2015). Ford claimed that when al-Abadi was in Washington DC, al-Abadi said: "we [Iraqis] are the ultimate arbiters of our fate, and we [Iraqi government] have told the Iranians to back off a little bit" (Middle East Institute, 2015). Al-Abadi has benefited from Iran and the US, but has tacitly pushed back against Iranian domination. This is despite the fact that al-Abadi's first visit abroad after assuming office was to Tehran, as Iran assisted Iraq in defending against Daesh.

Al-Abadi's foreign policy strategy was to assemble support from a broad range of states to defeat Daesh, and to try to project this in coherent messages from Iraqi officials. As a consequence of long demonstrations and resentment al-Abadi stripped the PM's and President's deputies and other ministerial posts in August 2015. This was part of a reform plan to reduce the government expenses, nepotism, which indirectly reduced the number of contradictory voices in the government (Gulmohamad, 2016a). However, the

Iraqi Supreme Court revoked his abolition of the President's deputies in October 2016, because it was unconstitutional. Since Saddam's fall, deputy PMs have usually contradicted the PM's or President's statements in all cabinets. The pro-Iran and al-Maliki's allied Shia militias continue to contradict al-Abadi on foreign policy, despite not being foreign policy bodies.

The Iraqi government hosted the fourth conference of the Arab Ambassadors in April 2015, which the three key officials – the PM (al-Abadi), President (Ma'sum) and Speaker (al-Jabouri) – attended. In the conference, al-Abadi stated: "Foreign policy is the second stage on the war on terror" (Nasiria, 2015). Here, al-Abadi is articulating the importance of facing security challenges alongside the Arab states. PM al-Abadi and FM al-Jaafari participated in the six partners summit in Brussels on 3rd December 2014 at the invitation of former US Secretary of State, John Kerry; this reiterated support for Iraq in combating Daesh (US Department of State: Diplomacy in Action, 2014). Additionally, al-Abadi and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg reaffirmed their partnership, discussed security cooperation and requested defence capacity-building support from NATO (Wales Summit Declaration, 2014). A ministerial-level conference in London in January 2015 included al-Abadi, Kerry, Hammond (UK Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs) and other international leaders to provide more military support to Baghdad. These events aided the evolution of the international coalition's strategy to focus on their fight against Daesh and to back Iraq. Al-Abadi's first year witnessed the invigoration of al-Maliki's period of dormant foreign policy, which focused on reaching out to states and security.

Al-Abadi was better received by the Arab states than al-Maliki and al-Jaafari during their premierships. Ibrahim Bahar al-Uluom, former Minister of Oil, stated in 2014: "Abadi is skilful in his liaisons with Arab and regional states" (Al-Aalem, 2014). The Arab world, particularly the Gulf States, welcomed al-Abadi's appointment. The Saudi FM Prince Saud al-Faisal and King Salman invited the new PM to visit. In 2015, the Saudi Ambassador began to work in the embassy in Baghdad. However, the Syrian Civil War and Iraq's political and security instability made it difficult for al-Abadi to balance the region's rapprochement with Iraq.

Al-Abadi's participation in international conferences and diplomatic speeches in English has provided a positive image. On 30th September 2015, he addressed the UN regarding Iraq's security threats and the war on Daesh. He also addressed its economic condition

in the 2015 and 2016 World Economic Forums in Davos, and in 2015 and 2016 at the Munich Security Conferences. Al-Abadi's foreign policy reflects the dire necessity to broaden Iraq's military, intelligence and security allies and restore Iraq's economy. Al-Abadi is more open to potential partners; Iraq has increased cooperation with the US, Iran and Russia. Therefore, Baghdad built closer ties with contentious bedfellows. Iraq is partnered in the war against Daesh with the Russian- and Iranian-led alliance, as well as the US-led global coalition.

Iraq has increasingly been plunged into economic and financial meltdown. This is due to reliance on oil revenues, which have fallen; chronicled and systematic corruption; the expensive war on Daesh; internal displacement; an unproductive economical structure (which burdens the state with a massive number of public employees). Consequently, al-Abadi lobbied internationally for financial aid. In April 2015, he visited Washington DC to lobby for further US support; his top priority was obtaining military equipment and financial aid. Iraq received USD $200 million in humanitarian aid, and the first batch of US fighter jets were delivered in July 2015. After a few months, a visit to Moscow concentrated on military and security cooperation to revitalise and create new military contracts.

Like previous governments, al-Abadi faces difficulty in producing a unified foreign policy. Divisions remerged between senior officials and actors associated with the government. Iraqi VP Usama al-Nujaifi disagreed with al-Abadi's rapprochement with Russia: "Our political bloc is against any new coalition with Russia … as this worsens the situation in Iraq and Syria" (Al-Khaleej Online, 2016a). Al-Nujaifi's statement reflects his position against the establishment of the sharing intelligence cooperation centre in Baghdad, which includes Damascus, Moscow and Tehran. Indeed, many Arab Sunnis reject Russian involvement; this may have been influenced by Moscow backing Assad's regime and bombing the Syrian rebels. Comparatively, the VP al-Maliki and pro-Iranian Iraqi Shia militias backed and encouraged Russian, Iranian and even Lebanese Hezbollah's engagement in Iraq. Meanwhile, al-Abadi tried to downplay the importance of the intelligence centre in Baghdad: "The centre is very low level, it is not high level … there is no military cooperation whatsoever" (PBS News Hour, 2015). Al-Maliki and pro-Iranian Shia militias depict al-Abadi's general policies as a failure because they do not serve their interests. Al-Abadi wants to maintain support from the US-led coalition, and also does not want to lose the Iranian and Russian-led coalition's support.

The PMs in the five cabinets demonstrate that the PM has the leading role in making foreign policy. Ambassador Faily, who directly worked with the PMs, articulated how the four PMs view Iraq and the world:

> "Al-Maliki wanted to focus on projecting power in his foreign relations for instance "we are strong" … Al-Maliki did not have clarity regarding his views about the West and maybe he didn't trust the West and he saw they are not reliable … al-Abadi wants to present to the outside that we need you [outside world] more than anything else and he sees the need for the West … Ibrahim al-Jaafari sees the world from civilisation and ethical perspectives rather than real politics; I can't say that he is a pragmatist … Ayad Allawi wants to have a liberal country and to westernise Iraq." (Author's interview with Faily, 2016)

These interpretations of the four PMs are realistic spotlights on their personalities. The PMs' continuous foreign policy priority is maintaining a stable relationship with the US (with varying degrees of enthusiasm between successive PMs) and Iran (excluding Allawi). All three PMs from Islamic Shia parties have had an interest in strengthening the relationship with Iran (al-Abadi being the least enthusiastic in this). All PMs had a continuous period of instability and – excluding Allawi – distance from the Arab states and Turkey. This is despite their differing approaches to foreign policy, in which al-Abadi appeared to be diplomatic and receptive to external counterparts. The last three PMs had an uneasy relationship with regional powers, excluding Iran. Finally, a pattern of continuous disagreements on foreign policy between all the PMs and their government officials has resulted in an incoherent foreign policy. The next section explores the FMs and the I-MOFA.

The Foreign Minister (FM) and the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs (I-MOFA)

This section discusses the performance of the I-MOFA and FMs by focusing on Hoshyar Zebari's and Ibrahim al-Jaafari's policies and actions. It discusses the reconstruction efforts, progress, shortcomings and poor performance of the I-MOFA and FMs in implementing foreign policy. It examines the I-MOFA and the FMs from a legal and constitutional angle. The section will examine the contradictions between and within the I-MOFA and its diplomats and other governmental actors.

The CPA built the I-MOFA from scratch between April 2003 and June 2004, and the IGC between July 2003 and June 2004 as part of the process of building the new Iraqi state. The reconstruction took place in three stages. The first was to rebuild the bureaucratic institution; in 2005, the Foreign Service Institute, which is part of the I-MOFA, sent 385 Iraqis on 36 training courses around the world. The second stage was the FM meeting with diplomats based in Baghdad and abroad, as well as media outlets, to give reassurances that they were on the right track. Third, Iraq sought to regain its presence in international organisations and to represent Iraq in international fora (Soffar, 2010, 240). The I-MOFA's structure includes the FM; three to four undersecretaries (*Wakala al-Wuzara*), each focusing on a particular issue in foreign affairs and aiding the FM; ambassadors, 21 I-MOFA departments, and the I-MOFA's spokesperson. The I-MOFA is structured according to function and geographical basis into departments, which are supposed to function as two-way channels, passing information to higher echelons and directives to lower ones (Soffar, 2010, 222).

The I-MOFA's main priorities are to emerge from isolation and revive Iraq's diplomatic ties with the international community; to protect Iraq's security, promote stability and preserve unity; to contribute to building the economy; to continue upgrading its work and performance level, guided by the constitutional basis and legal controls; to support international multilateral bodies; and to free the country from the sanctions and reparation obligations to which it was subjected under Chapter Seven of the United Nations Charter (Republic of Iraq, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015; Maggiolini, 2013; author interview with Faily, 2016).

Demonstrating the achievements of the I-MOFA post-Saddam, Ismail said:

> "Despite the domestic political instability and lack of genuine institutionalisation in Iraq post-2003, in a decade Iraq was successfully able to repair a great number of diplomatic relations. Iraq has 89 missions abroad whereas before 2003 Iraq did not have professional diplomatic relations. It was more intelligence relations conducted by intelligence officers." (Author's interview with Ismail, 2014)

The I-MOFA restored diplomatic representations and normalised Iraq's relationship with other states and international organisations, and the federal government was able

to free itself from the UN sanctions and Chapter Seven in 2013. However, the I-MOFA partially failed in other areas: unifying foreign policy messages; corruption and *al-Muhasasa* throughout the I-MOFA, which even reached the embassies and their staff; lack of sufficient professional cadres, diplomats and coordination; failure of the I-MOFA members to adhere to, understand and have a common interpretation of the Iraqi constitution; foreign policy interests. Sinjari, Iraq's Ambassador to Romania stated:

> "When Iraq has a strong government then you will have strong embassies and diplomacy but Iraq is very weak … There is no teamwork in the Iraqi Foreign Ministry … Many times we [ambassadors] write to the centre [ministry] and don't get an answer … we don't get anything [informing about the formal policies] from the centre … there is very little correspondence … In 2015 in the Baghdad conference for all the Iraqi Ambassadors, everyone was complaining about the ministry in some way." (Author's interview with Sinjari, 2015)

Ambassador Murad revealed similar sentiments. Murad also mentioned ambassadors' contradictory statements regarding a political position in foreign affairs. For example, a number of diplomats in Arab Sunni states disagreed with Iraq's official foreign policy positions (author's interview with Murad, 2015). In the I-MOFA, Mohsen Rajab is a manager in the Consulate Directorate; during Saddam's era, he was a consul in Washington DC. In 2015, he said:

> "During Saddam's era, the FM's office on a regular basis used to send talking points [a written list of foreign policy guidelines] via fax … I assisted in translating these points … to all Iraqi embassies around the world in Arabic and English to inform and instruct ambassadors about Iraqi foreign relations and their policy stances on various issues. For example, Iraq's position on the US war in Afghanistan, the Palestinian struggle, and Hezbollah in Lebanon … Everyone was adhering to it." (Author's interview with Rajab, 2015)

Rajab said these procedures have now diminished in the I-MOFA, and argued that if this approach returns it will reduce the contrasting stances between diplomats on foreign policy issues (author's interview with Rajab, 2015). Ambassador Faily, said:

> "There are major administrative and management problems in how you manage embassies, how you define priorities for them and how you facilitate relevant things for them … For example, they send staff to embassies abroad to English speaking countries or when English is required and they do not speak English." (Author's interview with Faily, 2016)

Faily said: "These shortcomings negatively affected the influence of foreign relations where we don't have tools [effective embassies] that provide effective messaging" (author's interview with Faily, 2016). The diplomats' perspectives underline the political, administrative and tactical shortcomings of the I-MOFA and the FM. Therefore, rebuilding the institution post-2003 failed to bring coherence to the ministry and has contributed to incoherent and weak foreign policy messages.

Suleiman and Ahmed (2013) have researched shortcomings in the I-MOFA. They claim there is a significant lack of information and relevant textbooks regarding administering the I-MOFA on all levels including the Institute of Foreign Affairs, the scarcity of specialists in the I-MOFA and the organisation failing to store and follow up information. The quota system included not only high-level positions such as ministers but also embassies and consulates. Another setback has been the lack of a number of qualified diplomats and other officers, and political party and ethnic-religious loyalties that overshadow loyalty to the state. The author's diplomat interviewees accepted that ambassadors have different opinions and positions about how Iraq should conduct its foreign policy towards a particular state. There is a lack of a unified vision for foreign policy throughout the I-MOFA and across the ambassadors.

Officially, the conventions Iraq has signed govern its diplomatic interaction with the international community. Iraq participated in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations in 1961 at the United Nations Conference on Diplomatic Intercourse and Immunities, to which 65 states were party (Hardy, 1968, 129). Iraqi diplomatic relations were organised according to laws dating from 1960, and have been modified several times. Post-Saddam, foreign relations have relied on the new constitution and the Foreign Service Act (2008). Order 35 (2013), based on the decision of the ICR and the follow-up order, relies on Articles 61/3 and 73 of the constitution to issue law number 36 (2013) for the I-MOFA. This law is considered to be the I-MOFA's founding statute; it covers its establishment, aims, FM, organisational structure and general provisions. Article 1 in this law outlines the I-MOFA's duty to implement Iraq's foreign policy, and

specifies that the FM represents it in the conduct of foreign relations (I-MOFA's Law, 2013).

The constitution provided broad principles, which suffer from a lack of detail and guidelines over the purview of actors in foreign policy. Hussein, a researcher stated: "The Iraqi constitution suffers from shortages in demonstrating exactly who should conduct Iraqi foreign policy" (Al-Mustansiriyah University, 2016). Although Article 110 states that the federal government has the authority to draw up foreign policy and Article 78 gives responsibility to the PM to direct the general policies, the vagueness is in the lack of details, which are critical in a fragmented and hybrid executive state structure like Iraq. Former FM Zebari (2014) called for a review of the articles that have caused tension in the Iraqi constitution (Kurdsat, 2014). There appears to be a consensus between decision makers and academics regarding the deficiencies of the Iraqi constitution in relation to many issues, including foreign policy. The next subsection examines the actions of the former FM, Hoshyar Zebari.

Hoshyar Zebari (2003–2014)

Hoshyar Zebari is a Kurd and a senior member of the KDP. As Head of the KDP's International Relations Bureau from 1992 to 2003, he gained experience in public diplomacy. Under Zebari's supervision during the CPA and IGC, the I-MOFA achieved a number of goals, including restoration of diplomatic relations. Zebari stated: "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' most difficult task has been to develop an independent Iraqi foreign policy at a time when our country is under legal occupation" (quoted in Soffar, 2010, 195). Since the occupation ended challenges in foreign policy development have been ongoing.

Zebari emphasised the need to direct Iraq's foreign policy to promote Iraq's stability and integrity and rehabilitate its economy (Salem, 2013, 5). When reviewing Zebari's speeches and interviews between 2003 and 2014, it can be seen that his approach focuses on Iraq's sovereignty; foreign relations, security, domestic integrity and economy. One of Zebari's policies was to try to convey the domestic political process and state building to the outside world.

In the I-MOFA's Law 2013/36, Article 1 states: "The Foreign Ministry implements the foreign policy of the Republic of Iraq and is represented by its Foreign Minister or

whoever represents him" (I-MOFA's Law, 2013). Therefore, legally, officially and theoretically the I-MOFA and the FM do not *create* foreign policy; rather, they should *execute* it. However, the FM contributes to shaping foreign policy because of the lack of any agreed – or even existing – detailed foreign policy plan. Simply put, the FM is filling the political void with perspectives based on personal efforts, expertise and/or worldview shaped by their political background. Therefore, Zebari had a degree of freedom in conducting foreign relations and projecting the foreign policy. He tried to avoid significant clashes with the PM, President and the Speaker of the ICR in foreign policy statements. Many diplomats and ambassadors do not adhere to official foreign policy endorsed by the FM.

Zebari, who was the longest-serving minister in Iraq post-Saddam, pointed out successful achievements. First, Zebari emphasised the ending of the US occupation: "The key issue for us after 2003 was to regain our sovereignty, to become a normal country and to reach an amicable agreement with the Americans for the troops' withdrawal, I think our interests coincided to reach that and that was a major achievement" (quoted in Sirri, Stansfield and Kinninmont, 2013, 10). Zebari noted the successful SOFA agreement between Iraq and the US, which negotiated a fixed deadline for the US troops' withdrawal from Iraq: by the end of 2011. Second, Iraq's foreign relations with the international community were revived. Normalising broken diplomatic relations with many countries on a bilateral basis is a process that is still ongoing. Third, pulling Iraq from the UN's Charter Chapter VII was considered a victory for Iraq's foreign policy actors and freed Iraq from restrictions. However, Ismail said:

> "The Foreign Minister reflected Iraq's foreign policy and is the official who is responsible for the country. In that regard we see another minister or member of parliament seeking to articulate and drive Iraq's foreign policy … this shows the disunity, the vulnerability of the process of democratisation of the new political system in Iraq, and mirrors the internal tensions." (Author's interview with Ismail, 2014)

In al-Maliki's second government, disagreements between Zebari and al-Maliki and his supporters escalated because Zebari did not entirely represent PM al-Maliki's vision. A meeting between Zebari and the FRC in April 2011 resulted in clashing statements over the FM's approaches and policies. Sami al-A'skari, a member of the FRC and ruling Da'wa Party, argued that the FM is not properly coordinating with the FRC and tries to impose

the I-MOFA's will (Al-Sumaria, 2011). Al-A'skari further stated: "The performance of the I-MOFA is bad and we have problems with the individuals who are running it … the head of the government [PM] and the parliament refused to attend the opening of the diplomatic course and asked to modify the list of participants" (Al-Sumaria, 2012). Disagreements between lawmakers and executive bodies are common in democracies. The disputes are also an extension of internal political disputes between the KRG's President (Masoud Barzani), former PM al-Maliki and their elites.

PM Al-Maliki consolidated and centralised power in the government, which resulted in overshadowing Zebari. The PM's office made all of the vital decisions on Iraq's foreign policy. For example, in 2012, al-Maliki's office imposed restrictions on US visas (Dodge, 2012, 186; Schmidt and Schmitt 2012). In 2014, Murad said:

> "In 2006 I received a formal letter from al-Maliki's office about a number of Iraqi officials who were allegedly involved in corruption and demanding that I [the Ambassador] ask the Romanian authorities whether the Iraqi officials have bank accounts in Romania … We are not supposed to receive orders or letters directly from the Prime Minister's office and everything should be coordinated with the Foreign Ministry. Subsequently I found out that the Foreign Ministry refused to send us this letter. Then I knew that there are differences between the Foreign Ministry and PM al-Maliki." (Author's interview with Murad, 2014)

This illustrates the shortcomings in the mechanisms and reflects the internal discord between al-Maliki and Zebari. Faily said:

> "I used to work directly with the PM and FM because of the country [the US] I worked in … A lot of ambassadors think they are only related to the Foreign Ministry. We [ambassadors] in reality represent the state not the government if the government changes we do not change … the Foreign Affairs Ministry primarily is the direct boss and facilitator for you [ambassadors] to interpret the foreign policy." (Author's interview with Faily, 2016)

Although Faily's assertion shows that the Ambassador's priority is representing the state, they represent the government too. He recognises the lack of collaboration and

coordination between the PM, FM and the President regarding foreign affairs. In the same vein, in 2014, Ismail said:

> "There are different visions between Zebari and al-Maliki, mainly internally which occur in respect to administrating the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the mechanisms of running it. For example, when the former Foreign Minister Zebari with the former President Jalal Talabani were in the United Nations General Assembly, al-Maliki issued an order to retire a number ambassadors without consultation from FM Zebari. This should not have happened in this way." (Author's interview with Ismail, 2014)

The lack of coordination between, and ignorance of, the government bodies was mainly (but not only) a feature of the PM's office. Al-Maliki abused his position and the distribution of powers. He expanded his authority, imposed his will on the ministries and interfered in other ministries and officials – including the I-MOFA and FM, Zebari – without considering the implications.

Ismail (2014) stated there were differences between al-Maliki and Zebari regarding regional foreign policy perspectives, but no differences when dealing with the US or the UN (Ismail, 2014). These differences are expected; as political leaders, they adhere to different perspectives, emanating from their personal views and their parties'. This naturally leads to different outcomes. Hassan al-Hamdani, the former Head of the FRC and from Ayad Allawi's al-Wataniya bloc (2015), said to the author: "Hoshyar Zebari acted as an Iraqi not as a Kurd, this counted [credit] for him. For example, he led the successful Arab League summit [in Baghdad in 2012] while Erbil and Baghdad's relationship had deteriorated" (author's interview with al-Hamdani, 2015). To a great extent, al-Hamdani's statement is accurate. His perception is also influenced by the friendly relationship between Ayad Allawi's bloc and the KDP, in which Zebari is a key figure. Therefore, the government functions when the political factions and elite have amicable relationships and common interests.

Aggravation between the Iraqi officials, including Erbil and Baghdad, reflected tensions over Iraq's territories (disputed areas), politics, natural energy and security, as well as the KRG welcoming prominent Sunni tribal leaders and working with them. PM al-Maliki accused the Kurdish leaders of harbouring terrorists: "We will not be silent that Erbil has become a base of operation for Daesh, Baathist, Al-Qaeda, and terrorists … I call

those [Kurdish Leaders] who want partnership to stop this … They [Kurdish leaders] who harboured them [terrorists] will lose" (Afaq TV, 2014). Within hours, the KRG strongly condemned these baseless accusations, and the political parties reached a consensus that Kurdish ministers – including the FM – would boycott the Iraqi cabinet. Moreover, in July 2014, Zebari asked al-Maliki to apologise to the KRG (Al-Sumaria, 2014b).

The domestic turmoil between the KRG and Baghdad reflected on the FM and I-MOFA's performance and the fragile unity of the government. In July 2014, al-Maliki temporarily replaced Kurdistan Alliance members, FM Zebari and Trade Minister Khairalla Hassan Babiker, as the Kurdish ministers had boycotted the government. Hussain Shahristani – an independent Arab Shiite who joined the SLC – replaced Zebari. Immediately, the Kurdistan Alliance in the Iraqi government declared it would not take part in the cabinet meeting of al-Maliki's government, as they were protesting the accusations and reshuffle. Zebari publicly denounced the general failure of al-Maliki's policies that led to the rise of Daesh, and stated that this was evident during his work in the cabinet (Al-Bawaba, 2014; Quoted by Zand, 2014).

Minister Falah Mustafa, Head of the Department of Foreign Relations (DFR), said: "Had our ministers resigned from the government, or if we had withdrawn entirely from the government, it would be different, but we are still participating in the political process" (Rubin, 2014). This demonstrates how fragile the federal government is in the face of any political, security or economic difficulties, in which the FM has not been safe. Finally, the disputes between Zebari and al-Maliki have weakened the image of Iraqi foreign relations actors, and brought internal disputes into Iraqi foreign policy representations. The next subsection studies the role of the second FM, al-Jaafari, in foreign policy.

Ibrahim al-Jaafari (2014–present)

The current FM al-Jaafari and the former PM and VP took part in al-Abadi's cabinet in September 2014. Similarly to other cabinets, al-Jaafari's appointment was the result of compromise, bargaining and accord (*al-Tawafuq*). Al-Jaafari defected from Da'wa in 2008, and founded the National Reform Trend (Shia-based). He was the leader of the INA (a broad alliance of Shia political parties). Al-Jaafari has possessed a number of critical positions since 2003, and has a reputation of being a traditional Islamic Shia intellectual and politician with little pragmatism in foreign policy. As PM, he was

accused of sectarian policies and having close ties with Iran and the Sadrist militias. However, there have been indicators of a slight shift in his approach and policies, which PM al-Abadi's practicality may have influenced. Ismail said:

> "Al-Jaafari could have changed, people change … The new foreign policy of Iraq involves al-Jaafari and al-Abadi. Both officials coordinate and do not want to repeat the lack of cooperation in al-Maliki's government. … al-Jaafari and al-Abadi are focusing on regional matters and pursuing a peaceful and reconcilable approach." (Author's interview with Ismail, 2014)

As both al-Abadi and al-Jaafari come from a Shia Islamic political background; they are therefore more likely to agree than their predecessors (al-Maliki and Zebari), and can thus reduce the incoherence in foreign policy. Al-Jaafari allegedly conducted a reform campaign to fight corruption and remove unqualified diplomats and employees from the I-MOFA – and, as the Iraqi budget was under strain, to reduce and review the number of diplomats and officers in missions abroad, many of whom were appointed according to al-Muhasasa. However, his campaign's achievements were limited. The new Head of the FRC, Abdul Bari Zebari, said: "We [FRC] have our observations during both Hoshyar Zebari and al-Jaafari's ministries … However the conduct of the previous ministry is slightly better than al-Jaafari's I-MOFA" (author's interview with Abdul Bari Zebari, 2016). The I-MOFA's problems lie in the Iraqi political system and corrupt elite, in which al-Jaafari has been a key figure since the beginning. Hussein Sinjari pointed out that, ironically, al-Jaafari is a top Iraqi diplomat who cannot speak a foreign language (i.e. English) adequately for his job, which is necessary for any diplomat at this level (author's interview with Sinjari, 2015).

Al-Jaafari was appointed at a time when Iraq was the centre of global attention because of Daesh. Therefore, al-Jaafari and President Masum formally visited the KSA to repair the strained relations from al-Maliki's tenure. Al-Jaafari met the Saudi FM, who stated Saudi was ready to amend the relationship. Al-Jaafari visited regional states to show Iraq's desire for rapprochement. Al-Jaafari also paid many official visits to European countries, Asia and the US, where he expressed Iraq's enthusiasm to enhance diplomatic ties.

Several interconnected summits have highlighted Iraq's efforts in diplomacy and security relationships with other states, particularly in combating terrorism and seeking

humanitarian aid. The Iraqi government, via the I-MOFA, proposed a draft resolution for the Arab League FM's summit on 7th September 2014, which resulted in resolution 7804 urging collaborative efforts against Daesh and support of Iraq (Al-Arabiya, 2014). On 11th September 2014, ministers from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC); Iraq; Jordan, Lebanon and the US attended The Jeddah Communiqué and emphasised the Arab League's resolutions (US State Department: Diplomacy In Action, 2014). This represented a new (but fragile) reconnection between Iraq and the Arab Gulf States. On 15th September 2014, the Iraqi President and FM al-Jaafari attended the International Conference in Paris on Peace and Security in Iraq, which emphasised the role of the Arab League and European Union as long-term strategic partners with Iraq (France Diplomatie, 2014). Al-Jaafari participated in the UN Security Council's session for combating Daesh and gave a speech to the UN Security Council, which stressed the international community's role in supporting Iraq in its humanitarian catastrophe and fighting terrorism (UN Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, 2014).

The last three summits provided Iraq with international recognition in its struggle against Daesh and laid the foundation for channels of support. Al-Jaafari asserted that Iraq was receiving unprecedented international endorsement and support: "The Head of the Security Council session told me that he has never witnessed in his life such kind of consensuses and unification in the United Nations for a cause" (al-Jaafari, 2014). Iraq's existential threats pushed the new FM to actively engage with international powers and try to reconcile with regional Sunni-dominated powers. Nevertheless, the Syrian Civil War; the war in Yemen against Houthis; the rise of the Shia militias namely the PMF; and clashes in foreign policy visions regionally between the Arab Gulf States and the Iraqi federal government have made it difficult for real Iraqi-Arab/Turkish rapprochement.

Al-Jaafari agreed with the theme of the "Iraq's foreign policy in the turbulent region" forum at the Brookings Institute in Doha (Brookings Institute, 2015). He claimed that Iraqi foreign policy is built on several constants. First, good bilateral relationships with neighbouring and regional states. Furthermore, al-Jaafari recognised the differences between the Arab states and Iraq, but argues that progress has recently been made and there are more shared than divergent values. Second, Iraq does not want permanent foreign military bases. Third, not allowing external powers to interfere in Iraqi domestic affairs, and vice-versa. Fourth, Iraq is avoiding the regional axes; al-Jaafari argues that Iraq is siding with neither the Iranian nor the Saudi-led axes. He argues that Iraq's foreign policy cannot separate itself from internal matters, such as the fight against

terrorism and Iraq's foreign policy and diplomacy cannot distance itself from regional turbulence, such as in Yemen and Syria (Brookings Institute, 2015).

Reality contrasts with al-Jaafari's aforementioned constants. Al-Jaafari has criticised the Arab states' policies. In the opening of the Arab Ambassadors conference in 2015, the I-MOFA criticised the Arab states for not consulting Iraq earlier regarding building an Arab military force (Nasiria, 2015). Al-Jaafari asserted Iraq's reservations on a joint Arab force or army (*al-Quwa al-A'rabia al-Mushtaraka*). Al-Jaafari, and to an extent al-Abadi, have moderately reinforced the Shia Islamic endorsement. In 2015, the Iraqi government and FM asked to remove some Iraqi Shia militias, such as Badr Organization and AAH, from the UAE's list of terrorist organisations. At other events, the I-MOFA has protested against and summoned the UAE Ambassador for calling for the dismantling of the PMF (Asharq al-Awsat, 2015; Mamoun, 2016).

While all the Arab states deplore al-Assad, FM al-Jaafari met al-Assad and the Syrian FM, Muallem, in Damascus about a week before the Arab League session regarding Yemen. In 2015, the Iraqi government strongly rejected the Arab League's Operation Decisive Storm (*A'sifat al-Hazm*) against the Houthis in Yemen. Iraq is the only country that rejected the vote, and Algeria abstained. Additionally, in the Arab League FM's session in 2016, Iraq abstained from voting to label the Lebanese Hezbollah, which the majority of its members agree is a terrorist organisation. Al-Jaafari strongly objected to this notion and called the leader of Hezbollah Hassan Nasrallah "the savior of Arab dignity", which caused the Saudi envoy to leave the session until al-Jaafari finished his speech (Alsharif, 2016). Al-Jaafari has played a coordinating role between the US-led coalition and the Syrian regime regarding the US airstrikes in Syria. He said: "When the US decided to bomb Syria the US State Secretary Kerry called me to inform us and send a message to the Syrian regime … I informed the Americans that Assad's regime should not be targeted in the airstrikes" (al-Jaafari, 2014). This shows the wide gulf between the Arab states/Turkey and Iraq. Al-Jaafari's statements and actions on regional issues have agitated some of the Arab states and caused deterioration of political ties, despite limited diplomatic revival. Regarding al-Jaafari's third and fourth points, there are regional powers interfering in Iraq (see Chapter 7).

The PMF has a relationship with the I-MOFA, which might shape the latter's performance towards pro-Iran Shia militias' interests. As mentioned in the last chapter, al-Jaafari invited the spokesperson of the PMF, al-Asadi, to the I-MOFA's conference in

2016 to provide support for the Shia majority umbrella (I-MOFA, 2016). Additionally, the I-MOFA's senior delegation has included PMF members. Labeed Abbawi Iraq's former Undersecretary at I-MOFA, said: "I think the ruling, especially the Islamic parties have a big influence on the running of the foreign ministry, especially in the present administration" (Rudaw, 2017).

Al-Abadi and al-Jaafari have applauded Iran because it was the first country to provide Iraq with logistic support – including weapons, ammunitions, funding and military and security advisors – in the fight against Daesh. Al-Jaafari's views on political and foreign affairs do not significantly differ from al-Maliki's or al-Abadi's, but are different from Hoshyar Zebari's. His views show less flexibility towards the Sunni Arab world/Turkey. This differs from his predecessor, Zebari. The author's interviews with diplomats in Iraq and their missions' representatives have shown divided visions and statements. Iraqi officials, including diplomats, define Iraq according to their political and communal identity as well as their own interests. The next section scrutinises Iraqi presidents' role in foreign policy.

Iraq's President's role in foreign policy

According to Article 67 of the Iraqi constitution: "The President is the head of the state, the symbol of unity of the country and represents the sovereignty of Iraq... The President shall guarantee the commitment of the constitution". The president is not only symbolic he is part of the executive authority according to Article 66 that stipulates: "The federal executive power shall consist of the President of the Republic and the Council of Ministers and shall exercise its powers in accordance with the Constitution and the law" (Iraqi Constitution, 2005). Those foreign affairs constitutional powers include Article 73/2 "To ratify international treaties and agreements after the approval by the Council of Representatives. Such international treaties and agreements are considered ratified after fifteen days from the date of receipt by the President", and Article 73/6: "To accredit ambassadors". Kamaran Karadaqhi, Iraq's former spokesperson and Chief of Staff of the President Jalal Talabani (2005–2007), said:

> "According to the Iraqi constitution, the Iraqi President does not have a direct oversight on Iraq's foreign policy … but because he is the head of the state he represents Iraq in international conferences and summits and he

> can directly request that the Foreign Minister explains to him his activities and work … When the President goes abroad for formal visits he usually takes with him the Foreign Minister … according to the Iraqi constitution the highest executive powers are granted to the Head of the Council of Ministers [the PM] … However, it is also stated in the constitution that the executive powers consist of the President too." (Author's interview with Karadaqhi, 2015)

Iraq's current President's spokesperson and legal advisor, Khalid Shwani, stated:

> "The President's external activities try, through his constitutional and political position, to consolidate Iraq's foreign relations internationally and particularly to normalise relationships with the states that Iraq has problems or tensions with." (Author's interview with Shwani, 2016)

Both Presidents (Talabani and Ma'sum) have adopted a conciliatory approach to regional powers. Therefore, the President has an input in Iraq's foreign policy despite it being a largely ceremonial post with limited powers.

After the first President, who was an Arab Sunni, the post was allocated to the Kurds due to the ethnic-religious quota system and power sharing agreement. The federal executive powers consist of two pillars – the President and the Council of Ministers – headed by the PM. Both are subject to the influential role of the ICR. A majority of the ICR elects the President and VPs. They form the Presidency Council, which one list and a two-thirds majority of the ICR elects, according to Article 138/2/A. Prior to the 2010 legislative elections, all members of the Presidency Council had veto power on laws or issues that were sent to them. The members of the Presidency Council are appointed by unwritten norms as part of the ethnic-religious quota system of three main components of Iraq: Kurds, Shias and Sunnis. The Presidency Council must unanimously approve any piece of legislation the ICR passes. After Jalal Talabani's 2010 re-election, the President was able to sign bills passed by the ICR without concurrent unanimity of his two VPs (Danilovich, 2014, 52 and 53).

The following subsections examine the role of Iraq's presidents – al-Yawer, Talabani and Ma'sum – in foreign affairs.

Ghazi Mashal al-Yawer (June 2004–April 2005)

As the transition of authority from the CPA to the IIG began, al-Yawer was appointed the first President of Iraq (June 2004–April 2005). Previously, he had been a member of the IGC. Al-Yawer is a prominent figure in the Shammar tribe, one of the largest Arab tribes in Iraq. He is a moderate Sunni, educated in the US, who led the newly founded Iraqis Party (*Hezb I'raqyoon*) – a secular party with Arab nationalist sentiments.[69] Paul Bremer, members of the IGC and UN Special Envoy Lakhdar Al-Ibrahimi were involved in the process of al-Yawer's selection (Raphaeli, 2004). However, the US had preferred the candidate Adnan Pachachi, while in a rare display of defiance the IGC selected al-Yawer (Stansfield and Anderson, 2009, 118). The Arab League, Egypt and Arab gulf states' FMs welcomed the appointment of al-Yawar and the new government, which Allawi headed (The Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies and Research, 2004).

Al-Yawer was a relatively unknown figure, but he had worked in the KSA and had close ties to the monarchy. Additionally, Al-Yawer had pan-Arabism orientations and sought to develop Iraqi-Arab relationships and assert Iraq's place in the Arab world (The Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies and Research, 2004). Al-Yawer was critical of the US occupation and its security policies. He asked the US coalition forces to stay for a short time and then leave Iraq (Fairweather, 2004). He demanded a larger role for the Iraqis in running the state alongside the US-led coalition and multinational forces. In December 2004, he said some Iraqi candidates and parties allied with Iran received funding (Cordesman & Khazai, 2014a, 158; Asharq al-Awasat, 2004). In the same month, the Iranian Foreign Ministry's spokesperson formally expressed its frustration with al-Yawar's statements (Elaph, 2004; Addustour, 2004). Al-Yawar's tendencies were not unusual for an Arab Sunni figure; he advocated for a strong relationship with the Arab world, and was cautious with Iran.

Al-Yawar's flawless English was a useful tool in reaching out to the international media and press conferences. In his short tenure, he discussed the transitional period of Iraq when visiting countries including the US, Europe, Arab states and Turkey. He also engaged in several meetings at which he addressed key figures, including world leaders at the G8 summit on Sea Island, the EU foreign policy chief in Brussels and the NATO's chief of Iraq's security file. In June 2004, he said: "Although we have a premiership

[69] In the January 2005 election, the Iraqis Party won five seats. In December 2005, it joined the Iraqi List to form the Iraqi National List (Allawi's coalition).

system in Iraq where the PM has the most responsibilities on most entities, but on issues concerning foreign policy we [al-Yawer and Interim PM Allawi] have more team work and partnership" (al-Yawer, 2004). In their interviews, Al-Yawer and Allawi expressed very similar views on foreign affairs – particularly regional affairs.

In March 2004, the CPA imposed TAL. The Presidency Council is part of the executive authority, alongside the Council of Ministers. In TAL, foreign affairs powers were not clearly identified between the National Assembly, the Presidency Council and the Council of Ministers. While Article 24/E gave the ITG the right to formulate foreign policy, sign treaties and negotiate, according to al-Yawer the IIG had limited lasting powers; he said the Iraqi government could conduct and exercise foreign relations, but could not make agreements or commitments lasting more than one or two years (al-Yawer, 2004).

Al-Yawar, his first interim VP Ibrahim al-Jaafari and second VP Rosh Shaways, all had differing views on foreign policy. Al-Yawar welcomed the proposal for Arab states' engagement in Iraq as part of the multinational forces (Cole, 2004b). Although al-Yawar's views were compatible with PM Allawi's, they did not fit with the majority of Shia officials, including al-Jaafari. Iraq was emerging from dictatorship into occupation and the process of establishing a new political system. Al-Yawar was part of this evolution, in which the focus was to diplomatically liaise with the international community and build new institutions.

The next subsection discusses the role in foreign policy of al-Yawar's successor the charismatic Kurdish leader, Jalal Talabani.

Jalal Talabani (April 2005–2012, but held the position officially till July 2014)

Jalal Talabani was the first Kurd that the Transitional National Assembly democratically elected in 2005 as President in Iraq's history. He was one of the co-founders of the PUK, of which he has been Secretary-General until the writing of this dissertation. Al-Yawar, the former President, became a VP; the ICR approved the other VP, Adil Abdul Mahid from Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq. Despite the difference of views between Talabani and al-Yawar such as Iran and the timetable to withdraw US troops, Talabani maintained stable relationships in the Presidency Council due to his political weight,

acumen and diplomatic skillset. However, there were rifts between President Talabani and the PM al-Jaafari regarding internal and foreign policy. Karadaqhi said:

> "There were constant tensions and disagreements, and occasionally a decisive position against each other in issues including foreign relations. For example, during al-Jafaari's tenure the Kurdish relationship with Turkey was strained … al-Jaafari abused this situation against the Kurds … the President Talabani had a decisive position against al-Jaafari … this contributed to the fact that the Kurds played a role in sidelining al-Jaafari for the next cabinet." (Author's interview with Karadaqhi, 2015)

Although President Talabani discussed his external relations activities with former PM al-Jaafari, the latter took unilateral decisions and actions in foreign affairs (Author's interview with Karadaqhi, 2015).

The ICR elected Talabani as President in 2006 and 2010 after compromises. In the 2006 al-Maliki-led government, sectarian animosities and clashes on domestic and foreign affairs appeared between PM al-Maliki and Talabani's new VP Tareq al-Hashimi. VP al-Hashimi lobbied in the US and regionally, without Talabani's agreement, against al-Maliki's policies.[70] This demonstrates the divisions within the Presidency Council and the al-Maliki-led Council of Ministers, which sent different messages internationally and regionally. Talabani tried unsuccessfully to alleviate and resolve these hurdles. Confrontations escalated until al-Maliki accused al-Hashimi of running death squads and persecuted him. However, Talabani maintained a relatively good relationship with al-Maliki, while many Sunnis and Masoud Barzani pushed twice for votes of no confidence against al-Maliki in 2012. President Talabani refused and shielded the PM; while he disagreed with al-Maliki's policies (Wicken, 2012a), Talabani's principle was to keep the house integrated.

The President has a number of advisors, who assist him in his responsibilities. Talabani had a Chief of Staff who is also a spokesperson, and 18 advisors with specialities including politics; security; law, media, and cultural affairs (al-Ittihad, 2006). The PUK provided Talabani with advantages in foreign policy making, as the party enjoys good relationships with Iran and Western countries. Talabani is known in the international

[70] VP Tareq al-Hashimi, with the help of US-based lobby firms and figures, lobbied against al-Maliki (Bogardus, 2007).

media as Iraq's safety valve, like a non-religious Kurdish version of al-Sistani. Karadaqhi said:

> "There were additional factors regarding constitutional powers for the President in foreign policy. Namely the personality of Jalal Talabani as he is charismatic and has political weight incomparable to other politicians and his good interrelationships with other Iraqi politicians … This gave him influence on foreign policy more than the constitutional powers … This condition is unique; we cannot apply it to the current President." (Author's interview with Karadaqhi, 2015)

All of the author's interviewees agreed that Talabani added additional importance to the post of the Presidency, which was projected onto Iraqi foreign relations and policy. Talabani emphasised the Kurdish commitment to the integrity of Iraq (Eppel, 2011, 113). His wise manner and negotiation skills enabled him to resolve many internal and international issues related to Iraq. Between 2006 and 2008, he paved the way between the US, some Arab Sunni insurgents and the Shia-led government for peace-making negotiations (al-Fayhaa TV, 2014a). He prevented the escalation of the situation between al-Maliki's government and the KRG, especially with Masoud Barzani. Talabani also had historical relationships with Iranian leaders in Tehran, including the deceased Khomeini and Syria's Hafez al-Assad. These relationships were in the context of opposing Saddam's regime; Talabani accredited the Iranians for their persistent support of their old Iraqi friends (al-Fayhaa TV, 2014a). Talabani was pro-active in foreign relations and policy; he proposed and initiated resolutions to problems, and established or improved relationships. Furthermore, his role extended beyond Iraq's borders; for example, he was the VP of Socialist International.[71] He also played a role in mediation between Iran and the US to mitigate their animosities.

Talabani recognised the importance of the role of the PM in consolidating Iraq's relationship with neighbouring countries. For instance, he said:

> "Our relationship with Jordan has improved very much … As you know we [Jalal Talabani] visited Jordan a lot of times but the last visit of al-Maliki [PM] has supported the visits that I have conducted with my governmental delegations

[71] The Socialist International is the worldwide organisation of social democratic, socialist and labour parties (Socialist international, 2014).

including ministers, and approved the success of our discussions with Jordan." (Fatha al-Hurriya, 2012)

This statement underlines his ability to have a working relationship with al-Maliki.

During the strained Turkey–Iraq relations in 2008, Turkey bombarded Iraq's borders in the north and targeted the PKK, which the Iraqi government called "unacceptable violations of its sovereignty" (Today's Zaman, 2008). The airstrikes stopped and Talabani visited Ankara by invitation of the Turkish President, Abdullah Gul and bilateral relations temporarily improved. Iraqi Ambassador to Turkey, Mr Sabah Omran, said: "The visit was successful … the President is a practical man … he is never affected by criticism. If he had listened to criticism this visit might not have happened … the President Talabani is the central figure in the Iraqi government apparatus and he made it clear against terrorism" (Today's Zaman, 2008). Talabani's peaceful relationships with regional leaders and most Iraqi elites and factions facilitated the government's foreign relations. Despite the constitutional limitations of the President's powers, Talabani's charisma and personality played a significant role.

His absence due to a stroke at the end of 2012 created a vacuum of a consolidatory elite in Baghdad, and a vacuum of power in the PUK-controlled areas. Al-Hashimi remained fugitive and the remaining VP, Khodair al-Khozaei,[72] was a Shia Islamist from the Islamic Da'wa Party–Iraq Organization.[73] This party is different from al-Maliki's ruling party, but shares relatively similar Shia political objectives. Al-Khozaei has a good relationship with al-Maliki and has defended the Shia-led government's policy. Therefore, Talabani's replacement President (al-Khozaei) and the PM were Shia. After Talabani, political exclusion worsened and resentment rose among the Kurds and the Arab Sunnis, further fragmenting the state and contributing to the rise of Daesh and Kurdish nationalist sentiment. The next subsection explores President Ma'sum's role in foreign policy.

Fuad Ma'sum (July 2014–present)

In July 2014, the ICR elected the veteran Kurdish politician Ma'sum, from the PUK to be the new President. Ma'sum said: "I became President after all the Kurdish political parties selected me and there is a decision to stay in Iraq" (Council on Foreign Relations,

[72] VP from 2011–2014
[73] This party split from the major Shia Islamic Da'wa Party in the 1980s.

2014). Ma'sum as a politician has no influence on the PUK, in which he is a member of the political bureau; nor does he have any influence on other Iraqi political leaders. He also lacks Talabani's charisma and relationships with world elites, thus, in foreign relations he is far less effective.

However, Ma'sum has been involved in international platforms relating to Iraq's security and its place in the international community. Ma'sum and FM al-Jaafari attended an international meeting in Paris, along with the leaders of more than 30 countries, which aimed to aid the Iraqi government against Daesh. In October 2014, Ma'sum said: "The Paris meeting convened according to coordination between President François Hollande, and me. We agreed to convene this meeting and send invitations to forty-one countries" (Alhurra Iraq, 2014). The President and his advisors participated in preparing the programme for that summit (author's interview with Shwani, 2016). This shows the President's efforts and contribution to conducting Iraq's foreign relations.

There have been divisions in the Presidency Council. Ma'sum has three VPs: al-Maliki, Usama al-Nujaifi and Allawi. All three have different approaches to foreign policy. Shwani, President Masum's spokesperson, said:

> "There was some understanding between the Presidential Council members in that the foreign policy address should be united; representing the Presidential Council, not representing individuals' views … However, the President was sometimes embarrassed by the VPs relationships or because of their political stances and statements towards some regional states that were outside the Presidential programme." (Author's interview with Shwani, 2016)

VP al-Maliki's policy and position was against PM al-Abadi's in general, as he was sidelined from the PM position. Al-Maliki has pursued a more rigid, aggressive and narrow approach to projecting foreign policy. He has encouraged closer ties with Iran and Russia and worsened Iraq's relationships with the Arab Gulf States. VP Al-Nujaifi and VP Allawi persistently criticised the domination of the Shia-led government and Iran. These perspectives were different to those of Ma'sum, who is moderate in his views; he is pro-West, encourages the US-led global coalition against Daesh and acknowledges the importance of the relationship with Iran; Ma'sum has visited Tehran and Riyadh to consolidate Iraqi bilateral relationships. Al-Abadi and Ma'sum have tried

to reactivate the stalemated Iraqi foreign relations during al-Maliki's tenure, especially after the absence of Talabani. Butt (2014) stated: "The new government of Iraq sent a sign that it's adopting a fresh foreign policy strategy that is both balanced and pragmatic: Iraq cannot survive its current crisis without the support both of Iran and the Sunni-dominated Arab States of the region".

However, Masum's and al-Abadi's efforts have yielded limited results. Ma'sum does not have Talabani's political base and binding relationships with internal, regional and international figures; his internal and external engagement has therefore given the impression of being rather weak and fruitless. When al-Abadi stripped the VPs from their posts – although this was later revoked by the supreme court – as part of the reform plan, it was without consulting Ma'sum, whose later intervention failed. The next section discusses the Speaker of the ICR, the ICR and the FRC's engagement in Iraqi foreign relations.

The Speaker, Iraqi Council of Representatives (ICR) and Foreign Relations Committee (FRC) in the ICR

The Speaker of the ICR does not have executive powers. However, he is a prominent figure domestically and internationally, as the position unofficially represents the Arab Sunnis in Iraq's power-sharing agreement and quota system. From 2005 to 2016, the successive speakers were Arab Sunni politicians from Sunni political parties – apart from Fuad Ma'sum, who was Acting Speaker for five months.

According to Article 33 of the ICR's Rules of Procedures, "The Speaker is the person who represents the ICR, and speaks in its name".[74,75] The Speaker plays a role in foreign relations and bilateral relationships, the effectiveness of which depends on his efforts and political base. For example, in 2008, Mahmoud al-Mashadani (Speaker from 2006 to 2008) argued that the US–Iraq SOFA agreement should be discussed with neighbouring countries. As Speaker, he was involved in bilateral talks about the security pact with a number of regional powers, including Iran (Al-Jazeera Arabic, 2008). Usama al-Nujaifi (Speaker from 2010 to 2014) aired Sunni grievances, lobbied regionally and internationally for an Arab Sunni region in Iraq and strongly disagreed with al-Maliki's

[74] The ICR's Rules of Procedures created in 2006, it is a manual for the ICR.
[75] According to the Rules of Procedures of the ICR (Article 34): "Seventh: Representing the ICR in national celebrations and other events."

domestic and foreign policy (Al-Sumaria, 2013). All Iraqi speakers have played a role in contributing to or contradicting the Shia-led government's foreign policy statements.

The Speaker not only meets foreign delegations but also visits foreign states and meets foreign officials. Shia-led government officials have critically noted that the speakers represent their political and sectarian backgrounds, rather than the ICR. The US Head of Congress and the US President invited al-Nujaifi to the US as Speaker to discuss the bilateral relationship (al-Sumaria, 2013). Al-Nufaifi used these visits to demonstrate al-Maliki's government's marginalisation of the Sunnis. On many occasions, speakers – including the current Speaker, Salim al-Jubouri, from the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) – have clashed with the Shia-dominated executive authorities regarding foreign policy.

According to Article 112 of the Rules of Procedures, Speakers coordinate with the FRC regarding their foreign affairs-related legislative activities. However, they lack coherent coordination. In October 2015, Speaker al-Jubouri met with FRC members to enhance relationships with foreign parliaments to improve Iraq's image internationally (Parliament Iraq, 2015). In November 2015, the FRC and Speaker al-Jubouri organised a forum that included Iraqi academics, all of whom recognised that Iraqi diplomacy and foreign policy faced obstructions in designing diplomacy. Speaker al-Jubouri emphasised that:

> "Their [Iraqi officials] loyalty should be to Iraq; it is dangerous that Iraqi internal political parties are conducting external diplomacy where each political party or component build ties with the international community and beyond the border where Iraq loses its compass [directions]. Then it [Iraq] becomes a theatre for regional struggle and national interests will be absent." (Parliament Iraq, 2015)

Al-Jubouri's statements highlight the splintered foreign policies, to which he and his party (IIP) have contributed by portraying different pictures of it.

The ICR has a role in foreign relations as it monitors the performance of the executive bodies, including the I-MOFA and FM. According to the Iraqi constitution, the ICR ratifies Iraqi international agreements with states, which executive bodies have signed, and the ICR has the power to approve or reject them. The ratification is voted on in a formal session in the ICR and, after the President's approval, published in an official

newspaper; subsequently, the agreement is implemented (Al-Jazeera Arabic, 2008).[76] More than one committee is involved in studying the agreement (law project; *Mashroo' al-Qanoon*) to ratify it. These usually include the FRC and a specific committee related to the area of the agreement. Abdul Bari Zebari is the Head of the FRC and has represented the ICR's Kurdistan Coalition for three terms. In 2016, he said:

> "The Iraqi constitution compelled the Iraqi government to obtain the approval of the ICR when they make agreements whether its trade, security or military … The government should present the agreement to the ICR to ratify it. Without it, it is not a legitimate law … Moreover, the significant agreements with huge military or economic impact needs the approval of two-thirds of the ICR, while other agreements require a simple majority 50 plus 1 … Nevertheless, the memorandum of understating between Iraqi executive bodies and foreign states do not need the approval of the ICR." (Author's interview with Abdul Bari Zebari, 2016)

This demonstrates that the ICR can influence Iraq's bilateral or multilateral relationships and commitments with foreign entity or entities. The ICR monitors the performance of all Iraq's international agreements. Therefore, the author and Abdul Bari Zebari believe that the ICR as a legislative authority (*Sulta al-Tashria'ya*) contributes to Iraq's foreign relations. In particular, the ICR provides legitimacy to the core executive bodies. Moreover, the ICR is a theatre of political debate, lobby and bargain, which also reflects on foreign policy performance by sometimes questioning executive figures. The ICR's support strengthens or weakens the PM and FM's foreign relations and policy.

Article 88 of the ICR's Rules of Procedures states that the FRC shall: follow up the foreign policy and diplomatic representation of the state; studying international political agreements and treaties with the Legal Committee; proposing legislation that regulates the diplomatic and consular affairs; and, following up issues related to the bodies and agencies of international and regional organisations (the Rules of Procedures of the ICR, 2006). These rules provide guidelines to the committee to conduct its duties and activities.

[76] Iraqi constitution, articles 61 Number 4: "Regulating the ratification process of international treaties and agreements by a law, to be enacted by a two-thirds majority of the members of the Council of Representatives." Article 73 number 2: "To ratify international treaties and agreements after the approval by the Council of Representatives. Such international treaties and agreements are considered ratified 15 days after the President receives them."

The FRC is an important body, but less critical than the aforementioned foreign-policy-making apparatus. The author's law-maker interviewees consider the FRC to be one of the most relevant committees in the ICR regarding foreign affairs. The FRC has two major functions: to facilitate legislation inside the ICR with respect to foreign affairs issues necessary for all governmental bodies, to monitor the I-MOFA's and FM's performance. Essentially, in relation to legislation, the FRC studies and presents a report regarding the agreements and treaties Iraq has signed, which is then sent to the ICR and voted on. The Chair of the FRC, Abdul Bari Zebari, said: "The I-MOFA send the agreement to the Council of Ministers then the latter send it to the ICR where all the FRC and other related committee depending on their specialisation and the agreement specification are involved" (author's interview with Abdul Bari Zebari, 2016). This shows some degree of functionality between the executive bodies and the ICR. Additionally, the FRC scrutinises the I-MOFA's finances and budget to defend in the ICR. It interviews and assesses Ambassador candidates and provides the I-MOFA with recommendations. Occasionally, some FRC members participate in formal Iraqi government delegations with the PM and other officials (author's interview with al-Bayati, 2014; and al-A'ani, 2014). The FRC does not formulate foreign policy, but tries to monitor foreign relations and related agencies.

Different perceptions regarding foreign policy were expressed in the author's interviews with ICR members and FRC members from various parliamentary blocs (conducted in 2014, 2015 and 2016). MPs from Sunni and Kurdish political factions are dubious of the effectiveness, representation and formulation of the government's foreign policy, while members of the SLC (Shia) advocate for the (Shia-led) government's foreign policy. This is not representative of all the Shia MPs or blocs. Regarding the power-sharing agreement, interviewees reported that the Arab Sunnis claim they are marginalised in decision-making and the Kurds criticise the Shia-led government for dominating it. For example, al-A'ani,[77] a prominent Sunni leader and member of the FRC, said:

> "The role of the committee is weak, and the decision-making process was opaque in al-Maliki's government. Al-Maliki had overridden all other governmental institutions. When he was shaping cooperative or animosity relations with countries he was conducting relations in isolation from the parliament, the political forces and even the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

[77] Spokesperson for the Al-Mutahidoon list and Secretary-General of the Al-Mustakbel National Gathering.

> which resulted in clashes between the Prime Minister's office, Parliament and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs." (Author's interview with al-A'ani, 2014)

Al-A'ani's argument underlines the argument of this chapter: foreign affairs bodies are at loggerheads. It also asserts al-Maliki's undermining of institutional and key figures. Abbas al-Bayati, a prominent Shia MP in the SLC ruling coalition and the FRC, said:

> "Iraq has foreign relations and a foreign policy which is not at the level that we pursue and wish for Iraq. Iraq's foreign policy is subject to censorship by the Iraqi people through the media, constitutionally by the parliament, and by the new body of the Supreme Council or Committee for Foreign Affairs. The Supreme Council for Foreign Relations was created during al-Maliki and should be reactivated, it consisted of the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Defence Minister, the Head of the FRC and other officials and convened several meetings in respect to foreign affairs." (Author's interview with al-Bayati, 2014)

The SLC's MPs, such as al-Bayati, back the Shia-led government's policies. This shows the different perspectives between the different blocs. The SLC also proposed and backed a Supreme Council for Foreign Relations, which did not continue.

In 2014, Abdul Bari Zebari said: "Iraq's foreign policy is a controversial topic that is a prisoner of the Iraqi people and the Iraqi people are manipulated by the slogans of some Iraqi politicians" (Abdul Bari Zebari, 2014). His argument illustrates that the fragmentation of Iraq's foreign policy reflects the influence of the political parties and leaders, who follow their party's and/or personal agendas (including ethno-sectarianism tendencies) and interests. The chasm in comprehension and interpretation of formulating Iraq's foreign policy between various ICR members was clear in the interviews. It can be concluded that the ICR and FRC are notably contributing to the legal framework, and legitimise the foreign relations of both the executive bodies and those allocated to create and implement foreign policy.

Conclusion

One of this chapter's key findings is that the incoherence of Iraq's foreign relations and foreign policy emerges between and within core governmental bodies and agencies. The divergence goes even further: into the Presidency Council, Council of Ministers and ministries, including the I-MOFA and its departments, embassies and consulates. To various degrees, the core executive authorities and the ICR contribute to shaping foreign policy. Nevertheless, as the Head of the Council of Ministers, the PM has superiority in drawing up foreign policy and directing Iraq's diplomacy. The FM implements the foreign policy; he has some input that is based on personal and partisan interests due to the lack of coordination or a detailed, concrete and comprehensive agenda. Although the President conducts some foreign relations activities, he has limited authority in foreign policy; his role is symbolic, shaped by his personality, political base and domestic and external interrelationships.

The lack of detail in the new Iraqi constitution and different interpretations of it, as well as the dearth of understanding among officials of the magnitude and responsibility, has contributed to incoherent foreign policy. The Iraqi constitution provides the federal government with some general principles for formulating foreign policy. Article 3 identifies Iraq as part of the Islamic world and an active member in the Arab League. Article 8 stipulates Iraq shall adhere to principles of good neighbourliness and non-interference in the internal affairs of other states. Article 9/E states the Iraqi government shall respect and implement Iraq's international obligations (Iraqi Constitution, 2005). Iraq's foreign policy is supposed to reflect the Iraqi constitution's values. Iraq has successfully implemented its international obligations. However, as Faily (2016) emphasized not all Iraqi officials and diplomats have adhered to all principles nor the official federal government's political stance. This is particularly evident when examining Iraq's aloof relationship with most members of the Arab League. Besides these few generic principles, the constitution is ambiguous about the requirements of foreign policy making on a granular level. (This is further discussed in the following chapter.)

Following the tenure of PM Allawi and President al-Yawar's in the IIG, no other Iraqi President or PM has issued hostile statements towards Iran. Sami Zubaidi stated that the officials (some Arab Sunnis) who were outmanoeuvred by the PM try to counterweight the centralised power of the PM in policy making (Boston University, 2011). The Arab

Sunni deputy PMs and VPs, the Arab Sunni Speaker and some Kurdish and Arab Sunni diplomats have contradicted the Shia PM or Kurdish presidents on many foreign policy issues, including statements against Iran. Faily said:

> "This is a problem with the politicians…Those officials go outside and want to project a certain policy … there is a lack of coherence because there are different drivers, objectives, interpretations of history and sometimes they may not agree on the strategy moving forward … As Ambassador this makes life much harder for me, it does not give me one image to reflect to the host country … the PM, the FM and sometimes the President; those are the three people I look out for in foreign policy." (Author's interview with Lukman Faily, 2016)

This underlines how a key Ambassador has struggled to comprehend the incoherent foreign policy statements, as well as to synthesise his own vision of foreign policy based on the perspectives of the PM, FM and President – who also compete, lack coordination and contradict each other on a number of issues. Faily said:

> "The core executive bodies, they may not be complementary to each other … there is a lack of coordination between them, specifically what the PM and FM want from a country, how to go about it, and how to coordinate. There is no clarity, even on how they chose an Ambassador, they may not be as cohesive or fully in agreement but there are negotiations going on." (Author's interview with Faily, 2016)

Since 2005, the Shia elites and parties (particularly the Islamic Da'wa Party) have dominated the major posts (primarily the PM) and bodies responsible for drawing Iraq's foreign policy. The institutionalisation of the quota system and the crippled (or even failed) power-sharing agreement between Iraqi actors has contributed to Iraq's incoherent foreign policy. Although the US has had a substantial role in reconstructing the governmental institutions, including those associated in foreign affairs, it was unable to establish sophisticated independent bodies or maintain influence after its withdrawal. Nevertheless, Iraqi officials were compelled to have a relationship with the US, as the regional powers (excluding Iran) did not have prosperous relationships with the Shia-led government and the political elite maintained a rapport with the US for their own interests.

There is a lack of coordination and cooperation between various governmental bodies and elites relating to foreign affairs and their duties; the Iraqi constitution and laws have not addressed these loopholes. Disparate statements and messages from Iraqi foreign relations representatives have confused Iraqi public opinion and regional and international powers. The Iraqi people despise the rotation of the political elite in every government's posts. For example, Ibrahim al-Jaafari has been the President of the IGC as well as the VP, PM and FM of Iraq. The endemic bureaucratic corruption; nepotism; cronyism; favouritism, clientelism and patronage network in the weak institutions is another contributing factor to incoherent foreign policy. Another key finding is that the majority of officials blame others for the failure to adopt a coherent foreign relations and policy. In fact, they should all accept a degree of responsibility. However, the government has had some success in foreign policy; it has built foreign affairs and governmental organisations (albeit fragile ones), regained Iraq's seats in transnational organisations and started to improve Iraq's global image compared to Saddam's era.

Another key finding is that, regardless of position or constitutional limitations, politicians and officials with a significant number of political party supporters and relationships have more power and influence over foreign affairs than officials without a support base, such as Jalal Talabani. However, the PM is the primary actor, and leads the Council of Ministers in formulating the bulk of foreign policy and conducting foreign relations. The FM has secondary importance conducting foreign relations, and fills the vacuum in Iraqi foreign policy. The President of Iraq has limited executive power; only during Talabani's time did the President have an exceptional role in shaping Iraq's foreign policy. The Speaker of the ICR has relationships with foreign officials, and – with the FRC – monitors executive authorities in foreign affairs. Due to the quota system, the Speaker has an informal but exceptional role in foreign affairs, as they represent the Arab Sunnis. The National Security Advisor and Agency play a supplementary role to the PM in pinpointing Iraqi foreign policy security imperatives. There are no clear cut provisions and laws that grant powers to the VPs and PM's deputies in foreign policy and they do not have a great input in the official foreign policy making. Rather they appear as political and partisan actors who are able to make the policy incoherent and weak. Due to Iraq's fragmentation and the communal quota system the posts including the Speaker of the ICR and the Deputy PM and VP positions are viewed as important governmental voices by external powers such as the US, Turkey and Arab states as they represent their constituencies, particularly the Arab Sunnis. However, external states do

not make official agreements with them without the consent of the executives that hold constitutional powers such as the PM.

Since 2003, the PM has not had control of the members of the Council of Ministers – including ministers and his deputies – as they are appointed according to the al-Muhasasa and al-Tawafuq al-Siyasi. This lack of commitment to the PM's policy vision has also made Iraq's foreign policy incoherent.

This chapter has mapped the failure of the aforementioned bodies to conduct a coherent foreign policy. To shed further light on Iraq's splintered foreign policies, the following chapter explores that of the KRG.

Chapter 5

The Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) foreign relations and foreign policy

Introduction

This chapter shows how and why the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is developing an independent foreign policy. The KRG's need for a foreign policy is a central part of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq's (KR-I) state-building project. The KRG's foreign policy often differs from and contradicts the central government's in Baghdad, which further fragments Iraq's foreign policies. This chapter examines the KRG's main foreign policy actors, their powers and performance. The chapter discusses the evolution of the stages of the KRG's foreign relations and foreign policy, and summarises policy makers' debate about the existence of the KRG's foreign policy. It maps the role of the elites, core executive bodies and political parties in shaping the non-sovereign entity's foreign policy. The chapter scrutinises the relevant Iraqi constitutional articles and the KRG's laws, which have directly and indirectly shaped the KRG's foreign relations and foreign policy. The chapter's questions are:

- Why does the KRG need a foreign policy?
- How is the KRG's foreign policy made, and who is making it?
- Do the KRG's foreign relations and policy diverge from Baghdad's?

These subsidiary questions address the divisions in Iraqi foreign policies, focusing on the sub-state entity. Thus, they are key complementary sub-questions that supplement the main research question. This chapter scrutinises the KRG's foreign relations and policy up until the end of 2016. From the KRG leadership's perspective, drawing up a foreign policy is urgent. This is because foreign policy lays out the external agenda, priorities (imperatives that have international dimensions) and alliances, most of which are different to Baghdad's. According to the author's interviews, the KRG's decision makers agree that having a foreign policy is imperative to achieve the KR-I's interests. Interviewees from the KRG told the author that the KRG's foreign policy will not contradict or clash with Baghdad unless Baghdad seeks to curb the KR-I's interests. However, the KRG seeks to have a role and a distinctive voice in the international arena

as the need for recognition for its rights, including self-determination and, ultimately, independence.

A key finding is that the President holds the major authority in formulating the KRG's foreign policy; the Prime Minister (PM) is the next most influential figure. Bureaucratic bodies such as the KRG's Department of Foreign Relations (DFR) implement the President and PM's unwritten foreign policy agenda.[78] An important consequence is that the KRG's foreign policy is independent and often contradicts Baghdad's official foreign policy. The chapter will expose the process of decision making in foreign relations and the divergence it creates. Analysing the structure of the KRG's core executive bodies, it appears that the region has a mixed or hybrid presidential-parliamentary system.

Stansfield and Caspersen categorise the KR-I as an unrecognised state and a relative success in state building; since 1991, the region has constituted a sociopolitical development in a post-conflict setting (Stansfield and Caspersen, 2011, 3). The KR-I has developed from a quasi-state into one that conducts the activities of a federal state in foreign relations (Mohammed and Owtram, 2014, 65). Stansfield and Harvey believe the KR-I can be described as "secessionist"; however post-2003 the KRG were a leading force in the establishment of the federal constitution to secure their status and powers. Despite the differences between the two main parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), they have, since 2003, been working on two tracks: first, the KR-I state building project, which includes foreign relations; and second, to secure recognition from Baghdad and external powers of the KR-I's rights and powers. Romano (2010a, 1350) argues that the Kurdish senior positions in the federal government have protected the KR-I from potentially unfriendly interventions by neighbouring states, such as Iran and Turkey. The elites in Erbil have adopted active foreign relations and a foreign policy, which serves priorities that this chapter addresses. Neoclassical Realism (NCR) provides space for paradiplomacy concepts to be applied to this chapter, which is explained in the theoretical framework. Paradiplomacy will be discussed in terms of the KRG's legality in the Iraqi constitution later in the chapter.

This chapter is composed of seven sections, which explore the evolution of the KRG's foreign policy; the Kurdistan Region's Presidency (KRP); the KRG's Prime Minister (PM); the KRG's Department of Foreign Relations (DFR); the Iraqi Kurdish political parties'

[78] The KRG's foreign policy began since the unified cabinets in 2006.

foreign relations; the Iraqi constitution and the KRG's foreign policy; and the emerging nature of the KRG's foreign policy.

The evolution of the KRG's foreign policy

This section discusses the three main stages of the KR-I's progress in foreign relations and policy and the key Kurdish political parties' engagement with Baghdad's foreign relations and policy. It is essential to recognize the Kurdish leaders', such as Sharif Pasha and Sheikh Muhammad Barzanji, engagement in foreign affairs in the beginning of the twentieth century particularly interacting with superpowers for Kurdistan region's self-rule.[79] Although their efforts failed to carve out a region for the Kurds, it was the beginning of Kurdish international interactions with nationalist purpose. There are three interconnected phases: from the 1940s to 1991; post-1991, which saw the development of basic foreign relations; and post-2003, which saw the development of the KRG's foreign relations and foreign policy. The Kurdish political parties in the KR-I began their limited relations with regional and global powers after the formation of the major Iraqi Kurdish political parties: the KDP in 1946, and the PUK in 1976. Along with other, smaller parties they built bridges with Iraqi political parties, regional powers and then beyond the Middle East. They focused on promoting the Kurdish cause with and via the Kurdish diaspora. Dr Fuad Hussein, the KRG's President's Chief of Staff, said:

> "The Kurdish movement began as a revolutionary movement in the 1960s, trying to make relations to spread awareness about the Kurdish cause and mobilise the Kurds. For example, to tell the European people and countries beyond that the Kurds are here and do exist and they are victims … this can be called public relations." (Author's interview with Hussein, 2014)

Therefore, the first phase, the Iraqi Kurds' external relationships, can be classified as public relations. The Kurdish political parties still have clandestine or covert relationships with various intelligence agencies in the region and beyond. The second stage of Kurdish external relations began in 1992, and can be identified as foreign relations. Since 1992, the KDP's and PUK's powers have gradually expanded. This is the result of the rebellion against Saddam's regime, known as *Rapareen*; the Iraqi Kurds and Kurdish political parties were able to control a considerable swathe of Kurdish territory

[79] For example, Sharif Pasha presented a map for greater Kurdistan in the treaty of Versailles 1919.

during the first Gulf War in 1991. Operation Provide Comfort in 1991[80] secured a safe haven for the Kurds in the KR-I, which had a historic opportunity to hold democratic multiparty elections in 1992, and to build a parliament and governmental bodies despite their chronic shortcomings and rivalries. Hussein said: "When the Kurds controlled the land and the establishment of the KRG and Kurdistan Region's parliament, the KRG started its foreign relations to facilitate its activities, such as economic and cultural relations" (author's interview with Hussein, 2014).[81] Before 2003, the international and regional powers were cautious to interact formally with the KRG, as it was a nascent, unpredictable and unrecognised entity. The KRG internally was not at a sufficient level to formulate a strategy so did not have a foreign policy as conventionally understood.

As a result of the Iraqi–Kurdish Civil War (1994–1998), known as *BraKuji* (the killing of brothers between the two major parties), two administrations with binary cabinets were established: the KDP's government in Erbil and the PUK's in Sulaymaniyah. Both parties have had external relationships with international aid organisations and NGOs, as well as some regional and international powers.[82] Their ties with states were often unofficial and fragile, and restricted to security and economy. The political parties' bureaus of foreign relations, intelligence services, party leaders and other nascent governmental bodies (e.g. Ministry of Humanitarian Aid and Cooperation) conducted external relations (Author's interview with Emad, 2015). These efforts were incoherent and without a professional approach or foreign relations objectives. The local two governments' external activities represented the two divided parties' domination.

PM Nechervan Barzani divides the KRG's foreign relations into two phases: from 1991 until 2003, and post-2003:

> "The KRG's foreign relations in the first stage was limited and restricted, which was not based on recognition of the KRG … We had relationships with the US, Turkey and Iran … We can define these relationships as not having a high level of rapport … we did not even have diplomatic relationships … Our relationships were more with intelligence agencies and with some foreign affairs ministries, such as the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs." (Author's interview with Nechervan Barzani, 2014).

[80] This was a US-led coalition operation imposed a no-fly zone in northern Iraq.
[81] In 2009, the Kurdistan National Assembly was renamed the Kurdistan Parliament (KP).
[82] Stansfield maps and discusses the KRG's cabinets from 1992 to 2002 in Iraqi Kurdistan (2003, 145- 174).

As Iraq's future was ambiguous, PM Barzani believes that pre-2003 states were dealing with the KRG as a temporary entity, that relations would diminish over time and that Iraq would become as it was before (author's interview with Barzani, 2014). The PM's views reflect the conditions that the KRG experienced before 2003. The author believes this was a preparatory phase for the period post-2003, and can be seen as the second stage of developing foreign relations.

Nechervan Barzani stated that the second stage began after 2003 and the KRG's foreign affairs are reflected in the Iraqi constitution, which states that the KRG can conduct foreign relations but Baghdad will draw up foreign policy. Nevertheless, in reality the KRG's independent status in foreign policy is de facto. Barzani called this period the stage of developing institutions (author's interview with Barzani, 2014). In 2006, in the KR-I, the Kurdish parties (KDP and PUK) formed a unified government in the fifth cabinet. This period witnessed a slow integration of governmental bodies and the start of institutionalisation of robust foreign relations. This institution building can be understood as the third phase of developing foreign policy and its organisations.

Post-2003, the KDP and PUK led the Kurds in Baghdad. They participated in defeating Saddam alongside the US-led coalition, particularly in the periphery of the KR-I. The two party leaders were in the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), and the KDP and PUK formed a coalition in December 2004 to participate in Iraq's elections in 2005. Despite their differences in foreign relations (such as disparities between their top-down sets of priorities and varying degrees of ties with regional allies), they joined with other smaller parties to form the Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan (DPAK), also known as the Kurdistan Alliance (KA) or *Al-Tahalf al-Kurdistani* and renamed the Kurdistan List (*Listi Kurdistani*) in 2009. The KRG and the two major Kurdish factions recognised the limitations of their aspirations as a sub-sovereign entity in achieving their objectives. The Kurds sought to make changes in Baghdad through engaging there to consolidate the KR-I and make it a recognised entity. They had a major role in the new political process and system in Baghdad to secure their rights and enable the KRG to exercise external relations.

In Baghdad, the Kurdish elite have had an input in Iraq's foreign relations since the reestablishment of the I-MOFA. The former FM, Hoshyar Zebari, held a vital role from 2003 to 2014. Although he is from the KDP, the PUK (which is closer to the major Shia parties than the KDP) has held the Presidency. The KDP and PUK remained in coalition

in Baghdad for the parliamentary elections in January and December of 2005 and 2010. The Kurdish coalition's political manifesto in the elections emphasised Kurdish rights; in foreign relations, they sought to develop relationships with Iraq's neighbours and not interfere in the domestic affairs of other countries, so as to develop cooperative and peaceful relationships and combating terrorism (Munther, 2005). Adding to the 2005 programme, the 2010 manifesto also included promotion of economy and access to Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Iraqi infrastructure (Al-Jumaili, 2010). Their political parties' ideologies promote Kurdish nationalism and further devolution of powers for the KR-I. However, Kurdish elites in Baghdad maintain a balance between their Iraqi counterparts and regional powers.[83] Iraqi Kurds have adopted two approaches: one tries to adhere to and develop the official Iraqi foreign policy; the other formulates de facto foreign relations and policy in Erbil. These two approaches were not synchronised among the Kurdish leadership but materialised as an imperative for the time and circumstances.

The debate around the KRG's foreign policy

The KRG's international activities went through two developing phases: from 1991/1992 to 2003, and post-2003. In the first phase, the KRG had limited foreign relations with the outside world. Post-2003, the KR-I became more secure than the rest of Iraq; the KRG set up specialised foreign affairs institutions and flourished economically, and gradually international actors (states and transnational corporations) began to be interested in the KR-I. Consequently, it broadened its foreign relations and the KRG began to draw up foreign policy. Stansfield (2013) argues that the KRG has an interventionist foreign policy, which opposes Iraqi foreign policy. This means, for example, there are different policies towards the Syrian Civil War, where Iraqi Kurds have interests and are engaged in Rojava (Stansfield, 2013, 279). The KRG has a proactive foreign policy that is mainly drawn up by the KDP. The PUK has a secondary role and its own foreign policy approach. In some cases, different interests have emerged between the KDP, PUK and Baghdad, such as in Rojava.[84] Furthermore, Stansfield stated that the KRG is another centre of a foreign policy that emanates from Iraq (2013, 279). The emergence of the KRG's foreign policy is a reflection of its evolution in policymaking and international actors' interactions. Officially, there are two governments' foreign policies: that of the Baghdad-based federal government, and that

[83] The KDP and PUK ran separately for the first time in the 2014 Iraqi parliamentary election.
[84] The KDP pro-KNC is a rival to the PUK pro-PYD, and Baghdad supports Assad's regime, which opposes the two aforementioned Syrian Kurdish forces.

of the Erbil-based regional government. Both possess incoherent actors in their foreign policies. Nevertheless, the KRG's formulation of foreign policy is far more coherent than the federal government's. The Presidency, the PM and the Council of Ministers (including the DFR and most of their representatives) are unified in foreign policy statements;[85] Tahir the KRG's highest representative in the UK, from the PUK, would not criticise the KDP or their officials and said to the author in 2015 that he is implementing the KRG's official foreign policy.

There is debate among scholars and policy makers regarding whether or not the KRG has a foreign policy or foreign relations or both and those terms have been defined in the introduction. It is critical to point out the distinction between both terms because identifying a foreign policy would underline the KRG's international objectives, while the day-to-day practise of the officials with foreign entities is foreign relations. All agree the KRG has foreign relations. The author interviewed Kurdish political leaders and officials from the major institutions involved: the KRP; PM; Deputy PM; Minister of the DFR, his Deputy and other prominent political leaders in the KR-I and Iraq. The different perspectives emanate from distinctive interpretations of the KRG, based on personal experience; ideology; beliefs (whether based on academic theory or practicality); partisan loyalties, interpretations and, to a degree, interest in legitimising the KRG's foreign policy. Hussein argued: "When the KRG was established [1991/1992] it started foreign relations. I do not believe currently that we [KRG] have a foreign policy" (author's interview with Hussein, 2014). Hussein argues that when Kurdistan becomes an independent state it will be able to have a foreign policy.

Barham Salih argues that the KRG has something in between a foreign policy and foreign relations, and in reality has been acting as a state. Salih leans towards the argument that the KRG has a unique, messy and independent foreign policy, which reflects the political reality on the ground in the KR-I. In many cases, he emphasises the distinctiveness of the KRG's foreign policy in comparison with Baghdad, such as the policy towards Turkey, the US and even Syria: "The KRG is reflecting the continuation before 2003 when it had its relations … by and large the KRG has a unified foreign policy but the KDP and PUK have their own foreign policy priorities" (author's interview with Salih, 2014). Salih underlines the differences between the KDP's and PUK's distinctive regional outlooks; they have relatively similar foreign policy priorities, but differ in how much value they

[85] This excludes the KRG's representative in Moscow, Aso Jangi Talabani who disagrees on some of the KRG's policies (PUK Central Council, 2015).

place on them. For example, while both parties aim for independence, this is more of a time sensitive imperative for the KDP. The PM believes the KRG has a foreign policy but not a written strategy. Nechervan Barzani said:

> "We don't have a written strategic plan in foreign relations but we know the KRG's strategy … The world political leaders know that the KRG became a factor of stability in the region … balancing and strengthening the relations with neighbouring countries based on mutual respect … The KRG has solid relations with the US, UK and other Western and European countries … Our new plan will focus on developing our relationships with the European countries." (Author's interview with Barzani, 2014)

The KRG's foreign policy has generic principles, which are known, but their approach and lobbying methods have not so far been written about in detail. Falah Mustafa has a similar vision to Nechervan Barzani: "We [KRG] have got a parameter of foreign policy which is in line with Iraqi foreign policy, but at the same time we are conducting and implementing that policy through the KRG's DFR" (author's interview with Mustafa, 2014). Mustafa said the KRG leadership know on what the KRG stands for, what they want to achieve and how they want to go about it. He argues the KRG has a foreign policy and foreign relations to communicate with the outside world (author's interview with Mustafa, 2014). His argument is compatible with Nechervan Barzani's; both agree they have the tools to draw a foreign policy and pinpoint its priorities. Nechervan Barzani said:

> "We view foreign policy from the interests of the Kurdistan Region, this is a reality … Therefore, the first priority is the Kurdistan Region's interests and it is above everything as our work and responsibility is for the Kurdistan Region of Iraq … therefore our conduct of foreign relations is a reflection of the Kurdistan Region's interests." (Author's interview with Barzani, 2014)

Barzani reiterates that the KRG's purpose is to conduct foreign relations and policy to serve the KR-I. The KRG's foreign policy objectives have not been announced or formally agreed upon by the PUK or other political factions. Nevertheless, neither the PUK nor their elite have officially rejected it, and representatives including Deputy PM Qubad Talabani are contributing towards it.

There are obvious clashes between the KRG's and the federal government's foreign policy priorities and objectives on almost all issues, including security, economic and energy policy and recently full sovereignty. (The KRG's priorities will be discussed later in the chapter). There are differences in foreign relations between Erbil and Baghdad in approaching regional powers. Baghdad, during al-Maliki's governments, has had a strained relationship with Turkey and the Arab Gulf States, particularly the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Meanwhile, Erbil has enjoyed excellent relationships with these states. Hussein said:

> "The KRG has better relations with the Gulf States than the central government. Moreover, for a period of time the KRG had better relationships than Baghdad with many states such as European countries where Iraq has embassies. When they talk to us [KRG leadership] they complain about Baghdad not being a functioning state." (Author's interview with Hussein, 2014)

These remarks show the uniqueness of the KRG's foreign relations, the ambitions and efforts of the KRG to expand its foreign relations and foreign states' increasing acceptance of the KRG's foreign relations efforts. In the interviews, PM Barzani and the President's Chief of Staff underlined the differences between Baghdad and Erbil in foreign relations. All the decision makers in the KR-I agree that the KRG has foreign relations and the majority agree that the KRG has a foreign policy that pursues distinctive interests. The next section discusses the President, who is the leading actor in formulating the KRG's foreign policy.

The Kurdistan Region's Presidency

This section discusses the President's (in Kurdish *Sarokayati Haremi Kurdistan)* powers and role in foreign affairs, the positions (e.g. advisors) and bodies associated with the Presidency and how the President and these bodies coordinate.

The Presidency is a political, administrative and legal body that the Kurdistan National Assembly (KNA) promulgated in 2005 (Kurdistan Regional Presidency, 2014). The President formulates and has the major role in foreign policy. He holds the highest executive authority in the KRG, according to Article 1 of the Presidency Law (PL) of the

KR-I in 2005, and in the draft constitution Article 60/1 (Kurdistan Regional Government, 2015; Kurdistan Region Presidency, 2015; author's interview with Dindar Zebari[86], 2014; Kurdistan Regional Government, 2005).[87] Masoud Barzani is the first President of the KR-I. The KNA elected him, and he was sworn into office on 12th June 2005 and re-elected by popular vote (roughly 70 per cent) in 2009.[88] He has been the leader of the KDP since 1979, and the party is considered to be the largest in the KR-I; it predominates politically by controlling Erbil and its institutions, and economically by controlling the KRG's oil revenues.

According to PL Article 12 and draft constitution Article 60/2, the President also serves as the Commander-in-Chief of Peshmerga Armed Forces. Moreover, PL Article 10/10 and draft constitution Article 65/13.2 state the President has powers over security forces; for example, mobilising forces against Daesh to retake territories and sending Peshmerga forces to Kobani in Syria.[89] Although the draft constitution is not yet operative, Masoud Barzani has exercised these powers. Practically, in the PL and draft constitution, President Barzani is responsible for domestic security and defence policy. This and the aforementioned executive articles of the KR-I afford him a stronger position to draw foreign policy. Reflecting on draft constitution Article 60, the former Minister of Peshmerga Affairs, Mustafa Said Qader, said:

> "The Article is operative although the constitution is not there yet as we have a constitutional project which has to be amended and there is a committee working on it … However, we have laws for the President of the Kurdistan Region and give powers to the President which is similar [to the draft constitutional Article] … and we have laws for the Council of Ministers and Ministry of Peshmerga and Interior Ministry and Kurdistan Region

[86] Dindar Zebari is currently the Head of the KRG High Committee to Evaluate and Respond to International Reports and former Deputy Minister in the DFR of International Organisations.
[87] According to Article 120 of the Iraqi constitution, the KR-I is required to have a constitution, but it should not contradict the Iraqi constitution. The controversial draft of the KR-I's constitution has 122 articles that were ratified by the KP on August 24th 2009 (Barznjy, 2013: Insight Kurdistan, 2013). After rejections, mainly from parties opposing the KDP, the Constitution Drafting Committee was formed in the KP in April 2015. The KR-I's draft constitution is not active. The research cites the articles of the initial draft, as they provide guidelines for understanding the political atmosphere and powers that are currently in effect.
[88] According to the PL, Article 2, the President will be elected directly and by secret ballot in the general election in the Kurdistan region. KR-I draft constitution (Article 61) states: "The President will be elected directly and by secret ballot in the general election in the Kurdistan region". These articles have caused political tensions and a stalemate between the major ruling party (KDP) and opposition from the second ruling party (PUK) and Gorran "Change", which was briefly in the government.
[89] The KRG Peshmerga forces' intervention in Syrian Kurdistan (Rojava) in favour of the Kurds would not have been possible without the agreement of the President and Turkey's (AKP) leadership.

> Security Council, they operate according to the laws." (Author's interview with Mustafa Said Qader, 2015)[90]

Qader tries to underline that, to date, the President is the major actor in defence and security policy. According to draft constitution Article 65/21, the President can issue a resolution establishing special offices for the KR-I in foreign countries, based on a proposal from the PM and in coordination with the federal government. The President has already exercised these as-yet unsanctioned powers, which has provided him with a base to lay out the KR-I's foreign relations. The President has power over most of the KRG's representatives, as he gives his permission for their appointment. Hussein said:

> "Legally the President is the face of the KRG to the outside world … The President and the Kurdistan Region's Presidency conduct the genuine and fundamental articulations of foreign relations, as they are responsible for this task. Thereafter, there are other governmental bodies which have foreign affairs activities." (Author's interview with Hussein, 2014)

Dindar Zebari underscored the President's role in foreign policy and his connections with other agencies:

> "Formulating foreign policy is the combined effort of several bodies headed by the President in collaboration with the Council of Ministers, the PM and his Deputy and cabinet, in partnership with the political stand of the KRG supported by political parties, elites, and parliament … The President is formulating policy in line with the Iraqi constitution so far and in line with the draft constitution of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region." (Author's interview with Dindar Zebari, 2014)

While the President plays the central role in foreign relations, other governmental bodies, political parties and elites are also influential. Barzani represents the KRG in the international theatre and international summits. At the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2013 and 2014, he met political leaders and heads of states. Hussein reflected:

[90] Although the laws from the Council of Ministers, ministries and other governmental or legislative bodies are valid, the draft constitution favours the President.

> "When we meet different groups [international delegations], we can see that people [state leaders] interact with the President [Masoud Barzani] as though they are interacting with a head of state. This is an indication of the recognition of the Kurdistan Region as an important economic power and that leadership is an integral part of this success." (The Review Kurdistan Region of Iraq, 2013a)

This is a new horizon for the Kurdish leadership's interactions in international relations that have developed post-Saddam. The President oversees relations between the KRG and the Iraqi federal authorities and overseas (Kurdistan Region Presidency, 2015). There is consensus among officials and politicians that the President plays the major role in directing foreign relations. The KRG's former PM, Dr Barham Salih, emphasised the President's role in making the KRG's foreign policy. He also underlined the role of the PUK, which holds unique external orientations; he described the PUK as a parallel to the KDP:

> "According to the law the President is in charge of the KRG's foreign policy and national security policy. Fundamentally it is the President who is formulating the foreign relations or foreign policy. But the reality in Kurdistan shows that the PUK has its own direction of priorities in formulating foreign policy. This demonstrates that the KRG has foreign policies." (Author's interview with Salih, 2014)

The KDP is the leading driver in the KRG, as it possesses the major positions (President, PM and Head of the DFR) that are engaged in foreign relations. This has aided the President in external activities and in having a coherent foreign policy, which the government designs and the President leads.

The positions and institutions associated with the President

According to the 2006 PL, the President should have a Deputy. The current Deputy President is Kosrat Rasul Ali, Deputy to the Secretary General of the PUK, who the KNA elected (Kurdistan Region Presidency, 2015; Kurdistan National Assembly, 2006). According to the law of the KRP: "The Deputy President assists the President in his duties and in the President's absence is the acting President, the President may delegate some of his powers to the Deputy President" (Kurdistan Region Presidency, 2015;

Kurdistan National Assembly, 2006). Rasul rarely plays a role in or influences foreign affairs; both his chronic health problems and the President's powers have overshadowed his position.

The Diwan of the Presidency is a vital body associated with the Presidency in foreign relations. It is a legal institution that was established in 2005 by the law of the KRP Diwan number 2. In the Diwan of the KRP, there are six directorates: administrative and finance; check and review; legislative affairs; public relations; society affairs and complaints, and media (Kurdistan Region Presidency, 2015). The Diwan's first and current Chief of Staff is Dr Fuad Hussein, who President Barzani appointed according to articles 1, 2 and 3 of the KRP Diwan's law and PL Article 1 in 2005. Hussein has ministerial rank, and can attend all of the KRG's Council of Ministers meetings.[91] He supervises the Diwan's activities and has numerous responsibilities, including public affairs, regional and foreign relations, which are seen as essential (Kurdistan Region Presidency, 2014). He is the diplomatic face of the President and provides administrative supervision and an advisory role to the President's external activities. Hussein said:

> "The bureaucracy of the KRG's President, organising the President's foreign relations and his visits abroad go through me. Meanwhile, foreign consulate representatives come to me to know the views of the President. From these positions, I serve the KRG's foreign relations." (Author's interview with Hussein, 2014)

Hussein receives foreign delegations that aim to meet the President. Usually, Hussein delivers the President's statements and coordinates between the DFR and the KRP, where he is closely engaged with the DFR's activities. Therefore, his role mirrors that of the President in the KRG's foreign affairs and bilateral relationships.

Related to foreign relations and led by the Chancellor, Masrour Barzani (who answers to his father, the President), the Kurdistan Region Security Council (KRSC) is part of the KRP and concerned mainly with national security and intelligence.[92] Officially, this council is under the authority of the KRP and the President. The KRSC focuses on the

[91] Hussein, an Iraqi-Dutch citizen, has abundant work experience in academia and on an international level.
[92] The KRP formed the KRSC on 2nd May 2011, pursuant to Law 4 of 2011, which the KP passed. The KRSC was established to increment collaboration between the agencies of the two main parties' security, intelligence and military intelligence agencies in one council.

security affairs of the KR-I; its intelligence agencies have sophisticated connections and relations with other countries' security and intelligence agencies, which lay out a base for broadening and strengthening relations with foreign governments' services and, consequently, states. The post-Saddam phase witnessed unprecedented interaction with external agencies, in which hundreds of intelligence employees received training and support in the KR-I and globally. Moreover, the chiefs of both agencies have met and coordinated with decision makers in the US and some European countries on issues relating to violent non-state actors – mainly radical jihadists. Although Masrour has superiority over the council, the division between both the KDP and PUK has hindered their integration and cooperation.

At the end of 2016 Masoud Barzani appointed two active and articulate political figures from his party as senior advisors to further energise the KRG's pro-active foreign policy, especially lobbying for independence: Hemin Hawrami former head of the KDP Foreign Relations office, and Hoshyar Zebari. The President determines the foreign policy between various foreign policy actors in the KRG. As a result of these interactions, he is able to formulate foreign policy with personal input. Despite the Kurdish opposition parties' disagreement on a number of policies – and even on the President – he controls key decision-making bodies. The key findings here are that the President has the most influential role in drawing up foreign policy, as he holds leverage over all bodies associated with the KRG's foreign relations. The next section examines the PM's role in the KRG's foreign affairs.

The KRG's Prime Minister

This section shortly illustrates the evolution of the PM's post since 1992. It then discusses the PM's role and powers in foreign relations and foreign policy. Subsequently, it highlights the PM's interaction with other foreign affairs bodies, and briefly compares the role of the PM in the central and Kurdish governments.

The KRG's PM (in Kurdish, *Serok Wazirani Hukumati Haremi Kurdistan*) is the second most powerful actor in conducting the KRG's foreign relations and drawing up foreign policy. The breakdown of the fragile government in the KR-I, which was established in 1992, divided the KR-I into two administrative governments led by two PMs from 1994

to 2006.[93] The KDP's base of authority is in Erbil, and the PUK's in Sulaymaniyah. According to Adnan Mufti, the KRG had unofficial and unannounced representatives from Erbil's and Sulaymaniyah's governments in a few countries (author's interview with Adnan Mufti, 2014).[94]

During 2003, rapprochement between the main political parties was consequential with the evolution of the political process. Since 2006, this has produced a unified government in the fifth cabinet, which the Deputy President of the KDP, Nechervan Barzani, headed.[95] The unified government was according to a strategic agreement between the PUK and KDP.[96] The KDP has more influence on the accord that extended the term of premiership in their favour (James, 2013, 21). The PM is the Head of the KRG's cabinet; he has executive powers according to the KRG's laws, which the KP and the Council of Ministers enacted.[97] The PM, according to Article 65/21 of the KR-I's draft constitution, can exert authority on foreign relations – such as proposing to the President to establish offices in foreign countries. The PM and his Deputy are elected by the parliament majority, therefore the political parties with the most seats bargain over who takes the positions; the President's approval is then required for the PM to go ahead and form the government (Kurdistan Regional Government, 2015). Certainly, the MPs adhere to the political parties' leadership instructions to form the government, and this is dependent on compromises between the parties.

The PM and his Deputy are in close coordination with the Head of the DFR in the Council of Ministers, and oversee their activities; this is backed by Article 18 of the Council of Ministers law (The KRG Council of Ministers' Law, 2006). The PM plays a pivotal role in conducting foreign relations, such as formal meetings with officials from various countries (e.g. ministers and ambassadors). The PM who is also the Deputy President of the KDP has a personal input that shapes the KRG's foreign policy, which is in line with the President's vision. PM Nechervan Barzani said:

> "We [the KRG] draw a policy and I had role in drawing it … The policy is on the basis to have normal relationships with all our neighbours and we

[93] For example, in the 1990s, Erbil's PM was Rowsch Shaways,a prominent veteran figure in the KDP,and Sulaymaniyah's was Kosrat Rasul,the first Deputy Secretary-General of the PUK.
[94] Andan Mufti is a member in the PUK political bureau and was Speaker of the KP in 2014.
[95] After a marginal win for the Kurdistani List (KDP and PUK coalition) in the 2009 election, Dr Barham headed the sixth cabinet. He became the PM and built on the successful progress of the earlier cabinet. Nechervan Barzani assumed the seventh cabinet in 2012.
[96] The PM's post has been rotated, with two years each for the KDP and PUK, for some of the cabinets.
[97] The KRG's Council of Ministers law number one 2006 includes 24 articles that provide powers to the PM and the cabinet in the governance (The KRG's Council of Ministers' Law, 2006).

> managed to have balanced relationships with the neighbouring countries for instance with Iran and Turkey without being biased to one side … I had a progressive role in designing the KRG regional policy with Iran, Turkey, Syria and even with Baghdad. However, other political forces had a role, adopted and contributed to the policy." (Author's interview with Barzani, 2014)

The PM plays a crucial role in building the KRG's capacity to develop its foreign relations, particularly regional relations. He is a key negotiator in the KRG's security and economic affairs with Turkey, Iran and Baghdad. Nechervan Barzani said:

> "The KRG's foreign policy is mainly drawn by the KRG's Presidency and government [Cabinet] … The implementation and execution of the policy is by the DFR … For example, some of the files [particular relationships] which are related to some states are conducted by the DFR, while the KRG's Presidency deals with regional states because it is a sensitive issue for us." (Author's interview with Barzani, 2014)

PM Nechervan Barzani has encouraged foreign investments, businesses and trade to engage in both the public and private sectors in the KR-I this was asserted in his inauguration speech for the eighth cabinet in June 2014 (Kurdistan Regional Government, 2014). Therefore, he is shaping the KRG's economic diplomacy. Dr Najmaldin Karim[98] stated: "PM Barzani has strengthened relationships with Turkey and frequently visits Istanbul for mutual economic and security purposes" (author's interview with Karim, 2014). For example, the PM had a key role in economic integration between the KR-I and Turkey and in mediating previous peace process negotiations between the PKK and Turkey.

Karim argues: "The Presidency and the Council of Ministers in particular, the President [Masoud] and the Prime Minister [Nechervan] of the KRG, are the primary actors in formulating the KRG's foreign policy, not the DFR which advocates that policy" (author's interview with Karim, 2014). The President and the PM provide cohesiveness in the KRG's foreign policy. They recognise the effect of their involvement in the development of exploration and production of oil and gas. Moreover, the PM underscores the

[98] Dr Najmaldin Karim is the governor of Kirkuk and a PUK political bureau member.

engagement of his Deputy and the President in the DFR, and subsequently in the KRG's foreign relations.

Nechervan Barzani said in 2014:

> "The DFR's Minister has a formal relationship with me [PM] and my Deputy [Qubad Talabani] who supervises and provides instructions to some foreign affairs files while I supervise the other files. We do the work together … in respect to Dr Fuad Hussein, as he is in the Diwan and close to the President, he has awareness about all the work of the DFR." (Author's interview with Barzani, 2014)

There has been progressive coordination in foreign affairs between PM Nechervan Barzani and his Deputy, Qubad Talabani, from the PUK. Article 18 of the KRG's Council of Ministers' law gives the Deputy PM an oversight role (after the PM) over the DFR (The KRG Council of Ministers' Law, 2006). They all share responsibilities in foreign affairs, for example Qubad and Hussein supervise and develop the US and Europe–KRG relationships. There have been far fewer differences in foreign affairs between the KRG's PMs and his deputy, who is from a rival party, than between Baghdad's PM and his deputies. The KRG PM's role in foreign affairs is significant but less influential than that of the PM in Baghdad. The KRG's foreign relations, duties and responsibilities are distributed and organised between the officials – especially the President, the PM and his Deputy, as well as the Head of the DFR – but they all adhere to President Barzani. Salih's and Nechervan's fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth cabinets (2006–present) have had functioning governments and made progress in foreign relations. Finally, mapping the core executive actors, the PM is the second most powerful actor in decision making and laying out international objectives. After the President, the PM has a notable role in designing diplomacy, mainly with regional states, but recently also in Europe and Russia. The next section discusses the DFR's role in the KRG's foreign relations.

The KRG's Department of Foreign Relations (DFR)

This section discusses the DFR's foundation, structure and coordination with the I-MOFA, and the purpose and activities of the DFR.

The foundation of the DFR

The KR-I's leadership, particularly the KDP's, realised the need for the DFR amid the gradual rise of the KRG on the international scene politically and economically. Although the DFR is not a ministry, its Head holds ministerial rank and is a part of the KRG's cabinet, with a variety of responsibilities regarding foreign relations. Previously, the conduct of the KRG's foreign relations was disorganised and carried out mainly by political parties with less specialised governmental bodies. Post-2003, the process of institutionalising foreign relations began. The Iraqi constitution paved the way for the establishment of the DFR, which was set up in September 2006 according to Article 22 of the KRG's Council of Ministers' Law no.1 by the KRG's Council of Ministers, under the supervision of PM Nechervan Barzani (author's interviews with Mustafa, 2014 and Dindar Zebari, 2014). Official establishment order 143 was brought into effect on January 2009, which relies on Article 121/4 of the Iraqi constitution and the aforementioned Law no.1 (Kurdistan Regional Government Order, 2009). It includes the duties of the DFR and outlines the establishment of seven directorates, each of which consists of two specialised sections (Kurdistan Regional Government Order, 2009). The directorates are: international relations; the KRG's offices abroad; international organisation; protocol and delegations; legal affairs; media and communications, and administration and finance (Kurdistan Regional Government Order, 2009). PM Nechervan Barzani appointed Falah Mustafa Baker as Head of the DFR who is close to President Masoud Barzani, for whom Mustafa acts as occasional translator for important events. Mustafa participates in all Council of Ministers meetings in which foreign relations and policy are discussed. The DFR is officially under the premiership of the KRG's Council of Ministers. The KRP also supervises it – particularly (at the time of writing) the Chief of Staff, Hussein – which results in the KRP directing the DFR according to the President's vision.

The DFR is an administrative body; or, as Salih put it, "A technical service body of the KRG, which has yet to be finalised by the Kurdistan Parliament" (author's interview with Salih, 2014). Mustafa said: "The KRG has parameters of foreign policy which go along the lines of Iraqi foreign policy. But, at the same time, the DFR is on the ground implementing and conducting the KRG's foreign policy" (author's interview with Mustafa, 2014). It can be argued that the DFR is an executive body that conducts the KRG's foreign relations and implements the foreign policy that the KRG's President and PM create.

The DFR's relationship with the federal government in Baghdad

After the DFR's inception, PM Barzani wrote a letter to the federal government asking for cooperation, particularly from the I-MOFA (author's interview with Mustafa, 2014). Meetings have convened to study insufficient areas of cooperation between the DFR and the I-MOFA. The results of the collaboration between the DFR and I-MOFA is evident in the representation of more than 30 countries in the KR-I and visiting delegations, many of which come via Baghdad. The relationship lacks advanced cooperation between both institutions (I-MOFA and DFR) including the Iraqi embassies and the KRG's representations abroad (author's interview with Mustafa, 2014). In 2015, the author attended a meeting between the Head of the KRG's representation in the UK and Iraqi Embassy representatives at the KRG's office in London. There were complaints about the lack of coordination between both representatives, such as the Iraqi Embassy providing some diplomatic leverage to the KRG's representative's officers that the I-MOFA was reluctant to provide. Karwan Jamal Tahir, the KRG's representative to the UK and former Deputy Minister of the DFR and, said:

> "According to the Iraqi constitution, a number of articles stipulated that the function, organisation and performance of ministries should be regulated by a law. The Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs law Article 42 points to the implementation of Article 121/4[99] that the Iraqi Council of Ministers should form a committee to issue a law for a system to coordinate the work between embassies and the region's or province's representatives." (Author's interview with Tahir, 2014)

Tahir argued that Iraq's Council of Ministers issued an order to form the committee, which should have been composed of both sides' representatives. The DFR drafted a paper on how the KRG would be represented abroad and how to work with Iraqi embassies. The meetings were unfruitful during al-Maliki's rule. Tahir suggested that Baghdad's committee members might not have a political order on how to act (author's interview with Tahir, 2014). Although in some areas there has been some progress in terms of coordination, in general the level of suspicion on each side has depended on the political instability between Erbil and Baghdad. Mustafa indicated the cooperation between the I-MOFA and the DFR, especially during Hoshyar Zebari's tenure. He

[99] This grants rights for the regions and provinces to establish offices in Iraqi embassies.

mentioned the limited support of the ministry that facilitated the DFR to be part of the I-MOFA's delegation in the General Assembly in the United Nations for the first time in 2013 (al-Fayad, 2013). The existence of a Kurdish political elite, members of which belong to the same political party in both Baghdad's and Erbil's governmental bodies, relatively eased some coordination and collaboration between these institutions. At the end of 2014, Mustafa said:

> "The cooperation between the DFR and I-MOFA could be better and we hope for more. In general, regarding coordination between Erbil and Baghdad, we had difficult relationships with the federal government especially the two terms of the former PM al-Maliki, it was not a healthy relationship because we did not find al-Maliki as a partner." (Author's interview with Mustafa, 2014)

The insufficient coordination reflects on all ministries' coordination between Baghdad and Erbil to various degrees. Discussions are continuing with respect to the DFR being part of the Iraqi Diplomatic Mission (The Review Kurdistan Region of Iraq, 2013b, 11). Karim argues:

> "Despite the fact that the two officials are Kurdish, there has never been good coordination between the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the KRG's DFR. They were on a collision course; the DFR would be more effective if there was better coordination. Nevertheless, they have begun to establish a relationship." (Author's interview with Karim, 2014)

In addition to the fragile relationship between the I-MOFA and DFR, the political instability in Iraq and tensions between Baghdad and Erbil has slowed the progress between the two. When Ibrahim al-Jaafari became FM, the two institutions became further polarised. Therefore, on an administrative level there is feeble coordination, and politically there are increasing differences that have curbed the collaboration.

The DFR's offices abroad assist a large number of Kurds in legal services, such as ratification and authentication of documents belonging to members of the Kurdish diaspora. In coordination with the I-MOFA, they grant power of attorney and assist Kurdish people abroad to obtain legal council (Department of Foreign Relations, 2015). These offices maintain the Kurdish diaspora's links with their region and the KRG.

According to Article 121/4 of the Iraqi constitution, "Offices for the regions and governorates shall be established in Iraqi embassies and diplomatic missions, in order to follow cultural, social, and development affairs". Controversially, the DFR's representatives are supposed to be within Iraqi embassies, but they have separate offices outside the buildings of Iraqi embassies abroad. Therefore, they conduct the work without the interference and observation of the Iraqi embassies (Mansour, 2014, 1187). Their relationship also depends on the personalities of those representing both governments between the Iraqi Embassy and the KRG's representatives. Neither the KRG nor Baghdad has disabled their representatives' relationships with each other. However, there is ambiguity and suspicion from each side about the other's performance. The lack of coordination on the bureaucratic level (between the I-MOFA and DFR, as well as between the embassies and representatives) reflects the dilemma of the political process between Erbil and Baghdad, which further divides Iraq's foreign policies.

The purpose and activities of the DFR

The KRG's primary body for international ties is the DFR. It is actively involved in building and broadening foreign relations with states and multinational organisations (Invest in Group, 2014). Dindar Zebari argues,

> "The DFR is a key partner in the implementation of Iraqi foreign policy when it comes to expansion of international presence and enhancing foreign relations. The de facto status of the DFR has led it to be involved in pressurising Baghdad for certain policy orientations – for instance, in terms of an 'open door' policy with neighbouring countries." (Author's interview with Dindar Zebari, 2014)

However, the Shia-led government perceives the DFR with scepticism, viewing it as part of the KRG's effort to further devolve powers and ultimately achieve independence.

The DFR is preparing Kurdistan for the next step with more economical, administrative and devolved political power. The DFR organises conferences and exhibitions in the KRG and abroad. The DFR regulates the KRG's interaction with the outside world and helps to provide a positive impression to the international community regarding the evolution

of the KR-I (author's interview with Mustafa, 2014). The relevant responsibilities of the DFR are: strengthening bilateral relations with the regional and international community; promoting trade, investment, tourism and institutional ties; organising the visits of political and economic delegations to the KRG; conducting and supporting activities that enhance the image of the KR-I, and coordination with the I-MOFA (Department of Foreign Relations, 2014). Mustafa said:

> "We laid out the DFR's strategy since day one of its establishment. It is working on two levels: first, with the I-MOFA to encourage the Iraqi embassies in Baghdad to have representations in Erbil; second, going abroad and reaching out to the international community through representations, initiating visits, accepting invitations to encourage businesses, parliamentarian, cultural, and educational delegations to come to the KR-I, and to have a strong presence in media, think tanks and universities." (Author's interview with Mustafa, 2014)

This strategy reflects the KRG's policy of adopting two tracks: one in Baghdad, contributing to Iraqi foreign policy and a second for the making of foreign policy for the KRG. The first track aims to serve the KRG's interests including securing and defending its rights in Baghdad and the second track promotes the KRG's interests internationally. Regarding the latter track for example, the KRG's representatives abroad are engaged in public diplomacy. Some of their representatives have actively conveyed their messages in writing for high-profile media outlets, participated in foreign broadcast programmes, summits and events. According to officials in the DFR and the department's website, the DFR performs its duties according to the KRG's legislation and the Iraqi constitution (Department of Foreign Relations, 2014). However, the Shia-led government claim the DFR violates the Iraqi constitution in some of its exercises of foreign relations. The KRG's representatives have several purposes: they assert the economic ties, governmental collaboration, and coordination with foreign entities; they enhance diplomatic relations, the KRG's representatives abroad (pseudo-diplomats akin to Quebecois, Scottish or Basque foreign representatives) have become familiar faces regionally and internationally (Romano, 2010, 1358). The numbers of DFR representatives and offices abroad have gradually increased; there are now 14 representatives. Western countries such as the US; UK; Australia; Italy, Spain and Germany have hosted the KRG's representatives and the KRG's mission to the European Union in Brussels. There are representatives in Russia and Iran (Department of Foreign

Relations, 2014), and 31 diplomatic representations accredited from countries worldwide in the KR-I in the form of honorary consulates, commercial offices and governmental representative offices. There are also representations of international organisations based in Erbil, where five of the countries are from the Security Council. The DFR's policy is to broaden its relations from West to East.

The presence of multiple international bodies, including the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and the EU delegation in the KR-I, disclose the political and economic atmosphere in the KR-I to the outside world while contributing to the region's development. The DFR organises and supervises the relations between the KRG and the aforementioned international organisations in three main areas. First, the DFR makes sure the KRG is in full cooperation when there are areas of engagement for Iraq with international organisations. Second, the KRG participates in full discussions with the UN and multinational organisations as a federal entity that has the right to exercise self-representation within Iraqi delegations. Third, the DFR oversees international presences in Erbil to ensure they are supported to help the KR-I in terms of democracy; development; peaceful transitional of power; human rights; construction, humanitarian support and transparency. Since the 1990s, the KR-I has had extensive relations with international organisations and NGOs that have been vital humanitarian corridors for the Iraqi Kurds (author's interview with Dindar Zebari, 2014).

The DFR is a crucial instrument in conducting foreign relations and being a proponent for the Kurdish leadership's vision. One reason for the KRG and DFR's success in foreign relations is coordination between the critical bodies in the KRG's foreign affairs. For example, the DFR and its Head (Mustafa), in coordination with the Chief of Staff (Hussein) and Deputy PM (Qubad Talabani), have together engaged in systematic, organised and extensive lobbying in Europe and the US.

To sum up, the DFR works for diplomatic and political ties as well as seeking economic, humanitarian, security and military support for the KRG. The DFR has managed to broaden the KRG's foreign relations, liaise with international powers and endorse the KRG in order to have a strong presence internationally – particularly since the rise of Daesh, the financial crisis and the call for a referendum on independence. A key finding here is that the DFR represents a nexus between the President, PM and the Council of Ministers, each of which have an input in the DFR to direct foreign relations. The DFR manages to balance, contain and synchronise these engagements to coherently execute

foreign relations and foreign policy statements. As the Head of the DFR, President and the PM are from the KDP, this helps to ease coordination. A number of concerns remain regarding future political bargaining between Baghdad and Erbil. During Hoshyar Zebari's tenure, there were few achievements because of limited collaboration between the DFR and the I-MOFA; there are poor prospects for future collaboration, because the new Iraqi FM has a rigid stance towards the KRG and Iraq is further fragmenting. This matches with the transformation of the KRG's foreign policy: from paradiplomacy to protodiplomacy (This is discussed in Chapter 2 and, briefly, later in this chapter). Finally, the DFR conducts foreign relations (day to day practice) and implements the foreign policy that is designed by the President, and the PM has some input. The next section discusses the role of political parties in the KRG's foreign affairs.

The Iraqi Kurdish political parties' foreign relations

This section examines the role of the major parties (KDP and PUK) and analyses their external activities. It discusses the role of the parties in the KRG's foreign relations and policy. It briefly examines the parties' relationships with regional states and non-state actors.

Behind the scenes the parties' leaders, led by the KDP, determine the KRG's foreign policy positions. The PUK represents the party rather than the KRG in foreign affairs, and its position is not official, even though it controls areas and runs local administrations. The KDP has superiority in drawing up and executing the KRG's foreign policy. Before and after 2003, the KDP and PUK have conducted external relations and activities. The political parties' external ties have supported the KRG's foreign relations, particularly in bargaining with regional powers. Hussein elaborated: "The Kurdish political parties were struggling for their rights in the mountains and for decades the party leaders have established relations with regional and international countries. Post-2003, these parties continued their relations with foreign countries" (author's interview with Hussein, 2014).

The KDP has a nationalist, conservative, tribal leadership with considerable tribal loyalties and recently incorporated educated individuals. It has a more cohesive structure than the PUK. The PUK is made up of leftist intellectuals; it is progressive, includes fewer hyper-nationalists, and has been fragmented since its foundation. It can

be argued that the PUK is centre-Left and the KDP centre-Right; both have nationalist sentiments for a greater Kurdistan. Their disparity includes a power struggle; competition for interests and revenue sharing; divergence in domestic policies and disagreements about the shape of the political system. These have led to different regional alliances, and even divergent periodic changes on how to view Baghdad.

Territorial control, in which each party has a specific area to exercise authority, has confined each party's foreign relations because the PUK is bordered with Iran and the KDP with Turkey. Geopolitics has pressured both parties to give concessions to their neighbours for economic, political and security purposes. This paved the way for the regional powers to interfere in the KR-I's domestic politics and economics. It is crucial to note that enclave borders have curbed alternative regional relations options (Hira and Jabary, 2013, 103). Both parties utilise their political weight and capabilities in regional relationships that help the KRG. Regional powers have testified to their shrewd and pragmatic approach, which has prevented confrontation.

Both political parties aim to compromise and prevent clashes with regional powers. For example, the KDP accepted multiple military interventions in the KR-I from Turkish troops in the 1990s to track down the PKK fighters. After Turkey's military withdrawal, they left MIT offices (Hira and Jabary, 2013, 104). Post-2003, the Turks have been heavily involved in the KRG in many private and public sectors. The PUK has facilitated a relationship with Iran for containing the Iranian opposition Kurdish political parties for a period of time. Bilal Wahab (2015) argues that what really influences Kurdish politics and it regional agendas are Kurdistan's political parties' agendas and domestic power balance. The parties' calculations matter more than regional dynamics (Wahab, 2015). However, the regional powers' relationships with the parties matter in their calculations.

The Iraqi Kurdish position with respect to Syrian Kurdish political parties varies between the KDP and PUK. The KDP has a tense relationship with the powerful Syrian Kurdish party, the Democratic Union Party (PYD), and the KRG's official stance reflects the KDP's, whereas the PUK and much of its leadership have close ties and coordinate with the PYD. The PUK has a friendly rapport with the Kurdish parties in Syria and Turkey that rival the KDP and their allies.[100] The KDP has affiliations with or significant leverage on some smaller Syrian, Turkish and Iranian Kurdish political parties and

[100] The PUK has close ties with the Kurdish Democratic Progress Party (KDPP) in Syria, and Komala in Iran.

armed groups.[101] Of the KDP's and PUK's Kurdish allies in Turkey, Iran and Syria, most are rivals with each other. For example, in Rojava, the PYD (PUK ally) and the Kurdistan National Council (KNC) (KDP ally) are competitors. This is to the extent that the PYD does not allow KNC fighters into Rojava because the KNC is trained and equipped by the KDP and allegedly Turkey. The gap between the parties' external relations widened for several reasons: Jalal Talabani's stroke; increasing regional competition between the KDP and the PKK and its affiliations; the rise of the Kurds in Rojava; the internal political stalemate regarding the future of Kurdistan's political system, particularly the Presidency;[102] the halt of the progress of the KR-I due to the rise of Daesh, significant numbers of internally displaced persons and the drop in oil prices.

The KDP dominates the major vital foreign affairs bodies, and the PUK does not seek to disrupt it. Both parties have their own separate external ties, which support the KRG's foreign policy. The parties' external relationships do not serve the federal government or Iraq as a whole; instead, they bargain with Baghdad on issues that benefit the elites, the parties and the KRG's interests.

The parties' structure and intra-politics in foreign relations

Before and after 2003, the KDP and PUK have had representatives and offices abroad, including in the US, the UK, Iran, Turkey and Egypt. Gradually, the number of the KRG's representatives increased while the parties maintained their own representatives overseas. Deputy Secretary of the PUK, Salih, said: "Abroad in Europe and the United States, there is a KRG representative but also we see the KDP and PUK offices. This reflects the political reality on the ground" (author's interview with Salih, 2014). Salih underlines that the parties' representatives reflect the KR-I, which is divided between the two major powers. The political parties' offices abroad facilitate the parties' activities in host countries to augment their ability to reach out to Kurdish diaspora.

The two parties have a complex and ambiguous structure regarding foreign affairs. There are organisations within each party that specialise in foreign relations. Hoshyar Siwaily heads the KDP's foreign relations office/bureau, and Abdul Razaq Faily heads the PUK's. These bodies are more administrative departments; the parties' leaders draw

[101] The KDP has leverage on the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Iran (PDKI), Kurdistan Democratic Party North in Turkey (KDPB), Kurdistan Democratic Party in Syria (KDPS) and KNC.
[102] The KDP favours electing the president by a direct vote from the people, whereas the opposing parties want to elect the President indirectly through the parliament.

up the external interests and objectives. Masoud Barzani creates the party's strategy, to which everyone adheres; but Nechervan Barzani has special status, as he is popular and considered to be a modern pragmatist. The PUK continues to be fragmented; after Jalal Talabani, several actors have conducted the PUK's foreign relations, all with different perspectives. These include Dr Barham Salih, Hero Ibrahim Ahmed (Jalal Talabani's wife), Lahur Talabani and the PUK's representative in the UK, Shanaz Ibrahim. Notably, the KDP's foreign relations department is more prominent and cohesive in external activities than the PUK's.

Generally, the KDP has a friendly rapport with Iraqi-Arab Sunni political factions, while the PUK has friendly relationships with the Iraqi Shia political factions. Both parties seek a strong relationship with the US, European countries and Russia.[103] Falah Mustafa argued:

> "The KRG's foreign policy principle is one that all the political parties agree on. For example, consistently good relations with neighbours and the outside world and good strategic relationships with countries such as the US, UK … I don't believe any political party is against that principle. What remains among the political parties is preferences of doing [approach] which are not opposing the main pillar of the KRG's foreign policy where almost all the parties are with it … where the coalition government policies represent the will of the majority." (Author's interview with Mustafa, 2014)

Romano (2010, 1359) stated that the Iraqi Kurds reach the outside world with a united voice, and neighbouring states have grown more accustomed to that voice. Those political streams shape the KRG's foreign policy, whereas the two major parties have the most influence due to their enriched roots in various sectors in the KR-I. Nechervan Barzani argues: "Despite the differences among some of the political elite and party leaders they did not violate the KRG's foreign policy decision making or framework" (author's interview with Barzani, 2014). However, Romano (2010, 1352) argues that the major Kurdish opposition party, Gorran, criticised the KDP and PUK for failing to achieve Kurdish foreign policy goals in terms of oil. The now-deceased Nawshirwan Mustafa, leader of the Gorran movement, which was in the government until the KDP expelled them, often criticised systematic corruption; lack of transparency about the

[103] For more than a decade, they have benefited militarily, financially and politically from the US. They received funding and logistic support from the US administration and Congress for various schemes and programmes (Author's interview with Gulmohamad, 2015)

budget; oil contracts; relationships between Kurdish leaders and Baghdad, and relationships between Kurdish leaders and the US administration (Romano, 2010, 1353). The main predicament is parties' and officials' lack of openness about foreign affairs, including bilateral relationships with states and energy contracts with transnational corporations.

There is a high degree of coordination between the KDP leadership and the KRG's foreign relations core executive bodies, because the KDP controls the heads of all the key posts. In the meantime, there is very limited influence and coordination between the PUK and the KRG's foreign affairs bodies, as the PUK does not dominate the main positions. There are limited degrees of cooperation between the parties' representatives and the KRG's representatives abroad. The next section outlines and examines the Iraqi constitution in the context of the KRG's foreign relations.

The Iraqi constitution and the KRG's foreign policy

This section discusses the Iraqi constitution in relation to the KRG's foreign policy, and examines the conduct of paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy in the KRG's foreign stance and in respect to the Iraqi constitution, and the divergence over control of oil and gas between Baghdad and Erbil and their energy policies.

The Iraqi constitution and the KRG's foreign relations and foreign policy

Articles 117/1 and 141 of section five of the Iraqi constitution acknowledged and accepted the KR-I's existing authorities' laws, organisations and activities before writing the constitution.[104, 105] Therefore, Kurdish politicians view the KRG's foreign relations as part of its previous activities, which have been exercised since 1992. O'Leary stated that the new Iraqi constitution recognises the KP, KR-I and KRG and all of their laws and contracts since 1992, and grants power and autonomy to the KP in terms of legislation, with very limited powers given to the federal government (O'Leary, 2008, 38). Salih said: "The KRG's foreign relations are a continuation of reality from before 2003. The

[104] Article 117/1 of the Iraqi constitution stipulates: "This constitution, upon coming into force, shall recognise the region of Kurdistan along with its existing authorities, as a federal region" (Iraqi constitution, 2005)
[105] Article 141 of the Iraqi constitution states: "Legislation enacted in the region of Kurdistan since 1992 shall remain in force, and decisions issued by the government of the region of Kurdistan, including court decisions and contracts, shall be considered valid unless they are amended or annulled pursuant to the laws of the region of Kurdistan by the competent entity in the region, provided that they do not contradict with the Constitution." (Iraqi constitution, 2005)

KRG had some relations with the Americans, Turks and Iranians and with other countries. This was very different to what Baghdad was doing" (author's interview with Salih, 2014). Kurdish politicians reiterate articles 117/1 and 141 of the Iraqi constitution to legitimise their external activities and foreign policy. This contradicts Article 110/1, which stipulates: "The federal government shall have exclusive authorities in…Formulating foreign policy and diplomatic representation; negotiation, signing, and ratify international treaties and agreements; negotiation, signing and ratifying debt policies and formulating foreign sovereign economic and trade policy". The Article states that the federal government has the sole power to design and manage the country's foreign relations and foreign policy. However, the KRG officials who the author interviewed argued the KRG does not violate the Iraqi constitution because it is in line with Iraqi foreign policy. The KRG has developed its structure and the right to issue laws and orders in conducting foreign relations.

Article 121/1 emphasises Baghdad's exclusive power over formulating foreign policy while granting the KR-I executive, legislative and judicial powers.[106] Meanwhile, Article 121/4 granted some limited powers to regions to conduct foreign relations in narrow terms, as well as to have representations and diplomatic missions abroad.[107] This Article provides the KRG with a platform to develop its foreign affairs and facilitate the implementation of its policies. However, Saad argues that some of the KRG's representations have extended their activities to become more influential than permitted in Article 121/1,4 of the Iraqi constitution (2013, 16).

While the Article restricts the KRG's foreign relation powers to only cultural, social and developmental affairs, the KRG has a powerful lobbying machine, which in some countries is more salient than the Iraqi embassies. This is the case where the KRG's representatives have close ties with groups of lawmakers in the UK parliament and the US Congress. Arguably, this is due to the weakness of Iraqi diplomatic missions and the proactiveness of the KRG. Danilovich argues that federal units are allowed to have representatives and offices abroad, with limited activities in their diplomatic missions, which have to be under the control of the federal government (Danilovich, 2014, 96).

[106] Article 121/1 in the Iraqi constitution states: "The regional powers shall have the right to exercise executive, legislative, and judicial powers in accordance with this Constitution, except for those authorities stipulated in the exclusive authorities of the federal government" (Iraqi constitution, 2005).
[107] Article 121/4 in the Iraqi constitution states: "Offices for the regions and governorates shall be establish in embassies and diplomatic missions in order to follow cultural, social, and development affairs"(Iraqi constitution, 2005).

Most of the KRG's representatives do not admit to exercising powers beyond the Iraqi constitution. In 2014, Shwani said:

> "According to Iraqi constitution Article 121, the KRG is permitted to have offices in Iraqi embassies for economic and cultural purposes … The Iraqi constitution does not prohibit the KRG from having independent [separate] offices abroad to conduct relationships with these states. Therefore, I don't see that the KRG is violating the Iraqi constitution, but the KRG should consider that these relationships should be in the framework of Iraq's political strategy." (Author's interview with Shwani, 2014)

Shwani, who was the Chairman of the legal committee in the ICR, provides a valid legal perspective with which many Shia officials disagree; the latter interpret the articles differently and place more emphasis on Articles 110 and 121/4 which states that the KRG's representatives should be inside the embassies. Tahir said:

> "The KRG has the power to establish any department, and this is totally in line with the Iraqi constitution. This order [to establish the DFR] did not grant the DFR power to draw foreign policy. However, we have ambitions to increase our capabilities and become more than a department." (Author's interview with Tahir, 2014)

Although the DFR was established by order no. 143 of the KRG's Council of Ministers, in line with the Iraqi constitution, the KP should stipulate how far the DFR will be involved in the KRG's foreign affairs (author's interview with Dindar Zebari, 2014).

The KP has been inactive since October 2015 due to political stalemate mainly between the KDP and Gorran, and it does not have a direct influence on foreign relations and policy; nor does it have a committee specialising in foreign affairs, like the Foreign Relations Committee (FRC) in the ICR. However, for the time being, the KP's laws and Council of Ministers' orders fill the Iraqi constitutional vacuum and ambiguity. The KP's laws have the right to amend Iraqi legislation that falls outside the federal government's exclusive powers (Kurdistan Regional Government, 2016; Kurdistan Parliament, 2016).

In 2010, Talib Rasheed Yadgar, General Director of the Presidential Diwan, argued that the KRG has the legality in the constitution to perform its foreign relations. His

conclusion was redrawn and based on a number of articles in the Iraqi constitution that do not reject the KRG's right to have foreign relations (Mohammed and Owtram, 2014, 70). Meanwhile, discrepancies in reviewing the KRG's scope of foreign relations reflect domestic, political and economic friction between the KRG and the federal government, the differences in interpretation of the constitution and the different visions between the Iraqi-Arab Shias and Sunnis and the Kurdish elites.

Paradiplomacy, protodiplomacy and the Iraqi constitution

The Iraqi constitution provides some space to conduct paradiplomacy for three reasons. First, the KRG had representatives and executed foreign relations before 2003 (Mohammed and Owtram, 2014, 71; Washington Institute, 2014). Articles 117/1 and 141 legitimise the KRG's existing authorities; In July 2014, Mustafa said: "We [KRG] had de facto independence from Iraq from 1991 to 2003 where we had our own foreign relations" (Washington Institute, 2014). Second, formulating foreign policy is not a right of the KRG, as the central government has the sole power to formulate foreign policy (as stated in Article 110/1); however, it identifies neither the practicality nor the process of implementing foreign policy and foreign relations. Furthermore, Article 115 mitigates Article 110, which grants residual authority; all of the powers not stipulated in the exclusive powers of the federal government automatically belong to the authorities of the regions or federal entities in Iraq. Hence, the constitution does not prohibit the KRG from performing foreign relations and providing legalities for its activities, but it is prohibited from forming foreign policy (Mohammed and Owtram, 2014, 71). Third, Article 121/4 points out that the KR-I can have offices in Iraqi embassies that promote cultural, social and developmental affairs. In principle, this Article provides space for the KRG to have representatives abroad, but they are outside the Iraqi embassies and scarcely coordinate.

In 2011, Bayan Sami Abdul Rahman stated that the KRG has no representative in any country in which Iraq has no embassy (See, Mohammed and Owtram, 2014, 71). Although Abdul Rahman's statement is true, the KRG has clandestine ties with states that do not have a relationship with Baghdad. Theoretically, the constitutional articles have built a foundation for the KRG's paradiplomacy. Officially, these three areas match the KRG's formal conduct of paradiplomacy; but practically, the KRG is exercising maximal paradiplomacy that reflects the de facto nature of its foreign policy.

From 2014, Erbil officially began to adopt protodiplomacy as it publicly sought independence (see Chapter 2). The Iraqi constitution does not give any region the right to self-determination or to seek independence. However, the Kurdish leadership argue that the Iraqi constitution is not fully implemented by Baghdad and in the preamble it stipulates "free union of people, land and of sovereignty", which can be interpreted that the KR-I's inclusion in Iraq is not mandatory. Therefore, the KRG resorted to a referendum that Baghdad does not consent to. Protodiplomacy increasingly matches with the KRG's external activities and international interests. Informally, protodiplomacy was also in line with the following contentious dynamics that existed before 2014 between Baghdad and Erbil. Post-2003, Baghdad became suspicious about the KRG's activities to fulfil the growing Kurdish ambitions and discrepancies have manifested over several matters. For example, oil and gas control including exports, and the KRG lobbying for their interests in Western capitals. The different interpretations, loopholes and ambiguity of the constitution have led to further disputes. These problems are interrelated and influence Baghdad's and Erbil's foreign affairs. The author of this dissertation argues that, post-2003, paradiplomacy was one of the tools the KRG utilised extensively to expand its foreign relations in a relatively legal but controversial manner, which Baghdad disputes. The KRG overtly utilised protodiplomacy as Iraq further fragmented after the rise of Daesh, and since the KRG loudly asserted its intention to have a referendum for more decentralisation – or even separation. The next subsection examines another constitutional dilemma concerned with natural resources, which has widened the schism between Erbil's and Baghdad's foreign policies interests.

The Iraqi constitution in Erbil's and Baghdad's foreign policies on natural energy

To comprehend Baghdad's and Erbil's divergence it is critical to demonstrate the constitutional dilemma in controlling natural resources, which is reflected in their foreign policies. Post-Saddam, controlling oil and gas became a major tension between the central government and the KRG. The vague Article 112 in the Iraqi constitution is heavily cited in a controversial debate on who has the sole power of formulating foreign policy in terms of oil and gas management and control. Article 112/1 states the regional and federal governments *together* have powers over management of natural resources. Article 112/2 underlines the requirement for cooperation between Erbil and Baghdad to

draw a coherent energy policy.[108] However, the KRG argues that this cooperation refers to current oilfields, not future oilfields, which were developed after writing the constitution and therefore not referred to in the Article. The KRG argues that it exclusively controls future oilfields in the KR-I (author's interview with Shwani, 2014), an interpretation with which Baghdad disagrees.

Internal issues, such as these in the oil and gas sector, can become internationalised; obviously, extraction and production will be performed with the assistance of transnational companies. Erbil argues it has the right to negotiate agreements with international actors and corporations regarding oil and gas; anything not prohibited by the Iraqi constitution is permissible for the KRG – its laws that have priority are based on Article 115 (author's interview with Shwani, 2014).[109] Due to the constitutional disputes and different interpretations, the KP approved hydrocarbon law number 28 in 2007 that paved the way for the KRG to produce and sell oil. The federal government rejected the oil and gas law and all of the KRG's following petroleum actions (Natali, 2010, 110). Shwani said: "The federal government has the general title and draws the general policy, but the implementation is for the federal region and governorates" (author's interview with Shwani, 2014). The KRG can implement the policy, but questions arise when the implementation contradicts Baghdad's interests. The Shia-led government disagrees with Shwani's interpretation and argues that the federal government has the sole power to control the KR-I's international oil and gas management and its external activities. The petrol energy conflicts have clashed on international platforms. For example, to block the KRG from directly exporting oil, the Iraqi Oil Ministry filed a lawsuit against the KRG in the US–Texas District Court regarding a vessel carrying more than USD $100 million of crude oil anchored off the Texas coast. On 29th October 2015, the lawsuit was dismissed.

During negotiations, Erbil and Baghdad stick to certain constitutional articles and interpretations. Both interpret the same articles in their own favour. Shwani said: "This is a consensus constitution, *Dastoor Tawafiqi*; it was written by the politicians and depicts and expresses the politicians as representatives of their component; Kurds, Arab

[108] Article 112/2 of the Iraqi constitution states: "The federal government, with the producing regional and governorate governments, shall together formulate the necessary strategic policies to develop the oil and gas wealth in a way that achieves the highest benefit to the Iraqi people using the most advanced techniques of the market principles and encouraging investment".
[109] Article 115 of the Iraqi Constitution states: "All powers not stipulated in the exclusive powers of the federal government belong to the authorities of the regions and governorates that are not organised in a region. With regard to other powers shared between the federal government and the regional government, priority shall be given to the law of the regions and governorates not organized in a region in case of dispute".

Sunni, Arab Shia in the period of writing it" (Shwani, 2014). There is wide consensus that the Iraqi constitution has significant loopholes and allows for different interpretations due to its ambiguity and lack of detail. Therefore, the constitution cannot solve the dilemma of division and competition in Iraq's foreign policy in any matter, whether diplomatic or economic; nor does it have the mechanisms to unify the KRG's foreign relations and policy with the federal government. The Iraqi constitution and Baghdad are failing to constrain the KRG's de facto development and aspirations in foreign affairs. The next section discusses the KRG's foreign policy priorities, approaches and challenges.

The emerging nature of the KRG's foreign policy

This section discusses the KRG's foreign policy priorities and the approach taken to achieve these priorities. It then discusses the emerging challenges that have hindered the KRG's development project.

Post-2003, the KRG's foreign policy priorities are to gain recognition for its rights to independently manage issues, including the economy, such as developing the hydrocarbon sector, selling its oil and trade cooperation; security cooperation with states and purchasing military hardware; increasing diplomatic cooperation with various foreign actors; promoting the KR-I's rights for independence (statehood)[110]; having peaceful and prosperous relationships with neighbouring countries; having a strategic relationship with the US, Turkey, Russia and European countries and institutions; and familiarising the KRG with the international arena. Despite domestic disagreements between the KDP and other Kurdish parties regarding lack of transparency and distribution of powers and roles, there is relative consensus on many principles of foreign policy priorities. Most of Erbil's foreign policy priorities clash with Baghdad's interests.

The KR-I, similarly to other separatist entities, such as Taiwan; Somaliland; Abkhazia, the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and Nagorno-Karabakh, faces a crisis of legitimacy. Self-justification then becomes a foreign policy priority, reflecting both the lack of confidence in the state itself (for example, the Iraqi state) or the indifference of the outside world (Voller, 2013, 77). Two of the KRG's foreign policy priorities are

[110] Post-Saddam, the Kurdish leadership prepared the conditions stipulated by the Montevoideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States 1933 (state must have permanent population, defined territory, government, the capacity to enter into relations with other states) for independence (Mansour, 2014, 1185).

justifying separation or more devolution of power, and earning sovereignty.[111] The KRG's justifications are that Baghdad is not implementing the Iraqi constitution, and the power-sharing agreement failed; Baghdad's centralised policies; marginalisation of Kurds; unfair distribution of revenues and cutting the KRG's budget; and sectarian violence, which is drawing Iraq into civil war, including the rise of Daesh and the Shia militias. The KRG uses its need for material resources to survive and Baghdad's incompetence to justify its formation of independent foreign policy.

To achieve its priorities the KRG has laid out strategic goals, including initiating and accepting relationships with states and lobbying in the major superpowers, particularly in the West. Some of these goals do not match, and even antagonise, the federal government's foreign policy. The KRG set up external ties and is lobbying for economic, security and political issues that are problematic for Baghdad–Erbil relations. For example, Germany and Hungary and secretly, for a short time after the fall of Mosul, the US provided a direct supply of weapons to the KRG (author's interview with Qader, 2015). Nonetheless, most weapons are shipped via Baghdad, and the Kurds argue they have not been receiving all the allocated weapons. Moreover, the KRG complained that Baghdad did not pay the Peshmerga salaries. The KRG lobbied externally for military aid and in July 2016 they signed a memorandum of understanding with the US Defence Department that included provisions of military support including salaries for the KRG's forces.

The KRG has also found buyers for Kurdistan's oil, such as Israel and Hungary (Raval, 2015), which it struggled to sell because Baghdad threatened to sue and blacklist foreign buyers (Whitcomb, 2014; Lister, 2014). The KRG bypassed Baghdad in developing the energy petroleum sector, signed contracts with transnational corporations and sought foreign buyers, which it argues is its constitutional right. The KRG's leadership (namely the KDP) perceives that the control of its natural resources including exports provides it with the capabilities to act as a prosperous quasi-state and/or de facto state and to be an independent sovereign state in the near future.[112]

[111] According to Scott Pegg, there are five main purposes for gaining recognition: without independence, an entity cannot turn to IGOs for support; the sub-state entity is unlikely to benefit from bilateral or multilateral treaties or alliances; the international aid regimes becomes quite limited; the uncertain legal status deters investments and exports; and private firms are reluctant to agitate the central government (Pegg, 1998, 50; Mansour, 2014, 1188)

[112] Natali (2010) described the KR-I as a quasi state. Whereas Voller (2014, 2) and Charountaki (2011, 12) argued that the KR-I is more like a de facto state entity.

To fulfil its foreign policy priorities, before 2003, the KRG's elite built relationships with US congressmen, politicians, prominent journalists and academics. The Iraqi Kurds are lobbying in Capitol Hill and engaged in talks with the State Department and the White House (The Rubin Report, 2016). In the 1990s, during Dr Barham's time as Head of the office of the PUK and the newly formed KRG (the US did not officially announce the latter position), his acumen networking and activities laid out the foundation for developing the relationship. Thereafter, Qubad Talabani became the KRG's first official representative in the US in the unification administration in 2006, where he successfully built on Barham's foundation. The KRG Liaison Office, currently headed by Sami Abdul Rahman, has a key role in promoting and developing the KRG's ties with the executive branch and the US Congress (KRG-I-Representatives in the US, 2015). The Iraqi Kurdish elite was able to achieve support from a wide spectrum of US politicians and members of congress. Post-2003, the KRG systematically hired various lobbying, public relations, consultancy and law firms, and spent around USD $1 million each year from 2010 to 2014 according to Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) filing (Pecquet, 2015a).[113]

The KRG has broad US political connections and groups that support its aims. For example, The Kurdish-American Congressional Caucus, founded by congressmen Lincoln Davis (D-TN) and Joe Wilson (R-SC), was created in the US House of Representatives; its membership increased from 14 in 2008 to more than 60 to date. The establishment of a bipartisan congressional caucus on 25th May 2008, which promotes and endorses Iraqi Kurds' interests to the US administration, has also enhanced relations between the US and the KRG (Shareef, 2014, 117). Numerous Kurdish organisations promote the KR-I in the US in different sectors, such as the United States Kurdistan Business Council (USKBC). The KRG's extensive efforts have succeeded in gaining more supporters among some US policymakers and lawmakers. Multiple bills in favour of directly supplying arms to the KRG were introduced in the US Congress and received considerable support; however, they did not gain enough approval until December 2015, when the House Foreign Affairs Committee unanimously voted to arm the Kurds directly (Pecquet, 2015b; Bill H.R. 1654, 2015). These bills angered the federal government and the Shia political factions.

Similarly, the KRG is lobbying in the UK via the KRG's representatives, who engage in various activities related to public relations and diplomacy. The KRG has close ties with

[113] For example: Greenberg Traurig, hired in 2007; QORVIS, hired in 2009; Squire Patton Boggs, hired in 2014; Dentons, hired in 2015. More than one firm has been hired each year; in 2014, four firms were hired (Pecquet, 2015a; The United States Department of Justice, 2016).

UK MPs in the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Kurdistan. This group has helped the Kurdish cause and promoted the KRG's efforts in the UK. Additionally, since May 2015, the KRG representative has been allowed to attend high-level meetings with Iraqi representatives in the EU Parliament (EUP). According to the KRG's EU mission, its representatives can express wishes, make their own demands and objectives and have a voice (Rudaw, 2015a). The EUP became a political arena through which the Kurdish elite and security officials could communicate with and present their case to European powers, particularly after the rise of Daesh. At the beginning of 2016, the Parliamentary Friends of the Kurds, an all-party caucus within the Canadian parliament, was created. This includes 14 parliamentarians who support the KR-I and coordinate with the KRG (Kurdistan 24, 2016). Since the rise of Daesh – and the KRG becoming the major actor on the ground fighting Daesh – the KRG's foreign relations have received more and more logistic and material support from foreign state leaders, officials and parliamentarians (Gulmohamad, 2014a). Mansour (2016) stated: "International actors move away from dogmatic state-centrism in their interaction with Iraq".

Turkey has played a major role in the KRG, as it is the economic lifeline and the international gateway to the KR-I. The KR-I has benefited from Turkish companies' investments and trade. The friendly relationship between the KDP and the AKP has a political dimension; both parties have secured prosperous relationships. Iran is less economically important than Turkey for the KRG; despite trade and the future oil and gas pipeline project between the KR-I and Iran. From the Kurdish perspective, the Shia-led government in Baghdad is a partner of Tehran, and the Iraqi Kurds come second to Baghdad. The success of stable relationships with the KR-I's neighbours and progressive ties with Western countries' bodies, which have in return benefited the KRG, can be considered as accomplishments in a number of the KRG's foreign policy priorities.

The KRG does not have a sovereign state's privileges; as such, it finds it hard to solve economic, security, military and foreign relations challenges. Hardships have materialised regarding the drop in oil prices, Baghdad and Erbil's disagreements and the war on Daesh, which caused the KRG to experience unprecedented waves of external refugees from Syria, but mainly Iraqi IDPs totalling nearly two million (Prendergast, 2016). Iraq and the KRG are rentier economies steeped in systematic corruption and nepotism. Since 2013, the KRG has been sucked into a severe economic and financial crisis, resulting in a huge debt of more than USD $17 billion that has crippled the

region's development (Manis, 2016, 7). The KR-I does not possess reserves, whereas Iraq has USD $50 billion (Knights, 2016). Deputy PM Qubad Talabani said:

> "What makes us [the KRG] different from the fallout of the drop of oil prices from other states' commodity economy, is that we are not a country, so as a sub-sovereign we don't have the levers to manage our economy in a way that a sovereign country does … We are not in charge of monetary policy we cannot print or devalue … We are significantly in debt and it is very expensive for us to go out and be more in debt for international funds … and we haven't had friendly countries come and bail us out." (Wilson Center, 2016)

This underlines the limitations of the KRG's financial and economic policies, particularly during the crisis. The government's burden resulted in its inability to regularly pay civil servants' and Peshmerga salaries, the halt of many public infrastructure and development projects and its inability to support the KR-I's private banks and pay the oil companies. Consequently, it reduced the cash flow to the KRG's foreign relation lobbying machine. The restrictions the KRG faces have hindered its functions, particularly in finding a buyer for its oil at a price similar to other states, and purchasing weapons. Moreover, The KRG cannot independently and directly receive large loans or financial aid packages from the majority of international institutions, such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Knights, 2016). Therefore, the KRG is lobbying the US and Europe to receive its share directly or trying to convince them to pressure Baghdad – which is expected to receive a USD £15 billion loan, mainly from the IMF (as well as other institutions and donor states) – to transfer the KRG's share. With Baghdad's consent in the end of 2016 the World Bank is assisting the KRG to reform and develop its economic and infrastructure sectors including the possibility of providing small loans (Sulaivany, 2016)

The KRG cannot develop or resolve significant internal and external challenges itself. It has therefore resorted to invigorating its foreign relations officials who have visited superpowers' capitals and requested financial support. Despite the governmental and political setbacks in the KR-I, their voices have been heard to a degree. Due to the KRG's courageous role in fighting Daesh, there is a lot of sympathy for them and some support is starting to materialise; the US are paying the Peshmergas' salaries. The KRG is trying to focus its foreign policy on common interests and the security, economic and political

support to fill the gaps caused by not being a sovereign state. Nevertheless, the KRG's foreign policy faces challenges to gain support from sovereign states who would accept one of its strategic objectives: independence.

The halting progress in foreign relations was evident when the internal political deadlock remerged in the KR-I in 2015, between the KDP on one side and the PUK and Gorran on the other. This led to divided low-level foreign policy messages and different foreign policy priorities. For example, the opposition to the KDP factions are not currently keen on independence, but they have neither the tools nor the representations to convey their message as the KDP are doing, so their efforts are not prominent on the international platform. The internal tensions have halted the building of unbiased institutional bodies in the KRG's foreign affairs. This will derail the KRG's long-term aspirations. In the meantime, Baghdad benefits from the fragmentation in the KRG, as it finds allies in the KR-I.

Conclusion

The first key question is: why does the KRG need a foreign policy? The KRG is compelled to have a foreign policy due to its distinctiveness from Baghdad in foreign relations; agendas; international interests; foreign policy priorities and objectives, and messages on the international platform. The KRG has a de facto foreign policy, which it needs because the direction of the KRG's external relations has reached a broader scale and places more emphasis on statehood, more devolution of powers, the need for its survival and a decent livelihood. The changing dynamics have shown a change in foreign relations – from paradiplomacy to protodiplomacy – since 2014, the rise of Daesh and further disintegration of Iraq.

The KRG's foreign relations have taken the lion's share of the Iraqi Kurd's state building project. Mustafa said: "The KRG utilises paradiplomacy, public diplomacy, political diplomacy, energy diplomacy, cultural diplomacy and sporting diplomacy. These are all tools that the KRG are using to pursue their objectives" (author's interview with Mustafa, 2014). The KRG's foreign policy also includes security and defence diplomacy.

The following paragraphs answer the second question: how is the KRG's foreign policy made, and who are making it? Post-2003, the KRG has conducted foreign relations on

two levels: first via the Presidency, the PM and his Deputy, the DFR and its representatives and other bureaucratic bodies such as the KRSC; second, via the political parties, mainly the KDP and PUK. These levels are not contradictory, as the KDP controls the major bodies and there is relative agreement on major foreign policy issues between the main Kurdish parties. However, internal political differences cause divides to resurface between the KDP and other parties.

On the first level (government), the KRG's foreign policy has evolved and been projected to the outside world. Therefore, this level is the official and the most recognised face of the KRG. The President of the KR-I is the leading actor, followed by the PM, in formulating the KRG's foreign policy. The President, the PM and the DFR and its Head conduct foreign relations. There has been fruitful coordination and cooperation between the major policy makers and implementers (the President, the PM and Council of Ministers, the DFR and its representatives and other governmental bodies, such as the KRSC). The KRG's representatives and officials engaged in the KRG's foreign affairs are far more coherent than the federal government's. Despite the political and bureaucratic division in the KR-I, there is awareness of common threats and the necessity to have a unified voice – at least on foreign affairs matters – and to represent a relatively united front to the outside world. A major underlying reason for the agreement on most international interests and objectives is that the KDP controls all major bodies. The government elite and officers coordinate and synchronise – even those from the KDP and PUK. For instance, there is successful coordination between the PM Nechervan Barzani and his Deputy Talabani on foreign affairs issues, and they do not contradict each other's foreign affairs statements.

On the second level (parties), unlike the first, there is almost non-existent coordination between the KDP and the PUK in foreign relations. These two levels overlap where there is coordination between the political parties and their officials in the KRG. The governmental foreign relations level matters the most in international relations. Domestically, the KRG is divided and incoherent – particularly on an administrative level, because administration is divided between the KDP and the PUK. This is in contrast to the formal foreign affairs that the KDP dominates. The parties' foreign relations do not clash with the KRG's foreign relations; their performances are complementary. However, the parties also pursue partisan interests to facilitate and manoeuvre the KRG's engagement with regional powers. For example, if the KRG has a dispute or misunderstanding with Iran, the PUK officials will rush to Iran to solve the

problem. Likewise, the KDP will do the same with Turkey. Both parties are pragmatic and diplomatic in their external and regional approaches. Post-2003, both parties' differences in foreign affairs have not led to confrontation, as they have looked for similarities instead of differences and are trying to avoid a repeat of the Kurdish Civil War. Each political party has their own priorities in foreign policy, particularly on regional issues such as how to deal with Syria and Baghdad.

The regional powers (mainly Turkey and Iran) appear to overtly and covertly intervene in order to pursue their interests in the KR-I. In some cases, this results in widening the divisions between the KDP and the PUK. At the same time, the KDP's and the PUK's relationships with regional superpowers have resulted in some stability, which has benefited the KR-I: the KDP and PUK have some leverage and ties with Kurdish parties in Turkey, Iran and Syria. There is regional competition between all Kurdish parties across the Middle East; some side with the PUK, and fewer with the KDP. There have been some attempts to unify foreign policy objectives on issues related to the KR-I's survival (politically and economically) and Kurdish national security; for instance, counterterrorism.

There are two contradictory centres of governmental foreign policies: the federal government and the KRG. Post-2003, the KRG has experienced an evolution in foreign affairs that has placed the KR-I on the international map. Conducting implicit independent foreign relations and drawing up a foreign policy have been at the heart of the KRG's objectives. The Kurdish elite engaged primarily in Erbil focusing on state building to pursue the Kurdish aspiration for more devolution of powers – and, ultimately, independence. Its purpose in Baghdad was to secure Kurdish rights and leverage in Iraq's new state structure and try to make Baghdad non hostile towards their aspirations.

The KRG has developed relationships with states and non-state actors, and gradually has been dealt with as a de facto entity. The KRG's ties reach beyond the region to governments; lawmakers (parliamentarians); political parties; lobbying firms; transnational organisations and corporations, think tanks and universities. The KRG's lobbies in Washington DC, London and some European countries, including Brussels have been relatively rewarding; it has also begun to reach out to Russia, but not at the expense of its strategic relationships with the West. Since the KR-I's financial and security crisis, the KRG has invigorated its foreign policy but faced challenges, mainly

due to its non-sovereign status. Since 1991, the Kurdish elite and major parties have sought to project themselves to the outside world as pro-West and an ally of the Western states – but not at the expense of their relationships with their neighbours. As such, this became a delicate part of their foreign relations and policy strategy.

The KRG has a set of foreign policy priorities that reflect the interests of the region. Post-2003, the KRG tried to adopt foreign policy priorities and approaches, constructed relationships with external actors and lobbied to achieve its priorities – some of which it has successfully attained. After the rise of Daesh, the KR-I's foreign policy priorities could be concluded as four interrelated priorities: reaching out to the international community, security, economy (finance, trade, petrol energy) and lobbying for independence. However, the KRG faces significant hurdles globally as the international community does not easily accept new sovereign states.

Finally, the third question relates to the divergence between Erbil and Baghdad. Many Kurdish officials argue that they act within the framework of the Iraqi constitution. Nevertheless, Kurdish decision makers – particularly those affiliated to the KDP – have declared on many occasions that they are not ready to sacrifice the interests of the KR-I for the Iraqi state. The author's Kurdish interviewees testified to this. Therefore, the KRG's foreign relations and policy priorities first seek to serve the region as a de facto entity. The KRG has drawn a de facto foreign policy that (intentionally or not) does not match Iraq's foreign policy. This includes a foreign policy with identified objectives that contradict Baghdad's. Coordination between the federal government's (I-MOFA) and the KRG's (DFR) foreign affairs bodies has been difficult.

Since 2003, the KRG and Baghdad have had different foreign policy agendas and orientations with various degrees of disparity. Since Jalal Talabani's stroke and the rise of Daesh, the divergence between the KRG and the federal government has increased. This has reflected on foreign relations. Erbil's and Baghdad's elites interpret the Iraqi constitution in their own favour and cherry-pick articles from the constitution. Increasingly the KRG's external activities have become more noticeable in the KRG's laws and KR-I's draft constitution, which gives more power and superiority to its institutions in conducting foreign relations. Paradiplomacy is a legitimate approach for a non-sovereign entity, through it the KRG managed to obtain certain international interests and conceptually does not contradict the Iraqi constitution. Protodiplomacy resembles the reality of the KRG's foreign policy and contradicts the Iraqi constitution,

as the KRG's foreign policy is starkly different to Baghdad's. Moreover, the superiority of the KRG's laws for the Kurdish policy makers and different interpretations of and loopholes in the Iraqi constitution regarding control of energy has further widened the splintered foreign policies of Iraq. The KRG is a nascent governmental structure that has to further develop its governmental organisations' responsibilities, duties and laws; the region's draft constitution; and its political system (for example, presidential, parliamentary or hybrid).

The next chapter discusses Baghdad's foreign policy priorities or imperatives, which underlines their incoherence.

Chapter 6

The federal government's key foreign policy priorities

Introduction

This chapter discusses Baghdad's foreign policy priorities. These priorities are imperatives because they represent interests, have domestic dimensions and are essential for the regime's survival. Listing Baghdad's key foreign policy priorities is important because they are ambiguous; neither Iraqi observers nor officials have clearly identified them, and those who *have* identified them have provided inadequate justification.[114] According to the author's research (for example, interviews with Lukman Faily, Iraq's former Ambassador to the US and Iraq's Ambassador to the UK), and partly inspired by Salem's (2013) paper, this chapter argues that the federal government's foreign policy imperatives are diplomacy, security and economy. It largely focuses on security, to which Iraqi elites pay significant attention; moreover, insecurity has further weakened the government and governance.

Baghdad's foreign policy priorities are: first, to restore Iraq's foreign relations and place in the international community; second, to build Iraq's security: including military, security capacity and capabilities and counter terrorism; and third, to rebuild the economy, which consists primarily of oil and gas and secondarily trade and investment. These priorities are not listed in order of importance; rather, it is contended that they are interconnected and interdependent, with each strengthening or weakening the others. For instance, without diplomatic relationships with foreign entities, the two other priorities are not achievable; without minimum security, building the economy is not achievable.

Through synthesising and investigating the aforementioned priorities, this chapter will provide academic insights into how decision makers in the federal government articulate foreign policy imperatives. It will enable understanding of Baghdad's imperatives for its state-building project, its needs from 2003 to 2016 and the ways in which Baghdad projected these to the outside world.

[114] For example, the author disagrees with Hammoud's (2015) list of foreign policy priorities (first, Iraq's security; second, Iraq's sovereignty and independence; third, protecting the democratic system; fourth, counter terrorism; fifth, protecting Iraq's foreign interests abroad).

A few observers and officials have indicated other foreign policy imperatives; for example, water competition (and its geopolitics) and infrastructure construction. For years, water competition, for example, has affected bilateral relations and created tensions between Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Iran. However, Baghdad has not pursued this imperative because it has been overwhelmed with its three main priorities. This tells us that some foreign policy interests have been neglected. The author believes it unnecessary to discuss these issues; they were not strongly presented in the federal government's foreign policy compared to the other three areas.

This chapter argues that Baghdad's foreign policy priorities have been a contested area between its core executive bodies and the KRG, as well as within and between its key elites and Iraq's key political factions. The chapter argues that the federal government has failed to achieve its security imperative. Faily (2016) supports the author's list of priorities: first, to restore external relationships; second, security; and third, oil and gas. However, Faily stated in an interview:

> "Our [Baghdad's] foreign policy priorities are not cohesive or coherent … There is no consistency to achieve certain goals and on certain policies … Our priorities were such as not to have enemies and trying to interpret the constitution such as having good neighbourly relationships, and gaining countries' support but without knowing or having our SMART goals [Specific, Measurable, Agreed upon, Realistic, Time-based] we cannot achieve it." (Author's interview with Ambassador Faily, 2016)

The chapter argues that the federal government lacks a foreign policy plan to pursue its interests. Since 2003, Iraq's foreign policy decision makers have focused on remaking Iraq's image internationally, building military and security institutions and reviving oil revenues as the pillars for economic prosperity, state survival and state building.

The lack of security and political stability has overshadowed and exacerbated the absence of agreed foreign policy priorities between the elites. Each Iraqi political faction has its own set of foreign policy priorities and views most of the priorities differently. Furthermore, two of Iraq's foreign policy priorities – diplomacy and economy – have been partially and poorly achieved; this chapter will explain why and how. The divergence in ruling elites' and factions' foreign policy priorities not only demonstrates

their interests and agendas but is also driven by representatives of ethnic or religious sects. The quota system (*al-Muhasasa*) and the political accord (*al-Tawafuq al-Syasi*) have partly reinforced the similar perspectives within each ethnic or sectarian political faction and among the elites. As discussed in Chapter 2, Neoclassical Realism (NCR) considers that foreign policy interests, which could be viewed as foreign policy priorities are shaped by domestic intervening variables led by the elites' perceptions and preferences and driven by regime survival in a competitive international environment (Schweller, 2004, 172; Rathbun, 2008, 315). Although Baghdad has an incoherent foreign policy and its priorities have not been fully achieved, these priorities represent the elites' interests, as well as the imperatives for the regime to survive.

This chapter will tackle the following question:

- What are the federal government's foreign policy priorities or imperatives, and have they been achieved?

The chapter's question is one of the thesis' subsidiary questions, which is an integral part of answering the main research question because it provides an understanding of Baghdad's foreign policy interests. The chapter first identifies the primary foreign policy priorities. It briefly discusses the first priority and expands upon the second priority. Thereafter, it focuses on the economy – particularly natural resources and trade.

Post-2003 foreign policy priorities

After 2003, Iraqi decision makers realised the need to rearrange Iraq's foreign policy interests and priorities for the new state-building project and state survival. Achieving these priorities has been challenging due to the lack of a clear and agreed plan, insecurity, political instability, corruption, weakness in capacity, vulnerability, the fragmentation of the federal government, the quota system, and divisions within and between Baghdad and Erbil. Despite the presence of the US and its involvement in building state institutions, the attributes and characteristics of Baghdad's foreign policy priorities or imperatives started to appear when the first Iraqi-appointed government the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) regained full sovereignty in June 2004.

In Washington DC in 2004, the IIG's Prime Minister (PM) Allawi said:

> "The importance of maintaining the strength of the coalition and the support of the international community is helping us to succeed. We [Allawi and President Bush] discussed the plan that focuses on building democracy, defeating the insurgency, and improving the quality of life for ordinary Iraqis. Our political plan is to isolate the terrorists from the communities in which they operate … Finally, our economic plan is to improve the everyday lives of Iraqis." (C-Span, 2004)

Allawi's speech at The White House focused on strengthening ties with the US and coalition partners, which fits the first foreign policy priority diplomacy; counter terrorism and building the security institutions, which fits with the second security; and building the economy, which is the third priority. The federal government's foreign policy became more apparent after the Iraqi constitution was passed in 2005. Despite various phases that Iraq went through between 2004 and 2016, its foreign policy imperatives have broadly remained diplomatic relations, security and economy. The following subsections discuss these priorities in turn.

Restoring Iraq's foreign relations

This section discusses Iraq's first foreign policy priority: diplomacy. Iraq adopted a policy to recover its place and image on the international and regional stage by first, focusing on regaining its seats in IGOs and coming out of UN sanctions; second, amending its bilateral relationships with states and transnational bodies; third, not interfering in the internal politics of other states; and finally, having a peaceful approach in international relations, which is stipulated as a principle in the new Iraqi constitution.[115]

Diplomacy is Iraq's first foreign policy priority because unless Iraq starts connecting and communicating with foreign entities through official channels, it is impossible to achieve its other priorities. Iraq has restored many of its relationships and international standing, and Chapter Seven of the UN's sanctions has been lifted (Salem, 2013). Former FM Zebari (2009) said: "Iraq's most important foreign policy priority was lifting chapter seven of the international [UN] sanctions" (Buratha News, 2009b). Iraq regained its seat

[115] This principle is stipulated in the Iraqi constitution (Article 8). Chapter 4 discusses the I-MOFA's efforts to recover bilateral relationships.

in IGOs such as the Arab League, and between 2003 and 2016 set up more than 80 diplomatic missions around the world, including 45 ambassadors (Iraq's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016). Although Iraq recently increased its debt because of the fall in oil prices and war on Daesh, after 2003, it reduced its external debt from approximately USD $133 billion in 2004 to USD £33 billion in 2008 (Sassoon, 2009, 138). Russia has forgiven Iraq its debt, while the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and Kuwait have not. This demonstrates the lack of affinity between Iraq and some regional countries.

Besides gradually reviving diplomatic ties with states and IGOs, Iraq's regional relationships have fluctuated and occasionally its elites' statements have clashed with Turkey and a number of the Arab states. Iraqi scholar Majid al-Samari stated: "Although Western and occupied states opened diplomatic missions in Iraq, the improvement of Iraq's Arab diplomatic missions was very slow and cautious after Iraq declared its new identity" (al-Samari, 2015). This reflects the domination of the Shia-led government, which Sunni states dislike. Hoshyar Zebari's delivery of the official foreign policy statement in 2016 differed from previous practice: "Although we had challenges with our neighbours due to Saddam's policies … One of the first issues [immediately post-2003] was to return Iraq to its place with Arab states" (Al-Rai Media, 2016). (Iraq's relationships with its neighbours are discussed in Chapter 7.) Iraqi elites intended to improve Iraq's relations in its immediate neighbourhood, but these efforts have been slowed by Sunni-dominated states' concerns about the Shia-led government and its close ties with Iran.

This does not mean Iraq's diplomacy failed completely in the region; for example, it successfully played a mediating role between Iran and the West (regarding Iran's nuclear deal) and Syria and the West (the Geneva II conference). Iraq set up an official meeting in 2007 between Iran and US officials (the two ambassadors in the offices of the former PM al-Maliki) in Baghdad, which broke the ice between both countries (Semple, 2007). In 2009, the US announced it would participate in P5+1 talks with Iran about the nuclear deal (Arms Control Association, 2016). In May 2012, at Iran's request, Baghdad hosted a meeting between Iran and the six world powers regarding the nuclear deal (BBC, 2012b). With respect to Syria, Al-Mu'alim, Syria's FM, said in Baghdad: "The talks with Iraqi officials were positive and we decided to participate in Geneva II Talks and we discussed with al-Maliki the diplomatic preparations" (Al-Alam, 2013). These two issues underline Iraq's diplomacy initiative to resolve tensions with its current allies.

However, contradictory and hostile statements from influential politicians and Iraqi officials (including al-Maliki), particularly towards regional powers (Turkey and the Arab Gulf States), have shown incoherence in Baghdad's foreign policy (see Chapters 4 and 7). The KRG's diplomacy priority serves the KR-I rather than Iraq as a whole, and has disparate relationships with (and broadcasts divergent messages to) regional powers, including the aforementioned countries. In short, despite divisions in diplomatic messages between Baghdad and Erbil, the federal government's diplomacy priority reflects the urgency of emerging from isolation and improving its image regionally and globally. This priority has been poorly achieved, as Baghdad until 2016 continued to have fragile and often strained relationships with many Arab states and Turkey.

Iraq's security

Security is about building Iraq's security and military capacity, securing Iraqi territories and combating terrorism, with the assistance of external powers. It reflects the security vacuum left by the US-led coalition's disbanding of Iraqi armed forces in 2003 and the need to ensure the regime's survival.

Baghdad's foreign policy security priorities are formulated in three layers: first, developing its capabilities; second, securing and being able to protect the country's territories; and third, cooperating with external powers and entities in countering terrorism. To achieve these, foreign relations with other countries are essential. In 2016, Iraq's Ambassador to the UK, Salih Husain Ali Al-Tamimi, said:

> "The core of Iraq's foreign policy priorities is finding solutions for the security challenges, particularly against Daesh. Solutions include military means and counter-terrorism efforts. We try to find other solutions such as political [diplomatic] solutions with our relationships with the states [and allies]. One of our Foreign Affairs Ministry's [I-MOFA] task is to gather support for this purpose… in addition to humanitarian aid … the humanitarian aid is just related to the current situation [temporary]." (Author's interview with Al-Tamimi, 2016)

Iraq's agencies (such as the I-MOFA) can pursue some security interests via their relationships with countries and transnational organisations. Bakr Fatah, Iraq's

Ambassador to Sweden, said: "Security is having the lion's share in Iraq's foreign policy priorities where Iraq has special circumstances [security dilemma]" (author's interview with Bakr, 2015). In 2017, the I-MOFA website indicated that its top foreign policy priority is Iraq's security, stability and integrity and protecting the country. It argued that the importance of security is due to Iraq's rapid transformation and decades of war during Saddam's era (Embassy of the Republic of Iraq in the US, 2016). Former FM Hoshyar Zebari stated:

> "It is our fight [against terrorism] for survival. It [fighting terrorism] is our core national and regional policy [foreign policy]. We consider terrorism a threat towards regional peace and the peace of our people, we are working in close cooperation with international community and our neighbours' countries to fight all sources and all manifestations of terrorism and where ever we find it." (Centre For Strategic and International Studies, 2013)

In the same context, Iraq's National Security Advisor and Chairman of the PMF, Falah al-Fayad, argued that security affairs overshadowed Iraqi foreign policy (al-Kadhimi, 2013). Iraq based scholar Khalifa argued: "Iraqi foreign policy faces the challenges of terrorism... terrorism has been the most fundamental challenge for Iraq since 2003. Therefore Iraq has established several specialised counter-terrorism bodies, councils and agencies, as well as passed Iraqi anti-terrorism law" (Bayt al-Hikma, 2014). These views demonstrate that Iraq's security is a priority in the foreign policy context and the federal government's procedures to contain the situation. Thus, Baghdad's foreign policy is devised with security in mind.

Before the Iraqis were able to form or contribute effectively to controlling their security, the US-led coalition took the lead in building Iraq's military and security capacity. The first security measure that appeared during 2003 (The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) period) was married to the US-led coalition forces' reconstruction of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and the mandate to defend Iraq's borders against external threats.[116] Despite some progress in building the ISF and initiating the construction of vital security and military institutions, the CPA period did not provide a competent ISF.

[116] The CPA set up a new Ministry of Defence to supervise the new Iraqi Army in the last month of its authority (Carcano, 2015, 246). The programmes involved in training, equipping and advising the ISF were placed under one headquarters. This provided the US with superior responsibility to rebuild the ISF, as they had 51 military bases across the country that reconstructed the ISF (Christoff, 2009, 19).

The US-led coalition and Iraqi elite were engaged with the Multi-National Security Transition Command (MNSTC-I), which was formed in 2004 to rebuild the ISF. MNSTC-I focused on Iraq's Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Interior forces (Dodge, 2012, 117). Its primary goal was to build the Iraqi Army (IA) and police forces, which was extremely challenging.[117] In June 2004, the IIG (headed by Ayad Allawi) requested and received NATO support in the form of training and other technical matters (NATO, 2014).[118] The new Iraqi government made an effort to engage with international organisations to develop security and military capacity, but there was no long-term strategy to maintain the high quality of the ISF after US withdrawal. On 9th June 2006, Hoshyar Zebari thanked the Security Council and MNSTC-I on behalf of the Iraqi government for their contributions, and welcomed the continuation of their necessary presence for Iraq's security.

Organisations that practiced aspects of foreign relations were created to contribute to Iraq's security, including the Iraqi National Security Advisory (*Mustasharia al-Amn al-Watani al-Iraqi*), Iraq's National Security Agency (*Jihaz al-Amn al-Watani al-Iraqi*) and the National Security Council (formerly known as the Ministerial Committee of National Security, MCNS).[119] Mowaffaq al-Rubaie, a Shia independent politician previously associated with the Islamic Da'wa Party, was the first National Security Advisor who Bremer appointed in 2004 (International Crisis Group, 2010). Subsequently, former PM al-Jaafari and then al-Maliki's first government again selected al-Rubaie (Al-Rubaie quoted from al-Majdi, 2009). Currently, Falah al-Fayad heads the Advisory and the Agency, and is also the Chairman of the PMF. The National Security Advisory contributes to formulating Baghdad's foreign policy in the security imperative by advising the PM. Al-Fayad meets with foreign security and military officials to develop military strategies in combating terrorism. Since the beginning of the war against Daesh, the Advisory and Agency have been more actively engaged with international powers. For example, al-Fayad has regularly met with Brett McGurk, the US Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL.

[117] The role included embedding training teams, developing of combat skills and leadership techniques. Dubik (2009) attributed the effectiveness of the ISF's offensives in simultaneously fighting on several fronts in Basra, Sadr City and Mosul to the MNSTC-I's efforts.

[118] The NATO Training Mission-Iraq (NTM-I) was established in accordance with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1546 in 2004. The agreement was discontinued in 2011, because there was no longer any agreement to provide the legal basis (NATO, 2014). NATO did not have an operational role.

[119] The CPA authorised the IGC to set up the MCNS, headed by the National Security Advisory by CPA order 68, signed by Paul Bremer. The MCNS contributed to Iraqi security policy (Rathmell, et al, 2005,14). The MCNS included a number of ministers (including the National Security Advisory, Defence and Interior Minister, the FM and other officials) in developing a security strategy.

In 2013, the Deputy National Security Adviser, Safa Hussein, stated that there was consensus on principles stipulated in the constitution and national security strategy, but that the differences were in the details. He also pointed out that Iraq did not have a very coherent foreign policy or policymaking process (Sirri, Stansfield, and Kinninmont, 2013, 15). Clashes between foreign affairs actors, such as the I-MOFA and the National Security Advisory, have been apparent and are bolstered by the quota system and partisan interests. In 2013, al-Fayad criticised the I-MOFA, which he said was "unable to craft a political policy that reflects the identity of the new Iraq", and indicated severe fragmentation between Iraq's major actors in foreign affairs (Al-Kadhimi, 2013). The clashes with other institutions within the government reflect the government's incoherent approach to security in the context of foreign policy.

The CPA authorised the IGC to create the Iraqi National Intelligence Service (INIS) with functions similar to the CIA (Carcano, 2015, 246 and 247). According to the Charter of the INIS, its purpose is to address threats to the national security of Iraq; terrorism and insurgency; proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; espionage, trafficking and other acts that threaten Iraq (Kahana and Suwaed, 2009, 145). In 2004, the US-led coalition helped set up the INIS, which is connected to the PM (Cordsman and Khaszai, 2014b, 52). It included some Iraqi former Ba'athist intelligence officers, many of whom left after the US withdrawal (Doran, 2016). The INIS plays a role in Iraq's external relations, as it has relationships with foreign intelligence agencies. It contributes to shaping foreign policy on security and counter-terrorism efforts by advising the PM. Other agencies conducting external relations include clandestine "intelligence" and counter-terrorism agencies, such as the Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service (I-CTS).[120] The creation of these reflects Iraq's security imperatives.

The security imperative of gaining control of Iraq's land, coastal borders and air space required strengthening the ISF and cooperating with external powers (International Crisis Group, 2010; Salem, 2013). There was no consensus among the political parties in Baghdad regarding the timing of US withdrawal. The ISF steadily took more control of its territories and faced challenges securing the porous borders with neighbouring countries, mostly along the Iraq–Syria, Iraq–Iran, Iraq/KR-I–Turkey borders, and in the south along the Shatt al-Arab waterway. There are plenty of infiltration routes and waterway crossing points for terrorists, insurgents and criminals who facilitate the

[120] The I-CTS, which the US created in 2003, is a quasi-ministerial-level organisation; it is independent from the Iraqi MoD and MoI, and answers to the Iraqi PM (Witty, 2015 .5)

smuggling of weapons, ammunitions and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs). The Iranian and Syrian regimes have exploited this. Transnational violent non-state actors used Iraq's weak borders with Iran and Syria, and to a certain extent, with Turkey, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Neighbouring states will be discussed in the next chapter. The Iraqi Shia-led government's policy to cooperate with regional powers to counter terrorism and secure the borders failed. Since Daesh gained control of western Iraq and eastern Syria, it demolished many frontiers between the two countries and merged the land into one territory.

Using foreign relations to purchase weapons played a fundamental role in building military capabilities. The IIG began purchasing weapons in 2004; building firepower was one of Baghdad's security priorities. Weapons were purchased from countries such as the US, the UK, Iran, Russia, Poland, the Czech Republic, and China. In 2013, Former FM Zebari said: "Iraq is in the process of purchasing [USD] $10 billion worth of military equipment, mainly from the United States and other countries. We pay for it from our revenue" (Center For Strategic and International Studies, 2013). According to the Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit, Iraqi expenditure in 2013 was USD $118 billion; comparing this figure to the military allocation hardware Zebari mentioned clarifies its importance (Joint Analysis Policy Unit, 2013).

Corrupt deals were revealed in a number of the purchases; numerous officials in the governments of Allawi, al-Jaafari and al-Maliki spent millions of dollars on extremely poor quality weapons (al-Shaf'i, 2005; Mahasna, 2005). These Iraqi governments sought to diversify their suppliers. The purchase of weapons from Russia and Eastern Europe, unlike those from the US, did not include delays, bureaucratic complexities or usage restrictions (for example, against civilians). The Kurds and some Arab Sunni elites opposed these deals, including purchasing fighter jets from the US, which they believed emboldened the Shia-led government against them (Allawi, al-Nufaifi, and al-Essawi, 2011). The Kurds recall Saddam's regime, which used massive firepower and chemical weapons against them. The KRG fears the central government will take control of the disputed territories by force. Externally, Kuwait opposed these deals, as Saddam used Iraq's military machine against them. Major Iraqi leaders and factions have never reached consensus or secured trust on developing Iraq's military and security capabilities.

Iraq's bilateral relationships have somewhat contributed to the security and military sectors. Key Iraqi leaders viewed maintaining US support as essential for Iraq's security needs. Critical bilateral agreements included the "Status of Force Agreement" (SOFA) and the US–Iraqi Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA), which were initially signed in 2008. In the wake of the rise of Daesh, the SFA was tested, and Iraq's ruling elite urged the US for more military and security collaboration. The Iraq–Iran bilateral relationship also focuses on developing Baghdad's security and clandestine collaborations in the form of intelligence sharing and military and security advisers. Iran has systematically engaged with Iraq's various security agencies. Their collaboration intensified after the rise of Daesh, which poses an existential threat to Iran. Hashd al-Sha'abi, in which there are Iranian proxies, has indirectly influenced Iraq's policy making. While Iraq has been a leading actor in the US-led global coalition against Daesh, it is also in another anti-Daesh alliance with Russia, Iran and Syria. Iraq officially expanded its clandestine cooperation beyond the US and Western powers in 2015, when it announced a joint shared intelligence cooperation centre in Baghdad between Iraq, Iran, Russia and Syria, mainly against Daesh and other terrorist groups.

This underlines both the federal government's proactive foreign policy to defeating Daesh and its engagement with a broad range of countries, including contentious bedfellows. Baghdad's security imperatives reflect and encompass the US's initial influence and Iran's increasing infiltration and influence through its agencies, proxies, agents and allies. While the influence of the US diminished after its withdrawal, the role of the Shia militias' Iranian proxies increased, and competition between Iraqi executive security actors escalated. The US leverage returned on a lesser scale to Iraq with the war on Daesh. Therefore, Iraq's foreign relations are influenced by the security interests of both Iran and the US-led coalition. The author believes the similar short-lived common interests between Iran and the US and their allies in Iraq will turn to conflict when Daesh is defeated in Iraq. Some of Iraq's key elites such as PM al-Abadi recognise that the US relationship is essential in military and security areas. Therefore, the relationship with the US is military and strategic, whereas the alliance with Iran is political, regional and clandestine.

One of Baghdad's security priorities was blocking the KRG's access to state-issued end-user certificates for obtaining and purchasing heavy weaponry (Knights, 2015b, 26). The former Minister of Peshmerga, Mustafa Said Qadir, told the author: "The KRG is drawing its own security plan and policy" (author's interview with Minister Qadir, 2015). Dr

Khasraw Gulmohamad, Head of Asayish of the KR-I and Deputy Advisor to the KRSC, said: "Due to the uniqueness of the KRG's security and military institutions they have their own security imperatives" (author's interview with Khasraw Gulmohamad, 2016). The KRG's security needs and plans sometimes clash with the federal government's interests, and have reflected on the foreign policies interests of the KRG and Baghdad. The differences emanate from competition to control a number of factors, including different political identities; different regional alliances; disputed areas; various constitutional interpretations, distrust and the will of Kurdish elites and factions to maintain an independent Kurdish security establishment. During the war on Daesh and under a new PM (al-Abadi), there has been room for cooperation between Baghdad and Erbil, including channelling some weapons the anti-Daesh US-led global coalition delivered to the Kurds.[121] However, the author contends this coordination is more of a tactical reaction against Daesh than a political reconciliation.

Since the rise of Daesh, gaining external military aid and increasing security and intelligence cooperation with anti-Daesh coalitions have driven Baghdad's foreign policy security imperatives. Support has come from various governments; on 10th June 2014, al-Maliki called the UN, EU and Arab League to fight Daesh (Hussain, 2014). Alongside foreign officials, PM al-Abadi stated in 2015 and 2016: "Our priority is to defeat Daesh" (Middle East Eye, 2015; Kurdistan 24, 2016C; Prime Minister Press Office, 2017). Since 2014, through its foreign policy Iraq has requested military, security and humanitarian aid and foreign (US-led coalition) air support to regain control of Iraqi territories, and shared intelligence to execute counter-terrorism operations.

However, the federal government failed to translate Iraq's gains from its bilateral relationships into a successful domestic policy. This is because of the incoherent and divided government and the lack of a common vision between Iraq's elites and factions. Some of Iraq's security approaches do not defend its security; rather, they benefit an individual, group, sect or political force. Al-Mutlaq, Deputy Chair of Iraq's Defense and Security Committee in the Iraqi Council of Representatives (ICR), told the author:

> "The most important security approach drawbacks are the absence of a security vision, strategy and plan; not building competent independent security institutions; the influence of sectarian politics on security

[121] The US, Iran, UK, Poland and other countries provided free weapons to Iraq for the war against Daesh. Very limited amounts of those weapons and a small proportion of donations have been transferred to the KRG's Peshmerga (Author interview with Qader, 2015)

> institutions; the absence of national will to take national decisions and the presence of external interferences, such as Iran, on these bodies." (Author's interview with al-Mutlaq, 2015)

Al-Mutlaq blames security shortcomings on poor governance, especially by the Shia-led government and Iranian interference in the security bodies (author's interview with al-Mutlaq, 2015). Iraq's security imperative remains engaged with extensively building security and military apparatus. After the US's withdrawal, Baghdad's strategy to maintain and build a competent ISF, as well as to provide security and complete control of Iraqi territories, largely failed. Security challenges and needs have profoundly shaped Baghdad's foreign policy interests and direction.

Iraq's economy

The development and prosperity of Iraq's petroleum industry has been imperative for Baghdad's foreign policy. Attempts to stabilise relationships with the regional and international community have been essential to developing Iraq's economic and financial backbone. This foreign policy priority has not fully been achieved due to political and security instability in Iraq, lack of a strategic economic plan, corruption, poor infrastructure and the longstanding differences between Erbil and Baghdad. Moreover, Iraq's state-run and rentier economy relies on its oil revenues. This sector deteriorated throughout the period of the UN's sanctions and the US-led invasion. One of Baghdad's key priorities has been to restore Iraq's devastated economy and its oil infrastructure.

Kubrusi stated: "It was oil revenues that transformed Iraq's economy from a self-sustaining low-equilibrium system in the early 1940s into an export-orientated, fast growing economy in the 1970s and 1980s" (1988, 283). Iraq's post-2003 economy grew significantly because of oil: from approximately USD $18.5 billion in 2005 to USD $94 billion in 2012 from oil revenues – an annual GDP growth of 4.4 per cent and 13.9 per cent respectively (Trading Economics, 2016; EITI, 2015; Mackey, 2013). According to Al-Khatteeb's Brooking Institute (2016) report, more than 90 per cent of all Iraq's federal revenues rely on oil. These numbers provide an indication of how Iraq's economy grew because of oil and how it is solidly related to oil revenues.

The federal government has made some progress towards achieving this priority, in terms of rebuilding the oil and then gas infrastructure with national and international oil and gas industries. Post-2003, Iraq has gradually increased its oil production by proactively seeking to construct energy export terminals and engage with the international market to sell its energy. For example, the federal government has a joint project with Royal Dutch Shell and Mitsubishi to produce gas in Basra (Financial Times, 2011). This is one of the largest contracts Iraq has signed with transnational corporations. Diplomacy and balanced bilateral relationships are necessary for Baghdad to have secure international energy routes. However, this has not been an easy task due to Iraq's fluctuating relationships with most of its neighbours.

Iraq's ambitious plans to diversify and expand its energy routes have faced hurdles. Iraq is a semi landlocked country; the only sea route is from Basra's oil terminals in southern Iraq through the Strait of Hormuz. The south of Iraq, particularly Basra, possesses more than 70 per cent of the oil reserves and wells across Iraq. The rest are mainly in the north (in Kirkuk and Nineveh) and in the KR-I, which has emerged as a new energy hub (The US EIA, 2016; International Monitory Fund, 2015). Iraq began to build a giant new shipping port to export oil from the hub of Basra to the Persian Gulf and out through the Strait of Hormuz, which is obstructed by the large nearby (around one kilometre) Kuwaiti port project, "Mubarak". This has led to low-level tensions between Iraq and Kuwait. However, Iraq's project has been slow and underfunded.

Other hurdles include the closing of pipelines, including Iraq's western pipeline to the ports of Banias in Syria, and Tripoli in Lebanon and a pipeline from Iraq to the KSA closing in the 1990s (Salem, 2013). Additionally, the Kirkuk–Ceyhan (Turkey) pipelines have been disrupted many times by terrorist attacks, and are prone to sabotage by the PKK. The latter is a strategic pipeline for the KRG. Kirkuk is fully under the control of the KRG's major political factions. Therefore, the main route for oil exports that the federal government controls is from the south. Iraq's bilateral relationships with neighbouring countries are essential to diversify existing routes. Iraq has slowly attempted to develop oil and gas pipelines, especially with Jordan, Turkey, Kuwait, Syria (before the civil war), and Iran. For example, in 2013, Iraq and Jordan signed an agreement and announced a 1,043-mile-long pipeline to export oil and gas from Iraq's Basra port on the Persian Gulf to Jordan's Aqaba port in the Gulf of Aqaba on the Red Sea (World Affairs Journal, 2013; Oil Price, 2013).

Iraq has exported its oil mainly to China; India; the US, South Korea and Greece (The Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2016). Iraq holds the world's fifth largest proved crude oil reserves (143 billion barrels) (US EIA, 2016), and in 2014 was listed in the top ten largest gas reserves (al-Khatteeb, 2013); it contains 126.7 trillion cubic feet (Tcf) of gas reserves, representing 1.7 per cent of global gas. Half of the gas has flared, and Baghdad is working with the World Bank to reduce this (al-Khatteeb, 2013). The perception among Iraqi politicians and the public is that Iraq's richness in natural energy resources has contributed to it becoming a relevant international and regional actor. Therefore, the Iraqi government believes its role – supported by its natural resources – is important in the international theatre. Many officials have mentioned this perception in their statements (Center For Strategic and International Studies, 2013).

The Iraqi federal government including the Ministry of Oil mainly shape Iraq's oil and gas policy. The State Organization for Marketing of Oil (SOMO) is authorised to negotiate oil sales (SOMO Oil, 2013). Iraq is also a founding member of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), in which it surpassed Iran in 2012 to become the second largest oil producer. Although Iraq's post-2003 oil production was slow to recover, it was climbing. As a giant oil producer, Iraq has influenced the international market prices for decades (Jaffe, 2007, 1). In 2016, Baghdad succeeded in increasing its oil production to a level above pre-2003 production. This is despite political and security instability, the skills and brain drain, sabotage and slow rebuilding of oil installations (Egan, 2016; Gulmohamad, 2013). According to members of the Oil and Gas Committee in the ICR, in 2015 – with the drop in oil prices (which began in 2014) and consequently in Iraqi revenues – the federal government encouraged local and national energy corporations to invest more and develop in oil infrastructure rather than foreign transnational companies, in order to keep the benefit within the country and reduce the production cost (Sky News Arabia, 2015). According to the IMF (2016), 94 per cent of Iraq's income in 2014 was from oil revenues.

Besides oil being Baghdad's and Erbil's main source of revenue, they plan to export gas to Kuwait and Turkey respectively. However, until now the gas has been mainly for domestic consumption, such as providing electricity (US EIA, 2016; McAuley, 2016; Bloomberg, 2016). Oil has contributed far more to Iraq's economy than the primitive gas infrastructure. Motivated by low oil prices and aided by local and transnational corporations, Baghdad and Erbil began to focus on and invest in gas. Iraq's federal government invited national and international investment for these sectors (Salem,

2013). Both the federal government and the KRG seek to export gas, but hold different and uncoordinated plans and routes to sell it. In 2011, Iraq, Syria and Iran signed gas pipeline agreements (Kadhim & Nayla, 2010; Hafidh & Faucon, 2011), which did not go ahead because of the civil war. There are plans between Erbil (mainly the KDP) and Turkey to export gas from the KR-I to Turkey (BMI Research, 2013). The KRG has plans to export gas and oil – oil has already been smuggled – to Iran (Richards, 2013). Therefore, Baghdad's and Erbil's oil and gas policy has been divided.

In 2008, al-Maliki invited Russian corporations to invest in and explore the oil and gas sector. In 2009, al-Maliki held talks with the Russian government and companies to produce oil and gas (al-Jazeera Arabic, 2009). In 2013 in Moscow, al-Maliki said: "The Iraqi government has begun an ambitious programme to develop oil and gas sectors and the doors are open for the largest international companies" (Al-Sabaah, 2013). The federal government offered opportunities and privileges to Russia's industry and companies in this field as additional stimulus to improve the bilateral relationship beyond military deals and security, as the Russians had shown good will towards improving the relationship. PM al-Maliki believed this relationship would provide him with more room to manoeuvre during his interaction with the US. This example demonstrates how the three priorities – diplomacy, security and economy – are interconnected.

Disputes between Baghdad and Erbil have arisen over oil and gas revenue shares and control of resources, production and export. In 2013, the KRG finished its own unilateral pipeline to Turkey independent of Baghdad's control. According to the KRG, the KR-I possesses around 45 billion barrels of oil reserves. The International Energy Agency estimates that the KR-I contains 4 billion barrels of proven reserves (US EIA, 2016). Therefore, there are various and conflicting estimations for oil and gas in Iraqi Kurdistan (al-Khatteeb, 2013). When the KR-I became an energy hub, differences in their foreign policies became more visible.

The KRG has unilaterally begun to develop contracts with giant transnational energy corporations – such as Exxon Mobil, Total, Gazprom and Chevron – to developing its oil wells, including extraction and production, and is also independently looking for buyers. The KRG taking control of its oil and gas sector without coordination with Baghdad has increased tensions (this divergence is discussed in Chapter 5.) Aside from the achievements of Baghdad and Erbil in reconstruction and production, there is neither

coherence nor coordination in foreign policy oil and gas imperatives between them. It could be argued that this aspect of the economic foreign policy imperative has partly been achieved. This is partially because of the divisions between the political actors' interests, which are clearly reflected in the disparate foreign policies.

Post-2003, trade and investment have been the second aspect of Iraq's economic priority, fostering and adopting a relatively open-door policy. This approach is fundamentally different to that in Saddam's era, in which Iraq was the subject of severe sanctions and isolation for the more than a decade. Post-Saddam, the UN sanctions gradually lifted, providing an opportunity for investment and trade with IGOs, including the EU; transnational corporations; companies, and states from around the world. For example, in 2015, the EU was Iraq's second biggest trade partner (behind China) and total bilateral trade in 2015 was 16.1 billion euros. The EU–Iraq partnership and cooperation agreement governed the EU's trade relationship with Iraq (European Commission, 2016). The ranking between the top four trade partners changes every year between the US, China, the EU and India. The US-led coalition encouraged and guided the open-door policy (Salem, 2013). All Iraqi governments' and most ruling political parties' programmes have mentioned opening and expanding investment and trade during electoral campaigns.

In 2006, the federal government of Iraq (with the endorsement of the ICR) passed investment law No. 13, which laid the foundations for attracting foreign investment to Iraq. The law includes tax incentives, investors' guarantees and the creation of the National Investment Commission (NIC) as the face of private investment in Iraq (NIC, 2016). This law provides equal investment incentives and protects foreign and domestic investors' rights (US Department of State, 2015). According to article 29 of the Investment Law 2006, there are a number of limitations for foreign ownership of natural resources, directly or indirectly. The law provides a gateway for foreigners to invest and own property in Iraq. Iraq witnessed a new era of restoring trade and investments – a neoliberal economy – that required a new and sophisticated policy (similar to the 2006 law) to adopt and seize opportunities (Sirri, Stansfield and Kinninmont, 2013). The KRG issued law No. 4 a few months before the Iraqi law, which had similar features and rights (Kurdistan Investment Law 4, 2006). Post-2003, the private sector and foreign investment emerged as a new actor in the Iraqi and Kurdish political economical theatre. However, the state's elites and political parties have

sponsored banks and companies that dominate the economy for their personal and partisan gain.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has gradually increased since 2003. For instance, in 2004, FDI inflow was 0.8 percent of Iraqi GDP; in 2013, it was 2.2 percent. After the rise of Daesh, this number declined slightly (International Trade Center, 2016). In parallel to the investment, the Iraqi government requested and was granted observer status in the World Trade Organization (WTO), in which it is now pursuing full membership status (Iraqi Ministry of Trade, 2016). Iraq and the UN Conference on Trade and Development collaborated in negotiation support for accession in the WTO (UNCTAD, 2013). Therefore, the UN assisted Iraqi trade policy, which is part of Iraq's economy foreign policy imperatives. Similarly to the security priority, the US's heavy presence should be taken into consideration, as the US has supported and guided Iraq's economy imperatives to achieve its goals. This includes US funds for reconstruction projects, building capacity and supporting Iraq's economy (US Department of State, 2009). For example, in 2003, the US Congress allocated USD 20.9 billion to Iraq's reconstruction, security and economy (US Department of State, 2006).

The Iraqi government has forged bilateral and multilateral trade agreements with countries that have been key trade partners and investors in Iraq. Between 2003 and 2013, Iraq took part in nine separate multiparty agreements and 35 other bilateral agreements worldwide (United States of America Department of Commerce, 2013). Trade relationships have been arranged via various bilateral agreements and understandings. Iraq has expanded its trade partnerships beyond major partners through various types of trade arrangements; for instance, with Japan and India. This foreign policy priority reflects Iraq's need to rebuild its infrastructure, meet consumer needs and fuel its new and emerging market and businesses after years of sanctions, embargos and isolations.

Post-2003, trade and investment with Iran blossomed on an unprecedented level; while trade and investment with the US has been open, it has faced obstacles from populist domestic factions and insecurity. A number of Shia factions, including al-Sadr's movement, have rejected ties with the US, including Iraqi–US trade agreements. The Iraqi government did not ratify a US–Iraq trade and investment framework agreement, negotiated in 2005, until 2013 – after the US's withdrawal (Sirri, Stansfield and Kinninmont, 2013). Iraqi foreign policy is the main tool to conduct and develop trade

and, according to the Iraqi Constitution Article 110, policy is exclusive to the federal government. The KRG has its own regional investment and business laws that the KRG designed, passed and implemented. This provides a different business and investment atmosphere in the KR-I, as well as diplomatic and management leverages for the KRG's officials to engage with international corporations. Post-2003, the KR-I has thrived economically, and has been dominated by Turkish trade and investment. The KR-I includes flexible regulations and laws for trade and investment. According to the Department of Foreign Relations (2015), "The KRG maintains very liberal investment laws" and is the most secure region in Iraq, which has helped it to become a hub for foreign corporations and investment. This has shaped the distinctiveness of the KRG's trade policy. According to the author's interviews with KRG officials – such as Tahir, the KRG's representative to the UK – the KRG has its own economic and trade policies.

This reflects reality, wherein the KRG pursues its own oil deals and bypasses Baghdad as well as multilevel trade and economic ties with Turkey. For example, the Turkish private sector has heavily invested in the KR-I. In 2009, there were 485 companies; in 2013, there were 1,500 (Fidan, 2016). Since February 2014, and despite some short-lived budget-sharing agreements, the federal government has cut and/or withheld the KR-I's budget. This has added to the deterioration of the economy in the KR-I. Similarly to oil and gas, there is no unified approach between Baghdad and Erbil regarding trade and investment. Iraq's post-2003 economic growth has accelerated from 5.9 per cent in 2010 to over 8.4 per cent in 2012 (International Monitory Fund, 2013). The World Bank indicated high economic growth annually from 2008 to 2012, averaging 7 per cent (World Bank, 2015). The IMF and World Bank agree that the economic growth is due to the significant increase in oil production. Despite this growth, however, the multilayered challenges of security and political instability, involvement of politicians in trade and business, systematic corruption and divisions between Baghdad and Erbil have obstructed progress. The foreign policy priority of improving trade and investment has been partly achieved – due to Iraq's energy oil reserves and production and focused, proactive engagement with the global economy – but has been hindered by the fragmentation of the state, elites' competition, insecurity, drop of oil prices and corruption.

Conclusion

Iraq's state building and regime survival has compelled elites to focus on certain key imperatives that became foreign policy priorities. Despite the statements on the I-MOFA website, the Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers' programme (General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, 2014) and Iraqi officials' political rhetoric for domestic consumption, there is no plan detailing the country's foreign policy priorities or how they are to be obtained. Nevertheless, fieldwork, monitoring of officials' statements and performance and some literature have provided the evidence to identify the priorities and assess their importance. Elites determine foreign policy priorities based on what they view is necessary for regime survival. Despite Baghdad's incoherent foreign policy the evidence discussed in this chapter and elites interviewees have asserted that the foreign policy priorities are imperatives for state building and regime survival. This chapter has shown that the elites are determining the interests; this is compatible with NCR's main variables framework and Schweller (2004). NCR's assumptions about elite disagreements and divisions as well as government vulnerability, which results in them not achieving their objectives matches with this chapter's outcomes that the lack of an agreed plan between the elites is one of the key reasons that obtaining all of the objectives is insurmountable.

This chapter shows that Iraq has three major areas (diplomacy, security and economy) of foreign policy priorities. These priorities are interconnected. Each supports (if it succeeds) or hinders (if it fails) the attainment of the others, which demonstrates their interdependence. For example, improved security would attract investment, which would improve the economy. However, one of the reasons why Iraq's foreign policy priorities have not been clearly achieved is because the federal government has no clear plan on how to pursue them. This is, in a large part, the result of insecurity, and disagreements between key elites in Baghdad, as well as between Baghdad and Erbil, are serious impediments to progress.

The first imperative was to restore Iraq's diplomacy and relationships. It was critical to establish communication with external powers and foreign entities for bilateral relationships; cooperation, projecting interests, reaching goals and participating in regional and international gatherings. Baghdad's post-2003 diplomacy shows no hostility towards the international community, and restored diplomatic ties with states and IGOs. However, it has experienced difficulties in its relationships with regional

states. Iraq's diplomacy has been a bridge between Tehran and Damascus (since the civil war) and the Western powers. Iraq's diplomacy does not, however, represent the KRG's interests, particularly on issues concerning security and economy. Baghdad has not completely achieved a coherent diplomacy; it lacks broad domestic support and inclusiveness, consistent and coherent messages, professional cadres and an affable relationship with most regional powers.

Baghdad's second priority is security. This imperative was a critical part of the US-led coalitions and the ruling elites' state building. However, Iraq has failed to achieve this. As vital as security is to the regime's survival, its security needs and interests are splintered between and within the federal government and the KRG. For example, despite the division between the KDP and the PUK, in principle they subscribe to a common vision for an independent Kurdistan. The set of priorities does not only represent a specific ethnic or religious sect; rather, it represents elites' and partisan interests. In other words there is fragmentation within each ethnic sectarian component in viewing the priorities. Nevertheless, there are more similarities in some interests and foreign affairs tendencies within each ethnic and sectarian political component than with other components. For example, the majority of Sunni elites and factions view Iran as an unfriendly state, threat and even as an enemy, this is in contrast to the many Shia elites in Iraq.

The Shia-led government and the major Shia parties have systematically engaged in integrating their elements into the ISF. Excluding some (such as al-Sistani's and currently al-Sadr's loyal militias), they seek closer ties with Iran on all levels. Iraqi-Arab Sunni elites have grievances, as they do not have a say in Iraq's security and running their own security affairs. Moreover, they seek closer ties with the Arab states. The 2003 destruction of the Iraqi forces and subsequent failure to competently rebuild the ISF has exacerbated Iraq's failure to achieve other foreign policy priorities. This has been worsened by the former PM al-Maliki's accumulation of power and interference in Iraq's armed forces. The deepening of the divisions has hampered the achievement of its security imperatives. Further evidence of the interconnecting of the imperatives can be seen in Iraq's participation in two coalitions that have provided ample resources and support for the federal government's rebuilding the military and security capacity. This has been reasserted since the rise of Daesh.

Iraq's third foreign policy priority is the economy. Oil revenues in particular have been the driver of regime survival. Despite the increase in oil production and revenues, Baghdad's efforts to achieve this priority have been hindered because of internal divisions, instability and corruption. Iraq's bilateral relationships have endorsed the build-up of gas facilities. However, expanding export routes via neighbouring countries as an additional revenue resource is fraught with difficulties due to Baghdad's unstable relationships with regional states (excluding Iran). So, Iraq does not have a unified oil and gas policy or strategy because policy preferences are divided on many levels, including control of the facilities between Baghdad and Erbil.

Despite the significant post-2003 increase in trade and investment, Baghdad and Erbil do not coordinate policy. Their trade and investment policies are divided, and each has its own laws and administration. Key factors hindering cooperation, investment and trade are insecurity and instability, failure to impose order and the rule of law, poor infrastructure, corruption and nepotism. Iraq has partly managed to achieve its economic priority because Baghdad restored the oil sector and is developing the gas sector and issuing new, flexible laws to encourage foreign investment. However, it has failed to provide security and stability, which would encourage further foreign investment and increase trade. The government has focused only on natural energy resources instead of cooperating with foreign entities for agriculture, industry and innovation.

Analysis of Iraq's foreign policy priorities shows clearly that there is no unified national and state interest projected in foreign policy making. Rather, various key leaders represent the interests of elites, factions, subgroups or sub-states. In short, Iraq's three main priorities have been contested and weakly pursued. Some, such as the security imperative, have been a failure. Scrutinising the foreign policy priorities exposes Iraqi elites' lack of agreement on approaches and principles to achieve their foreign policy priorities. The contested and the lack of agreed foreign policy agenda testify and fit with the overall argument of the thesis that Iraq has splintered foreign policies between Baghdad and Erbil where Baghdad's policy is also incoherent.

Iraq's neighbours have exploited the country's weakness, disorder, fragmentation, and political and security vacuum to further their own interests. Astrabadi (2016) indicated that although Iraq has historically been a theatre for regional powers' competition, the weakening of defense and security capabilities has weakened Iraq, rendering it

vulnerable to interference from its neighbours and increases in their influence in domestic Iraqi politics and policy making (Hudson Institute, 2016). Iraq's neighbours have worried that Iraq's weak security establishment will allow chaos to spill into their countries. The author also believes they favour a weak Iraq (albeit not to the extent of collapse or disintegration) so as to better control and secure their interests. The next chapter discusses and studies regional powers' interferences and the ramifications of these for Iraq's foreign policies.

Chapter 7

Regional interference and influence on Iraq's foreign policy post-Saddam

Introduction

This chapter investigates Iraq's neighbouring states' interference in and impact on Iraq's foreign relations and foreign policies. The evidence shows Iran is the most powerful external player in Iraq, followed by Turkey, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), and Syria (before the Civil War).[122] Iraq's two non-Arab neighbours (Iran and Turkey) are the most influential and Iran has more influence on Baghdad, Turkey on Erbil.

This chapter's question is:

- How do neighbouring countries interfere in and influence Iraq's internal matters and foreign policy issues?

This research sub-question is complementary to the thesis' main question "How is foreign policy made in Iraq?" This is because we cannot understand Iraq's policy making without addressing and investigating regional political, security and economic interferences, entanglement and influences in Iraqi affairs.

Ismail, Iraq's Ambassador to the UN in Geneva, discusses these external influences:

> "If we like it or not, Iran has an influence on Iraq … because of the common sect [Shia] and they [elites and their political parties] were in the past hosted and supported in Iran, thus of course there are affinities between them including Shia and Kurds. However, Turkey and Saudi also have an influence in Iraq but it depends on which component we talk about … And because the Shia are the most powerful in Iraq, Iran is the most influential." (Author's interview with Ismail, 2014)

[122] Kuwait and Jordan are not included because the aforementioned states are sufficient for the chapter's argument and case.

Ismail indicates that major regional powers have different influences on different components in Iraq. Faily argues that all Iraq's neighbouring countries interfere:

> "All our neighbours get involved and interfere in our internal affairs [policy making] because of a lack of cohesion and clarity on how we want the relationship with them. They all get involved, even Kuwait, as they want to understand the relationship between Basra and Baghdad… Iraq is a buffer zone for other neighbouring countries." (Author's interview with Faily, 2016)

Certainly some interference and influence from a neighbouring state is more obvious and has more impact than from another and this is what the chapter also addresses. This chapter examines both influence and interference; it accepts that these are not synonymous, as most countries try to influence each other. Interference indicates seeking involvement in other countries' or entities' internal affairs and seeking to influence decision-making. Therefore, not all influence is interference, but all interference is an attempt to influence. Scholars including Stansfield and Anderson (2014, 208 and 209) and Park (2005, 52) have identified what they term "external interferences" in Iraq's internal affairs. Tripp (2002) argued that, historically, various Iraqi groups have tended to sympathise with different regional alliances and enmities (2002, 174). Senior Iraqi officials have acknowledged external interferences, such as Prime Minister (PM) al-Abadi, who said: "There are a lot of countries intervening in my country, there has been a lot of support [from external forces] to terrorists and militias in my country" (Deutsche Welle, 2016). Iraq's domestic political debate has featured in the Iraqi media and programmes regarding external interferences on Iraq's foreign policies.[123]

Tripp (2002) examined Iraq's foreign policy during Saddam's era. He stated that one of its complications is unsettled identity, which distinctively and problematically connects Iraq's fragmented society with the regional environment (177). Analysing regional interferences and influences provides an original and comprehensive picture of Iraq's floundering post-Saddam foreign policies. This chapter demonstrates these external interferences, which in many cases represent Iraqi elites and some faction's interests

[123] Iraqi channels Al-Fayhaa (2015) and Al-Rashid (2016) broadcast programmes about external interference on Iraq's foreign policy.

and agendas. Haddad (2016) argued that Iraqi Arab Shia and Arab Sunni actors draw in external forces in the process of Iraqi state building, in which they receive abundant support. Moreover, the Kurds garner support from external forces to consolidate their position. In addition to exposing neighbouring external interference and influence, this chapter will analyse the Iraqi government's bilateral relationships with its neighbours.

This dissertation recognises the influence of the US and Iraqi policy makers' consideration of the US–Iraqi relationship when they take critical decisions in foreign policy. However, this chapter's focus is on regional powers. Not all regional states are equally influential in Iraqi politics or in formulating foreign policy; nor do they influence the same Iraqi political elites or factions. For example, in 2013, former Foreign Minister (FM) Zebari said: "There are two [major] countries that have an influence in Iraqi Sunni communities – Saudi Arabia and Turkey for different reasons … With Turkey we experience many problems primarily because the lack of respect by the Turkish politicians for dictating what an elected Iraqi government should do" (Center For Strategic and International Studies, 2013). External actors seek to influence Iraq's foreign policy outcomes to suit their interests. Iraqi internal actors facilitate their allied neighboring states' interference/influence on foreign policy, as they have common interests. External actors' influence and interference have contributed to Iraq's foreign policies becoming splintered and incoherent because of the fragmentation of Iraq's foreign policy making institutions and process. Iraq's policy making is not made only domestically, it is also shaped by regional powers' interference, influence and pressure and this matches with NCR's main variables framework and Schweller's explanation of independent variables' contribution to foreign policy. Schweller's NCR's theory assumes that the division and competition between the elites and groups within the fragmented state (along ethnic-sectarian and/or ideological lines) leads them to resort to (or they already have) collaborationist ties with external powers against other opponents domestically, this is compatible with this chapter's findings. The ties affect the central government so it has weak or failed responses or policies towards those states with internal allies. For example, Baghdad cannot firmly respond to Turkey's military interferences as their allies in the KRG support them. Taliaferro (2009, 216) argues that NCR recognises the external vulnerability when states have weak borders and strong neighbours, which has an impact on the weak state's foreign policy-making and this fits with the chapter's argument.

This chapter consists of four sections: Iranian interference in Iraq; Turkey and Iraq's

fluctuating relations; the unstable relationship between the KSA and Iraq; the shifting relationship between Syria and Iraq.

Iranian interference in Iraq

Iran's foreign policy regarding Iraq is oriented towards building a secure environment at its borders (Bargezar, 2007). Iran has had an influence on segments of Iraqi Shia communities since the Iranian Revolution in 1979. Covert Iranian aid for Baghdad's opponents increased in 1980, in response to the Iraqi regime aiding Iran's opponents (Halliday, 1986, 96). Iranian interference also included the formation of what is now known as the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) and its previous armed wing, the Badr Brigade, in 1981. However, Iran's influence was challenged during the 1980–1988 Iraq–Iran war, when the Arab Shia in the south of Iraq did not rebel against Saddam as Khomeini expected. In 2003, the US-led coalition's invasion of Iraq threatened Iran's national security but also provided a historical opportunity for the Iranian leadership to maximise Iran's power in Iraq. Since 2003, Iran has tried to influence Iraq's new government. Iranian influence and leverage in Iraq between 2003 and 2016 can be divided into four stages inspired by Juneau's phases of Iran's foreign policy towards Iraq from 2001 to 2009 (Juneau, 2015, 124-133).

First, the period immediately after toppling Saddam represented a stage of threat and opportunity for Iran. Old friends became the vital power structure, but the US forces' proximity to Iran's borders was perceived as a threat. Iran was confused regarding how to react and began formulating two contrasting policies, This period is short as it includes the CPA and subsequently Ayad Allawi was heading the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG), there was no democratically elected government and the constitution was not yet passed.

Second, since 2005, Iran further strengthened its ties with its Iraqi allies and invested in Iraq. Iran's interference in Iraq shows contradictory policies. Iran consolidated ties with old Iraqi friends, and supported the Shia-led government and radical Shia armed groups. Senior intelligence officers working for the Kurdistan Region Security Council (KRSC) provided reports and evidence in interviews with the author in 2013, Roberts (2007) and Eisenstadt, Knights and Ali (2011) showing that Iran covertly supported some Sunni jihadists and insurgents in Iraq; this declined in the following phase.

Third, since 2009, Iran's allies in Iraq became more divided; they also began to demonstrate independence and concentrated on the distribution of Iraq's oil wealth. Iran increased its support for Shia militias loyal to Tehran. Al-Maliki kept a balance between Iraq's relationships with the US and Iran. Meanwhile, competition within the Shia house surfaced in relation to Iran, demonstrating Iran's inability to control all Iraqi Shia factions. This is illustrated by emerging differences within the Shia elites and factions regarding what they think Iran's role in Iraq should be. After the US withdrawal in 2011, Iran's tacit, tactical support for Sunni radicals in Iraq diminished.

Fourth, since the fall of Mosul and other territories to Daesh in 2014, Iranian interference has faced both opportunities and challenges. The challenges are al-Abadi's government, al-Sadr and Ayatollah al-Sistani having similar objectives, such as strengthening Iraqi nationalism away from Iran and limiting powerful pro-Iran militias. The division between Qum and Najaf has become part of the rivalry between Tehran and Baghdad. Some Shia political figures counteracted the expansion of their pro-Iran rivals in Iraq (for example al-Sadr mobilised his loyal militias against pro-Iran militias) (Spyer and Al-Tamimi, 2014). Opportunities for Iran include the rise of Daesh, during which Iranian clients and agencies (via pro-Iran Shia militias) have proliferated. Pro-Iran Shia militias seized the opportunity of the collapse of state military apparatus and al-Sistani's Fatwa (*Wajib jihad al-Kafai*) on 13th June 2014 (Sistani, 2014; Gulmohamad, 2015a). Former US Ambassador Jeffery described Iran's influence during the rise of Daesh thus: "Iranian influence in Iraq is higher than the United States" (Atlantic Council, 2016). The Iranian military and security advisors with the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) illustrate the continuation of formal intelligence and military cooperation between Baghdad and Tehran.

The competition between Iran and the US has taken a new direction with the rise of Daesh, which resulted in tacit and unintended common interests, despite both sides supporting different Iraqi Shia factions. Al-Sistani's son Ali al-Sistani said: "If the US took its security agreement with Iraq seriously there would be no need for Iran to intervene and Iraq would not ask for the help of Iran's experts. We think Iraq should be independent and have respectful relations with other countries" (quoted in Steele, 2015). Iraqi Holy Shia Shrines militias cooperate with the US-led anti-IS coalition; they tacitly oppose the Iranian expansionist approach in Iraq, and thus strengthen al-Sistani.

During al-Maliki's tenure, Iranian leverage was such that Iran used Baghdad's airport without being subject to restrictions or searches. The free-use protocol permitted Iranian military aid to be transferred to Baghdad, to the PMF or resumed flights to Damascus. A change took place in mid-August 2015, when al-Abadi ordered that Iranian planes should be subject to Iraqi laws (Middle East Brief, 2015). Gulmohamad (2016a) and Knights, (2015) depict this as a result of the competition between al-Abadi and Iranian leverage.

Iranian's limitations or obstacles in Iraq have deep roots in modern Iraqi history, which Iraqi actors have revived. Besides ethnic and religious differences between the Kurdish and Arab Sunni and the distinctive regional interests of Shia Iran, there is divergence between Iranian and Iraqi Shia communities. These differences are ideological (doctrines regarding governance), cultural and political, and can be felt in all phases of Iranian influence.

There are differences between the two Shia religious establishments in Iran and Iraq. The Iraqi-based highest Shia cleric (*Marjia*) Grand Ayatollah Abu al-Qasim Al-Khoei and his successor Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani, along with his peers, adopted the "Quietist"[124] Islamic Shia tradition. They oppose Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's "Guardianship of Islamic jurists" (*Wilayat al-Faqih*), doctrine that is entwined in Iran's political system. Mamouri, a scholar in Shiism, said: "Khamenei [Khomeini's successor] wants to dominate Shia Iraq completely as a colony of Iran … Khamenei's representatives in Iraq try to change Iraq to support Iran in all political stances in the region" (Washington Institute, 2017). Mahmoud Al-Mashhadani former Speaker in the Iraqi Council of Representatives (ICR), acknowledged Iran's influences in Iraq: "I went to Iran to talk about Iraq's strategic agreement with the US … one who denies Iran's significant influence on the Iraqi political scene is a man who does not understand politics" (Al-Jazeera Arabic, 2008). Al-Mashhadani indicates Iran's influence on Shia political parties in Iraq, and consequently their representatives in the ICR (Al-Jazeera Arabic, 2008). However, post-Saddam, some Shia Islamist factions distanced themselves from Khomeini's doctrine (namely the Da'wa Party, Muqtada al-Sadr and ISCI), which made it challenging for Iran to have full control over Iraqi Shias.

Iran is lobbying strategically in Iraq via its supporters, allies, proxies and clients; yet,

[124] Quietism is a longstanding Shia tradition that discourages religious clerics from becoming directly involved in politics (Allawi 2007, 30; Nazim, 2008, 316).

Iran has faced resistance from some Iraqi Shia factions. Non-pro-Iran Iraqis view Iranian policy in Iraq as serving Iranian hardliners' narrow national and security interests. Therefore, Iran's significant influence and interference are not unchecked.

The Iranian perspective

Ali Panayi, Iranian General Consul in Sulymaniah, said: "In this new situation in Iraq the players [external countries] on the Iraqi scene definitely have their own interests in Iraq, whether they are Iran, the US, Turkey or the Arab states. Each of them pursues their interests" (author's interview with Panayi, 2015). Articulating Iraqi–Iranian relationships from the Iranian perspective, Hassan Danai, Iranian Ambassador to Iraq, stated:

> "Before 2003 and until now, Iraqi and Iranian relationships are solid and have developed consistently... this goes back to the two nations' social and historical ties … most of the [Iraqi] opposition were in Iran including Shia, Kurds and Sunnis … In 2003, when the government [Saddam's regime] collapsed, the opposition, who were in Iran and had a relationship with the Iranian government, came into power in Iraq … since then the relationship took its official form." (Author's interview with Danai, 2015)

This view reflects the evolution of the relationship, particularly when examining the Shia and Kurdish political forces' ties with Iran. Meanwhile, Danai undermines Iran's leverage on Iraqi Shia political factions and armed groups, which Iran created and which have substantial power in Iraq. Danai did not deny the author's assertion that Iran became the major player and winner in Iraq, post-Saddam. He said: "This kind of judgement others can give about our role in Iraq … We are working to accelerate and develop our bilateral relationship in different fields" (author's interview with Danai, 2015). In further discussions with the Ambassador, it became clear that he wanted to portray neutrality in Iran's involvement in Iraq; but his views tacitly acknowledge Iran's leverage.

Regarding interfering in Iraq's internal affairs, Panayi stated:

> "Iran does not interfere in Iraq's internal and foreign affairs … the Shia factions in Iraq see Iran as backer … The government in Baghdad takes Iran

> into consideration in its foreign affairs for strategic issues, but saying that Iran is informing the Shia-led government in conducting certain foreign policy issues, is an exaggeration." (Author's interview with Panayi, 2015)

Iraq's foreign policy is not a duplicate of Iran's. However, Iranian officials are cautious about showing the degree of their leverage on the Iraqi government. Panayi said:

> "We would like to get closer to the Arab states via Iraq, as Iraq is an Arab state … Moreover, we would like Iraq to take us into account when they make foreign policy decisions because our [Iran's] national security is related to Iraq and it has an impact on us." (Author's interview with Panayi, 2015)

This illustrates the ties and nexus between Iranian and Iraqi foreign policies. Iran views Iraq's foreign policy orientation as important for their interests in Iraq and the region. For Iran, Iraq is another critical corridor to the Arab world. Iranian interference in Iraq's affairs should not overshadow the fact that Iraq has conducted some foreign policy matters that were not in Iran's interests, such as Iraq's Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA) with the US. In generic terms, the Shia-led government backs Iran's regional positions and relations, in which there are common interests and perspectives, for example, appealing for Shia grievances and supporting the Shia masses in the region, for instance in Yemen, Lebanon, the KSA and Bahrain. In relation to the cultural, economic and security sectors, many Shia (and some Kurdish) politicians have demonstrated Iran's benign intervention in Iraq. According to, Kamran Karadaqhi, the former Iraqi President's Chief of Staff: "Iran knows how to deal with the Iraqi elite professionally, which is coupled with their knowledge of Iraq's culture more than the Americans. This provided Iran with exceptional status and weight in Iraq" (author's interview with Karadaqhi, 2015). Other Shia and some Kurdish interviewees also expressed this. In some ways, Iran utilises gentle communication methods and revives memories of shared struggles (during Saddam's era) when interacting with the Iraqi political elite. Iranian proactive attitudes in Iraq include providing their old friends and allies with various types of assistance, including logistical support. Iranian perspectives show their interests and allegedly legitimate rights to protect Iraq, its Shia community and Shia shrines.

Iranian influence on Iraq's military and security apparatus

Iran has funded, trained, equipped and indoctrinated several Iraqi Shia militias and armed groups, as well as infiltrating Iraq's security structure. Iran's military, security and clandestine strategy and network in Iraq can be considered as Iran exercising hard power (Bongers, 2013, 146).[125] Between 2003 and 2005, 16,000 personnel from Iranian-backed Shia militias were incorporated into the new ISF. The Badr Organisation has strong historical ties with the Iraqi Revolutionary Guards Corps-Quds Force (IRGC-QF), and has provided most of the personnel to the ISF (Eisenstdat, Knights and Ali, 2011). The Iraqi National Intelligence Service's (INIS) first leader, Mohammed al-Shawani, a Sunni who had strained relations with some prominent Shia members, left in 2009, after clashing with al-Maliki. An al-Maliki loyalist replaced him, and INIS eventually built up a relationship with Iran (Cordsman and Khaszai, 2014b, 52; Dodge, 2013b, 205). However, Iranian officials deny any security interference; in 2005, Danai said: "We give [to Iraq] valuable information to confront terrorism activities … We give our experience to combat terrorism … When Daesh threatened Erbil and Baghdad we provided support without any conditions, unlike the Americans" (author's interview with Danai, 2015). Despite the fact that Iraqi and Iranian coordination is extensive in security terms, this does not eradicate Iran's policy of interference.

Iranian involvement in Iraq is not monolithic; it has emerged from various Iranian institutions and individuals, such as the Ministry of Intelligence and Security, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Supreme National Council and – significantly – from Qasem Soleimani, the Major General and Commander of QF. To streamline operations in Iraq, IRGC-QF created a unified command, known as Ramazan Corps, and divided Iraq into approximately three geographical regions (Roggio, 2007). The aforementioned Iranian bodies engaged in Iraq show the multilayered involvement in Iraq's political; economic; military, security and intelligence structure.[126]

Soleimani is the most powerful Iranian figure in Iraq's security affairs; he has a tangible influence on Iraq's military strategies, particularly in frontline battles wherein Iraqi forces and Hashd al-Sha'abi are fighting Daesh. Hashd al-Sha'abi (Popular Mobilisation Forces; PMF) became the most powerful paramilitary umbrella in Iraq's military

[125] Hard power is a traditional tool in foreign policy that is widely utilised in realism and NCR. NCR maintains that soft power is an extension of hard power (Ferguson, 2011; Romanova, 2012).
[126] In the context of this research, a multilayer policy combines a number of different approaches, tools, channels and networks that aim to achieve the same goals.

structure. The PMF can be divided into three blocks of militias: pro-Iran, pro-Sistani militias and pro-Sadr (Gulmohamad, 2016b)

The dozens of pro-Iran Shia militias in Iraq are considered the most powerful forces within the PMF, and follow the Iranian Supreme Leader's doctrines (Gulmohamad, 2015a; 2016b). Powerful organisations in the PMF, such as the Badr Organisation (headed by Hadi al-Amiri) and Asaib Ahl Al-Haq (AAH) and its leader (Qayis al-Khazali) have very close ties with the Ramazan Corps.[127] Al-Khazali was initially considered to be one of the Ramazan Corps senior officers or agents, and the US refers to his group as the direct "arm action" of the QF (Nader, 2015; Roggio, 2007). In a televised interview, al-Amiri threatened to pressure al-Abadi and his government if they did not agree with his policies regarding US military operations in Iraq (Parker, 2015). As such, AAH, Badr and other pro-Iran militias have become part of Iraq's political and security governmental structure. Iran gained political and security advantages via its armed proxies. Consequently, this might indirectly and directly influence decision-making processes in Iran's favour. However, while Iran's proxies in al-Abadi's government should be taken into consideration, their influence should not be exaggerated in foreign policy making. While the federal government expressed affinities and solidarity with Shia figures and parties in the Middle East, the Iraqi pro-Iran Shia militias have publicly announced their willingness to support the Shias and have threatened the Arab Gulf monarchies for suppressing their Shia populations (Skypress, 2016; al-Khaleej online, 2015; al-Araby, 2016). This underlines the radical approach of those actors compare to federal government. Although the federal government has not adopted exactly the same rhetoric as pro-Iran Shia militias, Baghdad has been pressured by their rhetoric and has been careful in its statements to not antagonize them.

PM al-Abadi supports pro-Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani's armed groups in the PMF. Pro-Sistani armed groups, known as Holy Shia Shrines militias or A'tabat Forces, answer to al-Sistani and not Khamenei (Habib, 2015; Mamouri, 2015; Gulmohamad, 2016b). They neither possess strong political motivations nor hold the Wilayat al-Faqih doctrine. Since the rise of Daesh, pro-Hakim and Sadr militias adhere to the federal government in Baghdad. Pro-Iran militias are the most powerful in terms of numbers and equipment, and their key figures take their instructions from Iranian hardliners and their security circles. Strengthening the Baghdad-headed federal government and al-Sistani's forces

[127] Currently, al-Khazali is a prominent figure in Iraq's politics. AAH won seats in the ICR and was included in al-Maliki's State of Law coalition in the 2014 election (Nader, 2015; Katzman and Humud, 2015).

will limit the influence of Iranian proxies, and subsequently that of Iran.

Iranian hardliners and their powerful proxies (such as Badr and AAH) have perceived the US's return to Iraq to fight Daesh as a security challenge. The Iraqi pro-Iran and Muqtada's militias threatened to kill the US advisors in Iraq if they, for example, established military bases and armed the Kurds and Arab Sunnis without the Shia-led government's consent (Knights, 2015c). This has pushed the federal government, including al-Abadi, to be more cautious (at least publicly) with the US.

Iran through the Lebanese Hezbollah supported Iraq's pro-Iran Shia militias. There are a number of Lebanese Hezbollah's skilled fighters in Iraq, alongside the PMF and ISF, providing advice and other forms of support (Spyer and al-Tamimi, 2014; Levitt, 2015). According to Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, a leader of the PMF stated that Kataib Hezbollah in Iraq and AAH have a relationship with the Lebanese Hezbollah, including training (Al-Khabar Press, 2015). On 16th February 2015, Hassan Nasrallah, Leader of the Lebanese Hezbollah, revealed their presence in Iraq to fight Daesh, which the media subsequently reported (The National, 2015). The Lebanese Hezbollah's involvement in Iraq can be understood in the context of cooperation rather than interference. Hezbollah is an Iranian non-state client in the region; it coordinates with Iranian IRGC elements in Iraq and assists the Iranian agenda.

Iranian soft power in Iraq

Many Iraqi political elites have perceived Iranian soft power as useful, supportive and necessary for post-Saddam Iraqi state building.[128] Iran's activities have manifested in many areas (for example, politics; social and educational programmes, investment in energy and trade) most notably a number of active land-crossing borders, religious activities and tourism, including thousands of Iranian pilgrims travelling to Shia holy shrines in Najaf and Karbala annually. Iran spends millions of dollars reconstructing Iraqi Shia holy shrines, engaging in infrastructure investment projects and providing energy (Loi, 2011; Trend News Agency, 2014). Observing Iranian economic influence on Iraq shows a gradual and significant increase in trade partnership between both countries: from under USD400 million in 2004 to USD4 billion in 2009 (Marr & Parker, 2011, 32) and USD12 billion in 2013, and is projected to reach USD20 billion by 2018

[128] There is widespread consensus that soft power includes cultural diplomacy. For the purposes of this section, economic resources, aid, trade and investment have been coined as other instruments of soft power, acknowledging the possibility of utilising them as hard power too (Page & Xie, 2011, 224).

(Financial Tribune, 2015; al-Hassoun, 2014). In 2015, Iraq was one of Iran's top five trading partners (Esfandiary and Tabatabai, 2015).

Economic penetration is clearly a major pillar of Iran's policy towards Iraq (Juneau, 2015, 120). Iran's strategic economic policy towards Iraq can be depicted as economic diplomacy that serves its long-term interests to foster its relationships and impact on Iraq's internal political dynamics (Kebriaeezadeh, 2015; Habibi, 2010). Iran has the most diplomatic representations (11 consulates and an embassy) that are scattered throughout Iraq. Iraq and Iran signed a number of bilateral agreements in multiple sectors, including between governments, chambers of commerce, energy sectors and universities. Iranian involvement in Iraq was not entirely detrimental. This was part of Iraq's open-door policy to Iran, which had political repercussions and served Tehran's interests. Iraq's infrastructure, poor facilities and incapacity to provide basic services opened the door for Iran's engagement in these sectors. Iran/Iraqi (Shia region) economic interdependence and cultural exchange inevitably resulted in political gains for Iran.

Another level of Iranian engagement is Shia religious literature, which has flowed into southern Shia regions through the organisation of book fairs, and media outreach through television and radio (Juneau, 2015, 121). Religious tourism and education (such as Iranian educational schools and cultural centres throughout Iraq) have substantially increased, and now constitute a major instance of cultural diplomacy; the Imam Khomeini Cultural-Sports Centre in Diyala provides one such example. An unprecedented level of cultural interchange between the two countries helped to secure Iranian influence in Iraq.

Iran interferes in Iraqi seminary (*al-Hawza*) and Shiite Marjia circles; Khamenei was preparing a new Marjia to succeed Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani, who is viewed as a hindrance to the expansion of Iranian influence. With Iranian support and finance, Iraqi-born cleric Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi-Shahroudi began extending his network throughout the Shia community in Iraq including in Najaf (Esfandiary and Tabatabai, 2015; Arango, 2012). Shahroudi is considered to be in Khamenei's close circle, and would pose a challenge to the non-cleric democratic system in Iraq. Shahroudi (Iran's candidate) has a good rapport with former PM al-Maliki (Hendawi and Abdul-Zahra, 2012). However, according to Mamouri, Ayatollah Shahroudi is a weak candidate; he has insufficient support among the Shia seminary in Najaf, has spent insufficient time in

Najaf to build a network and influence, and has cancer. Despite Khamenei's efforts to influence Shia seminary in Najaf, it is a closed system that is challenging for him to penetrate (Washington Institute, 2017). Khamenei's formal representation in Iraq is Mujtaba al-Husseini al-Shirazi, which has an office in Najaf and advocates Wilayat al-Faqih in Iraq (Mahdi, 2015; Muttahidoon, 2015). Iran's blueprint for Iraq's future highest Marjia matches that of al-Maliki's and the interests of the pro-Iran Shia militias. Despite the growing influence of Iran post-2003, there are Shia political leaders and clerics who confront Iranian interferences such as al-Sistani, al-Abadi and al-Sadr.

According to Dodge, al-Maliki was not Iran's choice to be Iraqi PM (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2013); he was a nationalist figure but tilted towards Iran as it was convenient and they had common interests and similar political positions on regional issues. Geography (a 905-mile-long porous border); common religious sect (Shia Islam); security, economic, cultural and personal ties paved the way for Iranian influence (Gulmohamad, 2014b). After the rise of Daesh, the emboldening of the pro-Iran Shia militias and the weakening of the ISF, the Iranian support through its proxies became vital – at least on a military tactical level – in the face of the existential threat of Daesh. While Iran and the US attempt to direct Iraq's foreign policy towards their interests in the region, Baghdad is assembling a bridge between the two rival bedfellows in Iraq. Despite its limitations, Iranian soft power has extended Iran's spheres of influence.

Iran and Iraqi Kurdish and Arab Sunni factions

Iran's interference in the KR-I is limited and far less effective than its influence on Iraqi Shia factions. The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and especially the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) have a good relationship with Iran. Elements of the PUK's leadership frequently visit Iran. The PUK's controlled areas border with Iran, which influences its decision making towards Iran. Chapter 5 discusses the geopolitics and the two political parties' relationships with Iran. Historically, the two Iraqi Kurdish parties and Iran have switched between affinity and tension. For example, in the 1980s, the KDP had closer ties with Iran than the PUK, as the latter was allied with the KDP-I (Stansfield, 2003, 90). The two parties have historical ties that go back to before the Iranian Revolution in 1979. The Kurds have been a card in Iranian political bargaining, and games in both Iran and Iraq, to direct certain issues to their interests. The 373-mile border between the KR-I and Iran, mutual economic and political elites' interests has influenced the

relationships between Iran and the Kurdish parties, especially the PUK leadership.

Iranian influence and soft power includes cultural diplomacy: the relationship of the Kurdish language to Farsi (Persian), tourism and the popularity of Iranian music among the Kurds. Economic ties also play a significant role in their relationship. Iran is the KRG's second largest trade partner; for example, mutual trade generated USD4 billion in 2013 (Ingram, 2015). Several economic and trade agreements have been signed in various sectors (Rudaw English, 2014). Their ties include construction and energy (oil, gas and electricity). Iran serves as another trade corridor for the KR-I, particularly for the PUK-dominated areas, adding to its political leverage in the KR-I and on the PUK.

The KRG has a formal representative in Tehran: Nazim Omer, from the PUK party. This is alongside many Kurdish parties' representatives, including the KDP and Islamic Union. As each Kurdish party has a slightly different relationship with Iran, Iran considers itself the occasional arbiter when tensions between Kurdish parties emerge but also try to keep them divided if it fits with Iran's interests. The Shia-led government does not view the close ties between the KR-I and Iran as constituting interference in its internal affairs. Iran is firmly and publicly against Kurdish independence; meanwhile, it has interests that lead it to help maintain the KR-I's stability. Iran's ties with Kurdish parties build amicable relationships. Openly avoiding Iran's animosity is one of the KRG's political parties' national security interests. Limiting the Kurdish aspirations in Iraq for independence by the Iranians must be viewed through the prism of not only unifying Iraq but also curbing Iranian–Kurdish ambitions for an independent state, or any sort of autonomy. Iran does not dictate the decision making of the KRG, nor that of either the KDP or PUK. The KDP and PUK take Iran into account in their decision making, particularly in issues related to Iran. During Daesh's attacks on the KR-I 2014, Iran helped the Peshmerga forces by providing some ammunition and weapons for which Kurdish officials formally thanked them.

Although Iraqi Arab Sunni elites and factions are divided, they depict Iran as a threat, and reject Iranian engagement. Chapter 3 discusses the external views of Iraqi Sunni elites and factions, including towards Iran. Panayi said:

> "Iran cannot see who is representing them [Arab Sunnis] or who is the reference of Iraqi Arab Sunnis, to know what they want, to approach them, have an agreement with them … and to fulfil their demands." (Author's

interview with Panayi, 2015)

Here, Panayi admits that Iranian officials influence and interfere in Iraq's internal dynamics. Tehran might have a foreign policy strategy towards Iraq, but it has different tactics towards Iraqi major components that undermine Sunni interests. Iran's interests in Iraq are to project power into Iraq, while checking the increasing influence of the US; KSA; Turkey and other Arab Sunni states. Iran is not only the external power with the ability to interfere; it could also be argued that it is the foremost external state stakeholder in Baghdad. Although Iran through its hard and soft power has the utmost influence on Baghdad's post-Saddam foreign policy compared to regional powers, it faces constraints to fully dominate decision making. The next section examines the Turkish influence and interference in Iraq. The chapter considers Turkey to be the second most powerful regional actor; their influence is particularly felt in Erbil.

Turkey and Iraq: fluctuating relations

This section explores Iraqi and Turkish perceptions of their relationship, the ties between Turkey and the KRG and the consequences for the federal government's foreign policy.

Post-2003, Turkey immediately announced its support for the new government in Baghdad (Habeeb, 2012, 74). Baghdad's and Ankara's regional policies and ruling political parties' ideologies and personalities have played a role in their relationship. Turkey maintained the operation of its embassy in Baghdad before and after the US invasion (Habeeb, 2012, 74). Post-2003, consulates opened in Mosul, Basra and Erbil, demonstrating Turkey's interests in Iraq as part of its foreign policy priorities (Republic of Turkey – Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015). In 2009, Erdogan and al-Maliki signed energy deals and attempted to cooperate on water sharing and fighting the PKK. However, the effect of those deals has faded due to accusations of sectarianism, Turkish interference in Iraq, and complications arising from the Syrian Civil War. Accusations were particularly fierce between Erdogan and al-Maliki, and have continued with PM al-Abadi.

Turkey's hosting of the fugitive former Iraqi VP, al-Hashimi, worsened the bilateral relationship. During his premiership, al-Maliki called Turkey an "enemy state" that

interfered in the domestic affairs of its neighbour (Barkey, 2013; Cordesman and Khazai, 2014a, 149). Erdogan responded: "Al-Maliki should know this – if you start a period of conflict in Iraq with a sectarian struggle, it will be impossible for us to remain silent". Al-Maliki's office stated that this was "interference" in Iraq's affairs (Burch, 2012). The Iraq–Turkey relationship has not progressed during al-Abadi's tenure, mainly because of the Turkish military presence in northern Iraq, interference, support of a number of Arab Sunni figures and close ties with Erbil. The Shia-led government perceives Turkey's interests in Iraq as an attempt to control the energy-rich KR-I, Kirkuk and Mosul. Turkey's closest allies among Sunni leaders are, namely the two the brothers, Atheel (the former Mosul Governor) and VP Usama al-Nujaifi. Usama and Atheel established a higher coordination committee for Sunni factions and have connections with the Turkish military (Ali and Van den Toorn, 2015). Iraqi Shia policy makers have publicly revealed the perception that Turkey utilises the Sunnis and the Kurds against Iraqi interests. Iraqi officials view Turkey's policy as the rebirth of Ottoman domination, led by Erdogan in the region to subdue Mosul province.

The clashing policies of AKP and Baghdad towards the Syrian Civil War have worsened their already feeble rapport. Erdogan and al-Maliki's policies stem from viewing each other through sectarian lenses, which has deepened personal animosities. Al-Maliki's allied Shia militias are fighting alongside Assad's regime. For example, the AAH has sent fighters to Syria; their force is called Liwa Kafeel Zainab (Jihad Intel, 2015; Mapping Militants Organizations, 2015). Erdogan supports opposition groups, such as Ahrar al-Sham, which fight Assad and his allies, including the Iraqi Shia militias (Cafarella, 2016; Heller and Stein, 2015). The two leaders' opposing foreign policies in Syria are damaging the bilateral relationship.

The relationship between Baghdad and Ankara further deteriorated in 2016, particularly when Erdogan insulted al-Abadi and the Turkish parliament extended its military involvement in Iraq. Subsequently, Iraqi pro-Iran Shia militias threatened to attack Turkish troops if they did not withdraw and/or participate in Mosul's liberation (Mostafa, 2017; Al-Salhy, 2016). Military confrontations have not occurred between Baghdad and Ankara; although in 2016 and previous years Ankara and Baghdad summoned each other's ambassadors and each condemned the other government's approach, the diplomatic bilateral relationship survived.

During al-Abadi's tenure the hope of a stable relationship quickly evaporated; the

regional struggle, the Turkish military presence in Bashiqa, the rise of Iranian proxies in Iraq, and Baghdad's rejection of Turkey's participation in Mosul added to the strain. Erbil–Ankara energy and security ties, sectarianism, Turkey's interference in Iraq and elites' conflicting perceptions and interests shape Baghdad's policy towards Ankara. This has also had consequences on trade, investment and business between Baghdad and Ankara. Erbil has exceeded Baghdad in this respect, as Turkish business has been welcomed.

Turkey and the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) developing rapport

Turkey and the KR-I's relationship should be analysed within the context of economics, geopolitics, security, and the military, in which Turkey and the KRG's actors (mainly the KDP) are engaged. A limited, unofficial liaison has existed between the KDP, PUK and Turkey since the 1990s. A decade of distrust ended in 2007, when a rapprochement emerged after Kurdish initiatives and the first diplomatic Turkish delegations visited the KR-I in 2008. After an official meeting between Masoud Barzani, the former PM Ahmed Duvatogule, a Turkish consulate was opened in Erbil in July 2010 (KRG cabinet, 2009). Ankara and Erbil's close ties have further contributed to the fluctuating Iraqi–Turkish relationship (Gulmohamad, 2013). Turkey and the KR-I's relationship can be assessed in three areas: the economy, politics and security.

Economically, Turkey is the KR-I's largest trade partner. Cagaptay (2015), Wahab (2014) and Park (2014) have addressed the economic and energy progress between Turkey and the KR-I. The bilateral economic relations have covered almost all sectors in the KR-I – from energy (oil and gas, their extraction and developing strategic energy pipelines) to electricity; infrastructure; goods; healthcare; education; transport; agriculture; banking, tourism and small-to-large businesses. Turkish exports to KRG-governed areas in 2007 were USD1.4 billion; in 2013 they were USD8 billion, placing the KRG as Turkey's third largest export market. Some scholars, such as Cagaptay, argue that Ankara and Erbil share undeclared economic commonwealth (Cagaptay, Fidan and Sacikara, 2015).[129]

Turkish companies benefit from not only the KR-I's oil but also its gas sector; Turkish company Genel Energy has developed gas fields, and it is expected that the gas will be

[129] The scholars mean long-term benefit for both Ankara and Erbil, who have strong mutual interests in continuing their partnership (Cagaptay, Fidan, and Sacikara, 2015).

exported into Europe via Turkey (Hacaoglu and Firat, 2014). Turkey sees the KR-I as a potential alternative to Russia for energy. In 2006, the KRG rewarded Turkish energy corporations for oil explorations to develop the Shiwaskok oil field for Genel Energy (Wahab, 2006). Turkish energy corporations such as Dogan Energy and Petoil also operated in the KR-I (Marco Polis, 2012; Iraq Business News, 2015). Baghdad was indignant about transnational energy corporations investing in the KR-I without its approval. From the KRG's perspective, the budgetary penalties Baghdad enforced on the KRG by cutting or limiting its 17% share have justified independently exporting oil and monetising routes through Turkey. The pressure Baghdad exerted backlashed by pushing the KRG closer to Turkey (Wahab, 2014). The central government's foreign policy towards Turkey was inflamed by accusations of interference in Erbil. During al-Maliki's and al-Abadi's tenures, the Turkish Ambassador was summoned several times to hear protests regarding Ankara's interference and bypassing of Baghdad in its relationship with the KRG.

The strategic oil pipeline between the KR-I and Turkey is autonomous from the federal government. It lays in Taq Taq, close to Erbil, and even has its own independent metering station, which was completed in 2013 (US EIA, 2015; Natali, 2013). This is the second pipeline between the two countries, connected to Ceyhan and on the Iraqi–Turkey border, where the flow of oil is already ongoing (Natali, 2013). The older Kirkuk–Ceyhan pipeline is often disrupted, and the Kurdish factions now control Kirkuk. A third new pipeline to export natural gas between Iraqi Kurdistan and Turkey is under construction; completion is estimated for 2018. These developments represent a deeper economic and energy integration stage between Erbil and Ankara, which might have political ramifications. The fact that much of this is considered as interference attests to the divergence of economic policies between the KRG and the federal government. Turkey augments the divide in Iraq's foreign policies between Baghdad and Erbil.

In a political and security context, the leadership of the KRG has been in close contact with that of Turkey, particularly between the KDP and AKP elites. Masoud Barzani's visit to Diyarbakir alongside Erdogan in November 2013 had symbolic repercussions in Turkey and for the KRG's relationship, and was part of the successful public relations. Erdogan sought to gain more Kurdish voters in 2013 by inviting Barzani into Diyarbaker and undermining the pro-Kurdish parties in Turkey (Gunter, 2014, 23; Winter, 2013, 32). Political, economy and security interests are embedded in their ties, and cannot be analysed separately. One of the vital issues for Ankara and Erbil is the PKK as it poses a

security and political challenge to Turkey and to the domination of the KDP. As a result, they cooperate to limit and contain the PKK's activities in clandestine and military coordination (Korutürk, 2015; Al-Arabiya, 2012).

Turkey's military intervention in Iraq goes back to the 1980s, when Saddam's regime and Ankara ratified a formal security cooperation agreement to attack or bomb the PKK in Iraq (al-Laythi & Zayer, 2012; Barham Salih quoted in Sky News Arabia, 2015). The Iraqi Kurdish Civil War in the mid-1990s facilitated Turkey's military presence in the KR-I, especially in the KDP-dominated areas. In 2015, Turkey had around 3,000 troops in the KR-I, such as in Bamerni Airport and Kani Masi (Kasapoglu & Cagaptay, 2015). In December 2015, Turkey sent reinforcements to Zilkan in northern Iraq, which already had forces there to train Peshmerga and Arab Sunni forces under the umbrella of "National Mobilisation" (*Hashd al-Watani*). Baghdad declared Turkey's actions to be a violation of its sovereignty but Erbil did not object to Turkish troops (Knights, 2015; Ali and van den Toorn, 2015; Filkins, 2015). Turkey's incursion was not only to fight Daesh. The KDP and Ankara were concerned about the rise of the PKK and PYD in fighting Daesh in Iraq, and their increasing popularity among a segment of Kurdish society. The KDP and AKP enhanced their political rapprochement; the Turkish PM and President welcomed President Barzani to Ankara in 2015 and 2016 with Kurdish and Iraqi flags on the table – an uncommon gesture from Ankara.

Not all Iraqi Kurdish political factions depict Turkey as their political, security and economic ally. The PUK leadership openly disagree with President Barzani's close ties with Turkey. There is covert rapport and no animosity between the PUK and PKK, and close ties with its affiliate the PYD and military wing in "Rojava" (western or Syrian Kurdistan). The PUK and Ankara's relations are not as imperative as the KDP and AKP's. In the rapport between the KRG and Ankara, economic, political, security and regional matters are interrelated. Interestingly, in 2016, Turkey approved the KRG's representations (Kurdi, 2017). This demonstrates slow diplomatic development compared to the significant mutual cooperation between Erbil and Turkey, highlighting Turkey's cautious political concessions to the KRG. To sum up, Baghdad forthrightly resents Ankara's ties with Erbil and Arab Sunni factions, viewing them as interference in, and violation of, its sovereignty.

The following section analyses the unstable relationship between Iraq and the KSA – the third most influential regional actor in Iraq, particularly on Iraq's Sunni population.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iraq: an unstable relationship

The recently deceased King Abdullah reportedly criticised US officials for having "allowed the Persians, the Safavids, to take over Iraq" (Betts, Desch and Feaver, 2012, 187). Saudi rulers have perceived the changes in power and the political system in Iraq as a menace. The KSA are concerned about the influence of Iraqi Shia political factions and militias and worry that the rise of the Shias would further provoke the Shia minority in the KSA (who have a tense relation with the monarchy). The KSA views these as a threat to their national security. The Shia in the KSA aspire to emulate the rise of the Iraqi Shia Arabs (Stansfield, 2010a, 1407). Fears regarding the rise of the Shia have invigorated the KSA's foreign policy towards Iraq's Sunnis. Alterman (2007) stated: "The Saudi government has increasingly been cast as a defender of Sunni interests in Iraq". In 2004, the KSA proposed a plan for the creation of "a Muslim international force" to help the UN and stabilise Iraq (Cordesman and Obaid, 2005, 2), which the US and IIG rejected. This shows the KSA's attempt to obtain leverage in Iraq for its own ends.

The KSA's position is clear: it asserts Iraq's unity as an Arab state free from Iranian influence (Cordesman, 2009, 26). Iraqi and Saudi government relations have been very tense, especially between the KSA and the former PM al-Maliki's government (Stansfield, 2010, 1407). Iraq strongly believed that the Saudis had interfered with and provoked Iraq's Sunnis to oppose the Shia-led government. During his premiership, Al-Maliki openly accused the KSA (and Qatar) of funding and supporting the Sunni insurgents; he believed they were deeply hostile towards the new Iraqi political system. Al-Maliki's discontent was pronounced when the Anbar rebellion began at the end of 2013. Al-Maliki said: "They [the KSA and Qatar] have declared war on Iraq just as they have declared war on Syria" (MEMRI, 2014). Saudis believed the deterioration of Iraq's security was due to government discrimination against the Sunnis and the hostile military approach to dislodging Sunni demonstrations. The KSA sees the government's duty to be not blurring the line between the legitimate rights of the Sunnis and the extremists, such as Daesh.

The relationship between al-Maliki's government and the Saudi government was antagonistic; thus, FM Zebari said in September 2009, "There is a problem in Iraqi–Saudi relations" (Blanchard and Katzman et al, 2009). Al-Abadi's government has made some positive diplomatic progress; it has sought to turn over a new leaf and normalise relationships with Riyadh. Iraq's and the region's instability have hindered these efforts.

In spite of attempts to rebuild ties after the toppling of Saddam, both sides have been passive in approaching and understanding each other. In November 2014, Dr Wael Abdul Latif, a pro-Shia Iraqi politician, former minister, argued that the deterioration and ebb and flow of Iraqi and Saudi relations is due to some Iraqi government elites who represent Sunnis, such as a VP or a minister, going to the KSA and sending messages that contradict the Iraqi FM's official message (Al-Fayhaa TV, 2014b). This symbolises the incoherence of Iraq's foreign policies. The complexity of the feeble relationship involves dynamic changes of political power in Iraq and the fear of perceived Shiite expansion (*Al-Tamadud al-Shii*). The KSA's officials have bluntly accused Iran of detrimental interference in Iraq's affairs (Saadoun, 2016b).

The KSA's relationship with Sunni and Kurdish factions

The Shia-led government and Shia political elite have constantly called on the KSA to stop supporting and financing the Sunni rebellion. Unidentified figures and wealthy individuals in the KSA are claimed to have provided financial and logistical support to some Sunni insurgent groups in Iraq (Kahl, Katulis and Lynch, 2008, 95). The KSA responded to the regional alternation by supporting Arab Sunni forces in Iraq that oppose Iran (Gause, 2014, 191).

The KSA has had limited success, as their engagement in Iraq is far less than Iran's. The KSA has close ties with Iraqi-Arab Sunni elites, and tribes, which are spread across western Iraq and over the KSA's border. The Shammar tribe in Iraq extends into northern and central Saudi Arabia and the former King, Abdulaziz Abdullah, married a Shammar tribe member. These ties influence how the KSA's rulers view Iraqi Sunnis, and Sunni leaders in other Arab countries pressured the Saudis to help Iraqi Sunnis (Ottaway, 2008, 241). When Ghazi al-Yawar, a prominent Shammar figure that has close ties with the KSA's rulers, became Iraq's interim President, Riyadh unsurprisingly congratulated him. Other cross-border tribes, such as al-Anizah, have common interests and values. Al-Qassemi (2012) has described these cross-border links between the tribes as "tribal diplomacy". However, Bradley and Entous (2014) and Alrababa'h and Wehrey (2014) argue that the KSA exerts limited influence on Iraq's tribes. Nevertheless, the KSA provides intermittent funding and logistical support to Iraqi Sunni tribal leaders, and the Iraqi Sunni political elite encourage the KSA to develop close ties with Iraq.

Former PM Allawi was believed to receive funding from the KSA for his political campaigns (Daragahi, 2014). Saudi diplomatic documents in Wikileaks show that Usama al-Nujaifi and Ayad Allawi received financial aid and privileges from the KSA (Rubin, 2015; Saleh, 2015; Hubbard, 2015). This caused uproar in Iraqi media and politics. The KSA's financial aid also included the awakening movement (*Sahawat*) (Blanchard and Katzman et al, 2009). Beyond the validity and integrity of the documents, this could be a realistic policy that the KSA adopted and Sunni leaders accepted. Al-Iraqiya gained the most seats in the Iraq national election in 2010; this was seen as a victory for the KSA and other Arab Gulf States who financed them (Mansour and Jabar, 2017, 9). Baghdad is aware that the KSA could have an influence on Iraqi Sunni elites, due to the aforementioned links.

The aftermath of the attack on the al-Askari holy Shia shrine in Samarra resulted in Iraqi Shia militias retaliating against Sunni mosques and civilians. In February 2006, the Saudi Imam of the Holy Mosque of Mecca granted support to the Iraqi Sunnis and condemned Shia attacks against Sunnis. The Saudi Monarchy tacitly agreed with the speech (Alshamsi, 2011, 180). In October 2006, 38 prominent Saudi religious figures signed a petition calling on Sunnis everywhere to oppose a joint "Crusader [US], Safavid [Iran] and Rafidi [derogatory term of Shiite] scheme" that targeted Iraqi-Arab Sunnis (Blanchard, 2008, 5). Vali Nasr stated that, "It is clear that Wahhabi and Salafi clerics and activists in the Saudi Kingdom encouraged them to join the anti-Shia, anti-American jihad in Iraq" (Nasr, 2006, 245). The Iraqi Shia and Shia-led government believe anti-Shia statements encourage instability and worsen bilateral relationships. Iraqi Shias see the KSA as promoting Wahhabism and Salafiyya among Iraqi Sunnis. However, Wahhabism and Salafism have some historical links to Iraq (McCants, 2015; Leaman, 2006, 283). While the KSA rejects these allegations, Saudi clerics such as Grand Mufti Shaykh Abd al Aziz have released religious judgements stating that travel to Iraq for the purpose of participating in violent activity is illegitimate (Blanchard and Katzman et al, 2009; Blanchard, 2008, 5). However, Iraq has raised concerns over the hateful statements of Saudi Sunni clerics and a sizable number of Saudi fighters in Iraq who joined Daesh (Atwan, 2015; Rogers, 2014; and Bunzel, 2015). The federal government in Baghdad's execution and torture of Saudi prisoners who were part of terrorist organisations, such as Daesh, has also added to the deterioration of the bilateral relationship between Baghdad and Riyadh (Saadoun, 2016a).

The KSA's ties with Iraqi Kurdish leaders and officials in Baghdad and Erbil are in a

better condition than its ties with Shia-led government elites. In 2010, the now deceased Saudi King Abdullah awarded Jalal Talabani with the King Abdullah Aziz Medal, and President Barzani also received an honour (Asharq Al-Awsat, 2010; EKurd Daily, 2010). According to documents Wikileaks released in June 2015, the KSA's Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicates the importance of having a close relationship with Barzani against al-Maliki. Another document reveals Saudi donations of USD500,000 to the Kurdish Islamic movement in Iraqi Kurdistan (EKurd Daily, 2015; Rubin, 2015). The Kurdistan Islamic Union (KIU) (*Yekgirtu*) and Islamic factions in Iraqi Kurdistan have links with the KSA (Sherko, 2016; Ali, 2015). Several of the KSA's humanitarian NGOs (such as the International Islamic Relief Organization of Saudi Arabia) operate in Iraq, including in the KR-I (Egatha, 2016).

In 2015, President Barzani visited the KSA, where speculation about financial aid for the region was expected. Despite excellent relations with Iraqi Kurdish leaders, publicly the KSA neither encourages nor opposes the KR-I's independence. However, in 2016, Sero Qadir of the Institute for Research and Development in Kurdistan expected the KSA to formally support Kurdistan's independence (Frantzman, 2016). The author does not disagree with Qadir's prediction; however, assuming the KSA's formal approval of the KR-I's independence oversimplifies the KSA's policy. Riyadh seeks an internal ally in order to enable them to confront the Shia-led government and Shia militias, as well as to check Iranian influence on the KR-I and Iraq.

Fragile diplomacy

Iraq's diplomatic relations with the KSA were severed from the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 until 2004, when bilateral ties were restored. Diplomatic relations partly resumed in 2012, when the KSA appointed a non-resident Saudi ambassador to Iraq, who was based in Amman (The Intelligence Unit/The Economist, 2015). Al-Abadi's tenure signalled mutual improvements; the former Saudi FM Saud al-Faisil publicly welcomed al-Abadi's appointment in 2014. Iraqi officials visited the KSA, and al-Sistani called for Iraqi–Saudi rapprochement (Baghdad Al-Akhbaria, 2014; Mamouri, 2014b). Although the I-MOFA announced its readiness to prepare for opening a Saudi Embassy in Baghdad during al-Maliki's tenure, al-Abadi's government stimulated the relationship.

The Iraqi government appointed Ambassador Rushdi al-Ani to the KSA, who arrived in Riyadh in September 2015. After 25 years, the KSA named its Ambassador to Iraq,

Thamer al-Sabhan, in June 2015. The Ambassador, embassy staff and the officer in charge arrived in Baghdad in December 2015 (Al-Bawaba, 2015; Ain Iraqi News, 2015). In that month, the Saudi embassy started diplomatic work in Baghdad and in 2016 a consulate was opened in Erbil (Mustafa, 2015b; Basnews, 2015). The opening of a consulate and an operating Saudi Embassy in Baghdad after years of disrupted relations underlines the cautious diplomatic restoration, which both countries have described as delayed. Since 2003, many Iraqi senior high-level officials visited the KSA, but fewer and lower-ranking Saudi officials visited Iraq. This illustrates the KSA's hesitation, distrust and confined attitude towards developing relationships with the central government. However, the KSA's first Ambassador to Iraq since 1990, Thamer al-Sabhan, left the country at the request of the Iraqi government following diplomatic tensions and his statements regarding the PMF, which were seen as interference in Iraqi internal affairs (Daily Star, 2016). Iraqi delegations to the KSA have mainly been divided between the Shia-led government, Sunnis and KRG officials. The split in Iraq's delegations and contradictory statements to the KSA have resulted in the KSA losing respect for the federal government. This exposed Iraq's fragmentation and allowed the Saudis to match their interests with the Sunnis and Kurds.

Regionally, there is a significant divergence in the foreign policies interests of Riyadh and the Shia-led government in, for example, Syria, Yemen and Bahrain. Both have fundamental differences regarding who they believe should be in power, how the political system should be and which factions to back. Scrutiny of the conflicting actors in Syria shows that powerful Shia officials in Baghdad back Shia or Shia-leaning factions, whereas the KSA supports Sunni factions such as *Jaysh al-Islam* (Islamic Army). In the Arab League meeting in March 2015, Iraq officially rejected Saudi-led military intervention in Yemen. Shia-led government elites have overt relationships with Houthi leaders – the KSA's enemies – in Yemen, who visited Baghdad in 2016. As the threat of Daesh evolved since 2014, so did mutual national security threats, cooperation on which could be a basis for mutual understanding. Despite their disparate regional views, PM al-Abadi pursues reparation of the bilateral relationship and aims to reduce animosities between Riyadh and Tehran, or at least to avoid allowing Iraq to become a theatre of conflict between them. Pro-Iran Shia militias in Iraq who are vehemently against the KSA would like to antagonise and worsen the bilateral relationship between Baghdad and Riyadh. Although Iraq and the KSA share a 1,000-kilometer/621-mile border, according to al-Jumaili (2014) they trade via Jordan and Kuwait (Al-Jumaili, 2014). Therefore, the KSA does not have direct economic influence on Iraq, despite both being

major OPEC members.

Another dynamic of the rivalry is energy. Friction over oil policy goes back to the end of the Iraq–Iran war, when Iraq expected the KSA to maintain high oil prices as Iraq was in huge debt (McMillan, 2006). In recent years, Iraq has competed with the KSA in oil production. The International Energy Agency (IEA) stated that Iraq had overtaken the KSA as the second largest seller after Russia in Europe (Lawler and Gamal, 2015; Trade Arabia, 2015). The giant oil producers' competition involves different visions regarding OPEC's policy, oil production levels, competitive pricing and the struggle to obtain shares in international markets (Zaaiter, 2012; Oil Price, 2015). Iraqi and Saudi oil policies became rivals. A narrow and temporary compromise on oil policy is likely to be achieved by negotiation as part of economic diplomacy.

The fragile relationship between Iraq and the KSA is multifold and involves political and sectarian issues, combating terrorism, regional policy and energy. The KSA's influence in Iraq is on Arab Sunnis and segments of Iraqi Kurds. However, its involvement in Iraq is not strategic, attempting to influence Iraq's foreign policy to their interests has not been fruitful, and lacks investment in many areas, including the economy.

Syria and Iraq: a shifting relationship

This section demonstrates the developments of the bilateral relationship during Saddam's era and Syrian interferences from then until the Syrian Civil War. It examines Iraq's contradictory foreign policies before and after the Syrian Civil War.

Damascus used to tacitly interfere in Iraqi politics and challenge Saddam's regime. It was not in their foreign policy interests to seek Saddam's removal from power, but they used the Iraqi opposition to weaken Saddam's regime. The Syrian regime had little interest in strengthening Iraqi opposition (Scheller, 2013, 170) to the extent that the destabilisation of Iraq would affect the region, including Syria. While Syria's Hafez al-Assad participated in US-led efforts to liberate Kuwait in 1991, his son Bashar al-Assad opposed Iraq's invasion in 2003 and pursued an anti-US occupation rhetoric (Scheller, 2013, 171).

Syria and Iraq post-Saddam

Hinnebusch (2014) argues that after overthrowing Saddam, the US made non-negotiable demands for Syria to simply give up all its cards and limit its regional ambitions (228).[130] However, Syria conducted a two-faced foreign policy: overtly, Syria was band-wagoning with the US's demands and diplomatically engaging with Iraq, whilst covertly, Syria pursed the destabilisation of Iraq to hamper the US state-building project. Syria allowed Iraqi insurgent groups to operate, and acted as a transmission belt for weapons and infiltrating terrorists to fuel the insurgency (Cordsman, 2006b, 331). Syria hosted ex-Ba'athists (the wing of Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri and Ahmed Younis), senior ex-intelligence officers and Iraqi insurgent factions. For example, the Political Council for the Iraqi Resistance was conducting activities against Iraq and the US troops (Yacoubian, 2011, 152; Webb, Murphy and Nealen, 2014, 9 and 10).[131] The Iraqi government and the US depicted the Syrian sponsorship of the Iraqi opposition in Syria as blatant interference in Iraq's domestic affairs. Syria cautiously engaged with the IIG and restored full diplomatic ties in November 2004 (Prados and Sharp, 2005, 18).

The Syria–Iraq relationship see-sawed from 2003 until the Syrian Civil War. Both embassies in Baghdad and Damascus officially reopened in 2006, following a boycott that began during the Iraq–Iran war. Syrian policy towards Iraq repeatedly used the new post-Saddam Iraqi opposition in Syria to bolster its agenda for covert and clandestine activities in Iraq. Meanwhile, Syria pursued economic interests, including energy benefits, from Iraq. Bilateral relations began to improve when the two countries exchanged a series of dignitary visits, including former PM al-Maliki and former FM Zebari. Nine memorandums of understanding and cooperation were signed in 2009, including a security file (terrorism), border control, trade and an energy pipeline (al-Alkim, 2011, 54; Al-TV Fayhaa, 2009).

However, after a series of devastating explosions in 2009, the relationship deteriorated. In September 2009, the Iraqi government said it had evidence of Syrian involvement in bombing in Iraq (Security Council Report, 2009). Al-Maliki sent a letter to the UN to nominate a senior international envoy to come to Iraq and evaluate the degree of interference. Although the UN dispatched Fernández-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to Iraq to consult with the government on security issues,

[130] The US demands included: to end support for Palestinian militants, dismantle Hezbollah, withdraw from Lebanon and cooperate with the occupation of Iraq (Hinnebusch, 2014, 228).
[131] Six Iraqi insurgent groups fighting the US and Iraqi government were unified under one umbrella in 2007.

the UN Secretary-General said such an investigation required a mandate from the Security Council (Security Council Report, 2009). Both countries recalled their envoys after a short period. The federal government clashed internally over Syria's alleged involvement in the 2009 explosions. Iraq's Presidency Council rejected the government's internationalisation of terrorism against Syria. Al-Maliki accused Iraqi ex-Baathists in Syria of involvement in the explosions, and called for involvement of the International Criminal Court (Asharq Al-Awsat Arabic, 2009; Al-Arabiya, 2009). However, in October 2009, Iraqi former President Jalal Talabani addressed the General Assembly and again requested an investigation into foreign involvement in Iraq for bombing – without accusing any particular country, in contrast to al-Maliki (Security Council Report, 2016). Syrian interference in the new Iraq was a destabilising factor, primarily in a security context. Iraqi ex-Baathists, elements in Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and Iraqi insurgents had links to Assad's regime post-Saddam (Mauro, 2009). Assad's regime turned a blind eye to the infiltration of insurgents who were based in Syria to attack the US military and Iraqi government (Katzman, 2008; Mauro, 2009).

Syria and Iraq during the Syrian Civil War

The Syrian uprising led to a shift in the relationship to the beginning of fresh rapprochement in Iraqi–Syrian relations. Al-Maliki changed his position to support the Syrian regime – partly because of his sectarian regional views, as allegedly Assad was combating Sunni jihadists. The Iraqi government gave moral support and turned a blind eye to Iraqi Shia fighters going to Syria (Smyth, 2015), as well as to Iranian flights in Iraqi airspace that purportedly consisted of military equipment. Sunni regional powers placed Syria in a stranglehold; its survival relied on Hezbollah to the west, and Iran and Iraq to the east (Hinnebusch, 2014, 230). The Syrian Civil War was a catalyst for Iran-backed Iraqi Shia militias to send fighters to Syria, supposedly with the intention of defending al-Sayidda Zaynab Shrine (an important Shia site).

There has been a friendly shift – partly influenced by Iran – in Iraq's foreign policy towards the Syrian regime since the beginning of the Civil War.[132] Iraq abstained from voting for Syria's suspension from the Arab League in 2011. The change in Baghdad's strategic thinking towards Syria demonstrates the domination of Shia Islamists in Baghdad (al-Khoei, 2013). However, in 2012, Iraq voted in favour of the UN resolution to end the violence in Syria, while Iran was one of 13 nations that voted against (United

[132] Habibi and al-Qarawee (2015) argued that Iran was instrumental in securing Iraq's cooperation with Syria.

Nations, 2012). This is an example of Iraq demonstrating some independence in its foreign affairs.

Compared to al-Maliki, al-Abadi sought to pursue a less vocal and mediating diplomatic posture on Syria. Al-Abadi said: "The current trend is that Daesh is the most dangerous group in Syria, not the regime" (Charbel, 2015). Al-Abadi's government channelled messages from the US-led coalition to Assad's regime about the fight against Daesh. Al-Abadi is under constant pressure from powerful pro-Iran Shia militias to take a closer position to Assad. Opening the intelligence-sharing centre, in which Syria is participating, is also a step towards a closer rapport with Assad. Baghdad's foreign policy towards Syria continues to be a subset of domestic politics, which does not favour Western interests in Syria (Mardini, 2015). Baghdad's stance on Syria is fundamentally different to that of Turkey and the KSA, which actively worked for regime change. Most of the Sunni elite and factions in Baghdad disagree with al-Maliki's and al-Abadi's positions on Syria. VP al-Nujafi said:

> "The parliament was not consulted by the government to construct an approach towards Syria, the Iraqi political forces are divided between supporters and opponents of the Syrian regime that back the Syrian uprising … I recommend that the Iraqi government avoid interfering in Syria … no militias or arming of the Syrian regime." (Al-Jazeera Arabic, 2014)

Iraqi Sunnis want a regime change in Damascus, and share similar grievances with the Syrian Arab Sunnis and rebels. AQI and other Iraqi Sunni militant groups began directing their efforts to Syria when the revolution started. The author's elite interviews with Iraqi tribal Sunni and Shia Arab leaders in Iraq indicate that neither all Sunni tribes nor an entire clan is with Daesh or other militants in Iraq or Syria.[133] The confederation of tribes extends into Iraq, Syria and other Arab countries and includes those such as the Baggara, Dulaim, Jabbour, N'eim, Qugaidat, Shammar, and Tai'e. The Iraqi–Syrian tribes between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, known as the Jazirah (meaning 'island'), have maintained tribal ties (Knights, 2012). This demonstrates Iraq and Syria's Sunni kinship and sociopolitical and security links that connect both countries' populations.

The KRG's KDP-dominated foreign policy towards Syria is in line with the policy of the

[133] In 2015 the author interviewed MPs who are also Iraqi tribal leaders and key figures, including Ahmed Madlul al-Jabra (al-Shammer tribe, mainly from Mosul province), Fareed Khalid Sha'lan Ibrahimi from the Tribal Committee (Ibrahimi tribe from southern Iraq) and Ghazi al-Quoud (Head of Abu Nmr tribe in Anbar province).

Arab states and Turkey, not with Baghdad's. The lack of consensus among Arab Shia, Arab Sunni and Kurdish elites and factions shows the different agendas, interests and objectives towards Syria.

Before the Syrian Civil War, Assad's regime interfered in Iraq using Iraqi ex-Baathists, extremists and angry dissent to destabilise Iraq. In a striking reversion, elements of the Iraqi government and the KRG became involved actors in the Syrian political scene. Baghdad's foreign policy during the Syrian Civil War sympathised with the Syrian regime, in which various Iraqi centres of power in Iraq (including Shia militias) played a remarkable role in shaping Baghdad's foreign policy towards Syria. The fragmentation of Syria exacerbated the fragmentation of Iraq's foreign policies, which has led to clearer but contradictory interests in Syria.

Conclusion

Illustrating Iran's, Turkey's, the KSA's, and Syria's interactions with Iraq, the circumstances of their bilateral relationships and regional forces' internal allies in Iraq has shown that external interference and influence on Iraq have both contributed to and exacerbated the fragmentation of Iraq's foreign policies. Safa Hussein argues that regional actors justify their interference in Iraq's domestic politics via internal actors seeking external or regional support (Sirri, Stansfield, and Kinninmont, 2013, 15). Internal actors facilitate external states' influence and interference on Iraqi political, security and economic spheres that directly or indirectly affect foreign policy decision-making.

External interference and influence have contributed to the hindrance of state building and the thwarting of a coherent domestic and foreign policy. This external interference is also a result of the fragmented weak state of Iraq. Post-Saddam external influence and interference has been aggrandised and facilitated by distrust between Iraqi elites and political factions. The different political identities in Iraq have furthered the access of regional forces. In many cases, major Iraqi political factions and their figures have stronger relations with regional forces than with the federal government in Baghdad. Iraq has become a battlefield for external forces' rivalled interests and agendas. Iraqi relationships with external powers are for personal and partisan interests and seeking power, but are also shaped by sectarianism, security, regional rivalry and economy.

Iran and Turkey have powerful internal allied actors with strong mutual interests. As a result, the two regional superpowers, Iran and Turkey, are directly and indirectly the most influential regional states on the internal politics and external behaviour of the KRG and the federal government. It can be argued that both states' strategic and powerful internal allies have contributed to them becoming the most potent external actors in Iraq. Their attempts at interference have further divided the ethno-sectarian political elites and factions therein. Iranian and Turkish interference leads to the conclusion that both countries check each other in Iraq. Tehran's and Ankara's approaches differ. Iran uses its religious relationship with the Shias and their fear of the return of the Sunnis to exert real power, both on security and throughout the state apparatus. In contrast, Turkey pursues an offensive economic and security policy (International Crisis Group, 2012a) with the KRG. The AKP's economic policy is married with the KR-I. Ankara's political and security cooperation with some Iraqi Kurdish factions and Arab Sunni factions is there to serve their interests. Turkey has provided a historic opportunity for the KRG (or at least, for the KDP) to thrive economically and distance themselves from Baghdad. Turkey's and Iran's foreign policies pursue their interests by seeking to influence both Baghdad's and Erbil's foreign policies. Iran is the biggest stakeholder in Baghdad and the Shia areas, while Turkey is the largest stakeholder in the KR-I and Sunni-dominated regions. Despite Iran's and Turkey's competing interests, both agree on the principle of a united and integrated Iraq.

The KSA's influence on Iraqi Sunni actors should not be underestimated; they play a role in supporting Iraqi Sunni interests. The KSA and Turkey might have similar interests in Iraq by supporting Arab Sunnis, and they also have common interests in reducing Iranian leverage in Iraq, as this clashes with their interests. An Iraqi actor (an elite or a political faction) involved in foreign policy making may have ties and affinity with any one of the opposing powerful neighbouring countries. Accordingly, the Iraqi actor might present a different formula and picture of how bilateral relationships, foreign relations and foreign policy are and should be.

Apart from Kuwait, none of the regional states desired the overthrowing of Saddam (Fawcett, 2013, 231). Post-Saddam, each regional power has different degrees of interference and influence in Iraq's internal affairs. Post-2003, Iran is the most powerful external force in Iraq; it has influence on all Iraq's vital sectors, politics and, to a certain degree, policy making. Iran has expanded its spheres of influence in Iraq through its consistent, multilayer, in-depth strategy and use of its old and new Iraqi friends to gain

internal leverage. Iran has clients and allies in Iraq's security and military apparatus, Iraqi Shia Islamic political parties and their armed wings (excluding al-Abadi, al-Sistani and al-Sadr) and elements of Baghdad's governmental structure. Some Shia militias and groups who have political and ideological links with Iran have conducted de facto foreign relations and statements, which differ to al-Abadi's. Al-Abadi's relatively modern orientations are in contrast with pro-Iran Iraqi Shia militias. The latter oppose and threaten the engagement of the US, Turkey and the KSA, and encourage the involvement of Iran, Lebanese Hezbollah and Russia in Iraq. Iran has economic, cultural, religious and clandestine influence. Geopolitics plays a role, as Iran has a long border with Iraq. Furthermore, the shared Shia sect in the Sunni-dominated Islamic world has pulled them closer. The Shia-led government and Tehran have a common vision in regional affairs, such as in Syria and Yemen.

Tangible interference in and influence on Iraq's domestic politics and policy making, from the most to the least forceful, can be examined by the strength of external powers and internal allies, and their impact on policy making. The degree of external interference depends on the clout of the domestic actors, which eases penetration and the regional powers' strength and interests. External interferences are multilayer; Iran and Turkey are the best examples and target different sociopolitical and economic groups, government and subgovernment levels. After the US withdrawal, Baghdad's foreign policy, particularly al-Maliki's, has been viewed as closer to Iran. The Shia-led government has driven this trajectory, rather than Iraq's entire elite or political factions as a whole. There are Iraqi officials, politicians and diplomats from various ethno-sectarian backgrounds, but the majority of Sunnis and Kurds disagreed with Iraq leaning towards the Iranians during al-Maliki's tenure. They occasionally displayed contrasting views to those of the Shia-led government's orientations in the author's interviews, as well as in public statements. Iran's influence and interference should not be overstated, as key decision makers (such as former PM al-Maliki or current PM al-Abadi) have a degree of independence. However, they take Iranian interests and inclinations into consideration in their foreign policy decisions, because Iran is of significant importance to Iraq and there are powerful Iranian allies in Iraq.

Iran's influence in the KR-I is limited, but to a certain extent tangible in defined issues and territories. It does not always succeed in achieving its goals. The PUK has been considered friendlier to Iran than other Kurdish parties. Iran's commitment to Baghdad and fear of Kurdish ambitions for independence has restrained Iranian leverage in the

KR-I. Iranian logistic and military support to the Kurdish forces (*Peshmerga*) against Daesh has been acknowledged, and it has also built rapport with the KDP. Interestingly, the Shia-led government has not considered Iranian–Kurdish security ties as interference in Iraq's internal affairs. External interferences are a continuation of regional forces' ties with Iraqi political diaspora, which persisted after the toppling of Saddam, such as Iran's ties with the Shia factions and Kurdish parties.

Al-Maliki's and al-Abadi's governments depicted Turkey's close energy and political relationship with the KRG as interference in Iraq's internal affairs. As they have been sidelined, Baghdad denounced and rejected the energy ties between Ankara and Erbil. Baghdad views Ankara as a sectarian regional power that is encouraging the splitting up of Iraq and hankers for Iraq's resources. The Shia-led government depicts Turkey – especially Erdogan and the AKP – as exploiting Baghdad's inability to extend its authority and build economic and political ties with Iraqi Kurdistan. The KRG, particularly the KDP, sees Turkey's close ties as a gateway to an independent economy, and to consolidating its political posture in Iraq and internationally. Turkey has actively supported a number of Arab Sunni political elites and factions; it has interests in the majority Arab Sunni regions in Iraq, including in determining the future of Mosul. Some Arab Sunnis, such as al-Nujaifi, see Turkey as a key external partner to balance against the Shia-led government's domination. Baghdad depicts Turkey's ties with Erbil and the Arab Sunnis and their military presence as interference and violation of its sovereignty.

Al-Maliki frequently accuses all neighboring and regional states (excluding Iran) of interference. In his era, regional major-Sunni states were deplored with undiplomatic language for hosting exiled or opposition groups and organising events regarding Iraq's internal affairs without Baghdad's consent. The Kurdish officials in Baghdad during al-Maliki's tenure, especially Iraq's former President Jalal Talabani and FM Zebari, tried to take a moderate stance on regional and international issues. Their acumen, diplomatic behaviour and political weight usually protected them from political confrontations with al-Maliki.

Arab Gulf states have closer ties with the KRG than with al-Maliki's government, and have invested in Iraqi Kurdistan in sectors such as energy and infrastructure, rather than the rest of Iraq. This does not mean those countries will choose Erbil over Baghdad, but it does tell international relations (IR) students the extent of the gap between Sunni dominated states and Shia elites and political factions in Iraq. As demonstrated in the

Arab League, Iraq has been distanced from the Arab states. For example, Iraq did not vote in line with the majority of the Arab states against Assad's regime, Iran's allegedly hostile behaviour and the building of a pan-Arab military force.

Al-Abadi's government has begun to invigorate Iraq's bilateral and diplomatic relationships with its neighbours, rather than change its position on key regional issues in foreign policy. Iraqi and Arab Gulf States' bilateral relations have somewhat improved compared to during al-Maliki's tenure. Regionally, al-Abadi is more accepted than al-Maliki; nevertheless, his political affiliations to the Da'wa Party have somewhat constrained his progress in the view of many regional Sunni states. Iraq's relationship with the KSA is fragile due to regional turbulence, the KSA's alleged supporting of the rebellious Sunni tribes and pro-Iran Shia militias' anti-KSA stance. Regional turbulence reflects on the bilateral relationships; Baghdad portrays the KSA's anti-Houthi war in Yemen and its support of Sunni Islamist rebels in Syria as aggressive intervention. Meanwhile, the Shia-led government depicts Iran's military aid for Damascus and the Houthis as support for the victims of the Saudi-led Sunni states' military campaign. The relationship between Baghdad and Damascus changed from enmity before the Syrian Civil War to affinity after the war, and from Syrian interference to destabilise Iraq before the war to Iraqi support for Assad's regime and Iraqi pro-Iran Shia militias' interferences against the Sunni rebels since the war.

It can be argued that after al-Maliki, the federal government has determined a path that leans towards utilising diplomacy and soft power, projecting engagement and looking for common ground including with regional states, combating terrorism and attracting the Western powers for military support.

The complexity of Iraq's new political system, which is based on the quota system, has further bolstered external interference. Divisions between influential political elites in foreign affairs in Baghdad have manifested in more regional than international affairs. There are divisions among Iraqi officials and political elites in which state is an ally, friend or enemy. The majority of Iraqi Islamic Shia parties see Turkey as an unwelcome meddling power, while a segment of the Kurds, represented by the KDP, sees Turkey as a counterweight to Baghdad – or at least, a closer partner than Baghdad. Furthermore, the considerable number of Iraqi Shia elites sees Iran as an ally – or at least not a threat – to Iraq, while Iraqi-Arab Sunnis view Iran as a threat and KSA as an ally.

Iraq is still debating the kinds of relationships it should have with regional and international forces. Examining Iraq's relationships with its neighbours shows fluctuation in different cases and over time periods. Iraqi relationships with regional powers are not static and are significantly influenced by domestic politics, regional struggles and dynamics, in which non-state actors have increased their influence. As a result of external interferences and influences, sovereign decision making regarding foreign policy is viewed as a non-independent process. Currently, Iraqis are exploring how to formulate and exercise foreign relations with their neighbours and regional forces, while relationships beyond the Middle East are less contested. As a weak state, Iraq vitally needs its neighbours; this has become salient since the rise of Daesh. While Baghdad cooperates with Iran more than with any other regional state, regional states might offer a way out of Iraq's lingering problems if Iraq and the neighboring states find common ground.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Introduction

This dissertation's central claim is that Iraq has splintered foreign policies. It has explored Iraqi political elites and factions, core bodies of the federal government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Baghdad's and Erbil's priorities and neighbouring states' interference and influence. It has demonstrated how foreign policy is made, how Iraq's foreign policies are fragmented and the dilemma of foreign policy making.

This concluding chapter first recaps the research questions and the key findings relating to each question. Second, it discusses the contribution of the research to the existing literature. Third, it outlines some potential objections of the thesis. Fourth, it discusses areas for further research and questions that could be explored in future projects, before finishing with some closing remarks.

Research questions and findings

It is essential to first discuss the findings of the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2, which lays the theoretical and conceptual groundwork for the dissertation. The theory of neoclassical realism (NCR) was used to explain Baghdad; this enabled an analysis of elites and internal politics, as well as external factors such as regional dynamics and threats. In NCR foreign policy making is a product of internal and external factors (variables) led by the elites. NCR frameworks integrate the massive amount of information and complexities in the federal government's foreign policy making without ignoring the external factors. NCR's main contribution is its flexibility in incorporating delicate but influential details in its frameworks that directly and indirectly influence policy making as well as its openness to the incorporation of additional justified concepts (paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy). NCR's framework includes domestic intervening variables such as elites, core executive bodies, political parties, bureaucratic and non-bureaucratic figures and opposing groups and even their ties with external

actors that shape the outcomes. Another contribution of NCR, is considering foreign policy as a case by case study and its ability to explain a fragmented state that has weak foreign policy making. However, NCR does not have a framework to explain how sub-states formulate foreign policy. Therefore, a synthesized theoretical framework was applied, which incorporated paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy to explain the KRG's foreign policy and this is explained in Chapter 2. Paradiplomacy is a suitable concept to explain the KRG's international activities until 2014. Since then, protodiplomacy is perfectly suited to the KRG's claims to independence in its foreign policy behaviour. The final findings about NCR are its predictions about the internal and external divisions and increasing competitiveness that reduces the foreign policy's influence on its environment. This is in addition to failed responses and policies towards perceived external aggressors. The broader significance of splintered and incoherent foreign policies in NCR is that they are contracted, do not have significant influence on the external dynamics, and are unable to achieve their objectives despite their confined or limited achievements.

The chapter's first question is "How is foreign policy made in Iraq? Which elites, political forces, key figures, and core executive bodies have been involved in conducting foreign relations and shaping Iraq's incoherent foreign policies post-2003? What is their role and who has superiority in foreign policy making?" The two governments (the sovereign federal government in Baghdad and the non-sovereign KRG in Erbil) both formulate separate foreign policies. Foreign policy in Iraq is made purely by elites, backed by their political factions; these elites and factions control and use executive and/or bureaucratic bodies, including their resources and network. The research found that the federal government's foreign policy is incoherent and a number of their foreign policy actors contradict the official foreign policy position, whereas the KRG's foreign policy actors are relatively coherent.

The Iraqi Prime Minister (PM) has the highest executive power, he orchestrates and leads the federal government's foreign policy making, while the KRG's President orchestrates and leads that of the KRG's. In Baghdad, foreign policy making progresses through very weakly coordinated elites and core executive bodies, including the PM, President, Foreign Minister (FM) and Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs (I-MOFA). The Iraqi Council of Representatives (ICR) and its Foreign Relation Committee (FRC) also have a degree of involvement; they can disturb or support the executive actions. The position of Speaker of the ICR is allocated to Arab Sunni political factions, which have

increasingly engaged in foreign relations due to *al-Muhasasa*. Baghdad's PM is supported or constrained by key bureaucratic bodies, elites, prominent figures, the ICR and political factions (some of which possess militias). These actors have feeble coordination and collaboration in foreign policy. Discordant elites, poor bureaucratic performance and domestic instability shape the federal government's incoherent foreign policy. Schisms in foreign policy emerge from the interests of elites and parties, as well as ethno-sectarian and sectoral drivers, which have become increasingly divided within each communal component. When conducting foreign and bilateral relations, there is some space for bargains and compromises between elites and their political parties. However, discussion between and within elites and their parties does not change their foreign relations and policy position unless their personal and partisan interests are achievable. As such, the Iraqi public's interest does not drive Iraq's foreign policies. Baghdad is trying to figure out its position on the international platform and through its foreign policy to maintain government and state survival.

Ayad Allawi's government tried to mend Iraq's decades of isolation with openness towards both the Arab world and the West. Al-Jaafari's government represented the beginning of the Shia era in determining Baghdad's foreign policy. Al-Maliki attempted to project a vision of a strong, centralised government; he side-lined his opponents from the government and further deepened the splintering of foreign policies between Baghdad and Erbil. Haider al-Abadi's government portrayed a more coherent foreign policy and was externally more receptive than al-Jaafari and al-Maliki.

Iraqi elites and political factions pursue their partisan and self-interests through their relationships with foreign states. They simultaneously influence Iraqi policy making with their grassroots supporters and/or government networks, which includes a considerable number of members in the federal government. Despite divisions within and between Shia elites and factions, they have more influence over the federal government's foreign policy than other political actors. The most influential faction is the ruling Shia Islamic Da'wa Party, of which the PM is a key member. Prominent Shia figures al-Sistani and Muqtada al-Sadr do not possess official positions but influence foreign policy making. Al-Sistani believes elites should be free to govern while he provides limited guidance and tries to play a conciliatory role; al-Sadr has radical views and seeks proactive political engagement from within and outside the government. Other political Shia factions engaged in foreign affairs include the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), led by Ammar al-Hakim (until 2017), which has moderate views

and seeks a regional role supporting the federal government. Increasingly powerful pro-Iran Shia factions with armed groups, such as the Badr Organization and Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH), seek to reorient foreign policy according to their political and sectarian interests. Arab Sunni political factions, such as the al-Nujaifi brothers, have their own agendas and objectives. They have little to no influence over the Shia-led government; rather, they strongly illustrate the discrepancies in Iraq's foreign policy making. This includes their close ties with Arab Sunni states and Turkey, from which they gain logistic, and in some cases financial and military (namely, for Atheel al-Nujaifi's militias), support. This tells us that Iraqi political actors have their own external ties and seek to steer Iraq's foreign policy behaviour.

Regarding the second research question, "Why does the KRG need a foreign policy? How is the KRG's foreign policy made, and who is making it? Do the KRG's foreign relations and policy diverge from Baghdad's?" The KRG's foreign policy imperative reflects its political, security and economic interests. The KRG needs a foreign policy as part of its independent governance and state-building project. It is projected from core executive bodies at the governmental level; namely, the President, the PM and the Department of Foreign Relations (DFR) and its Head. The core executive bodies – including the deputies of the aforementioned posts and critical bodies such as the Kurdistan Region Security Council (KRSC) – coordinate and perform adequately. The KRG's President, Masoud Barzani, has the highest executive authority and superiority in designing foreign policy, with input from the PM. Minister Falah Mustafa and the DFR implement policies with limited diplomatic contributions, on which the President decides.

The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) possesses the major positions in, and therefore controls, the core decision-making executive bodies (including the President, PM and Minister of the DFR). The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) is also involved, and holds secondary posts with lesser powers in all executive bodies. The KDP and PUK have different priorities; for example, the KDP pushes for independence sooner than the PUK and favours closer energy ties with Turkey, while the PUK prefers to work through Baghdad. The KRG's two powerful political factions have different stances on foreign policy positions, particularly regionally; nevertheless, all key bureaucratic foreign policy positions adhere to the KDP's policy.

The KRG's foreign policy priorities primarily serve the KR-I's and partisan interests. The KDP drives the KRG's interests and governmental representation, and in general has the

final word on foreign relations and policy. Its priorities include strengthening ties with the international community by being practical and realistic on all levels, including politics, the economy and security. It aims for peaceful and balanced relationships with neighbouring powers, as well as lobbying for the KRG's independence and taking control of its own affairs in all sectors, particularly oil and gas, of which Baghdad disapproves. The KRG has the capacity to approach foreign policy priorities through its relatively coherent bureaucratic bodies, the will of its elites, investing in lobbying in foreign capitals and possessing rich natural energy resources. However, the KRG faces challenges due to its non-sovereign status to achieve some of its objectives such as acceptance of the idea of future independence by sovereign states.

The relationship between Baghdad and Erbil is fragile and characterised by feuds over control of natural resources, disputed territory, different interpretations of the Iraqi constitution and disparate positions on regional politics and security, including ties with states; these impact on foreign policy. The two governments' divergent foreign relations and foreign policies have led officials from both governments to direct and redirect foreign policy behaviour according to their own interests and priorities. In foreign policy making specifically, Baghdad and Erbil's relationship is characterised by lack of coordination, bureaucratic confusion and domestic political tensions; however, there is some space for compromise where the KRG has managed to achieve some of its interests through Baghdad such as opening consulates in the KRG.

The KR-I's evolution has led it to pursue an increasingly independent foreign policy. Of critical significance is the KRG's shift from paradiplomacy to protodiplomacy. Baghdad neither agrees with nor accepts the KRG's independent foreign policy; indeed, the Shia-led government's elites vehemently oppose Erbil's de facto foreign policy. Baghdad views the KRG's international activities as unfavourable at best and illegitimate at worst. The KRG does not necessarily seek to contradict Baghdad's foreign policy; rather, its foreign relations and foreign policy behaviour and objectives naturally differ from those of Baghdad and contradict the federal government. In the Middle East, the strategic regional allies and/or close ties of Baghdad (particularly al-Maliki and the powerful pro-Iran militias) differ to those of Erbil (the KDP); the former is allied with Iran and the latter with Turkey. Consequently, this places Baghdad and Erbil on different trajectories. The scale of foreign policy divisions has widened as a reflection of domestic tensions and instability – particularly since Baghdad cut off the KR-I's budget, the KR-I's economy plummeted, Daesh rose and the KRG officially called for independence via referendum.

Due to this fragmentation, not every official, diplomat or political party (whether part of the Erbil or Baghdad government or not) adheres to the Iraqi government's formal foreign policy positions. The research found that Iraq's splintered foreign policies are not only analytical interpretations or explanations of divisions within the government; rather, they are practiced by key elites and their political parties, which control and/or are part of the core executive bodies in Baghdad and Erbil.

With regards to the third research question, "What are Iraq's foreign policy priorities or imperatives, and has the federal government achieved them?" The federal government's foreign policy priorities are interrelated and interdependent and reflect regime interests and survival. They focus on three areas: diplomacy, security and economy. The diplomacy priority aims to restore Iraq's place in the international community and present a different image to that of Saddam. Iraq has succeeded, to a certain degree, in achieving this – more at the international level than regionally. The security priority aims to utilise foreign relations as a tool to rebuild Iraq's security and military establishment, stabilise and safeguard the country and combat terrorism. Despite being able to provide some fragile security to certain areas, the federal government has so far failed to achieve this imperative. The economic priority first aims to use foreign relations and foreign policy to recover Iraq's economy, namely by encouraging foreign transnational corporations to rebuild the oil and gas infrastructure and open new markets for Iraq's natural resources. Iraq has partly succeeded in this but disagreements have re-emerged between Baghdad and the regions, particularly the KRG (and, to a lesser extent, Basra). The second aim of the economy priority is trade and investment. Post-Saddam, Iraq adopted an open door policy towards foreign investment and transnational corporations, having been isolated for decades (particularly in the years of war and UN sanctions). Again, Iraq's achievements have been limited in this regard due to domestic instability, corruption and lack of infrastructure. All of the aforementioned priorities lack a concrete plan and elite consensus on how to approach and achieve them – both between the federal government and the KRG and within Baghdad. Although, there are no unified foreign policy priorities between Baghdad and Erbil, and great distrust exists between the two sets of elites, the three priorities have been pursued by the elites in Baghdad as necessary objectives for survival and government operation.

Finally, regarding the fourth research question, "How and why do neighbouring actors interfere in and influence Iraq's foreign policy? Which are the most influential?" Key

Iraqi actors have alliances and common interests with regional actors (including material and political aspects), which they use to strengthen their domestic positions. As such, domestic and regional political, sectarian, economy and security dynamics are connected with, and shape, bilateral relationships with those countries. Moreover, the links between Iraqi actors and external powers directly and indirectly influence the orientation of Iraq's fractured foreign policies. Iraq's weak and fragmented state and distrust between its elites (and their political factions) have paved the way for Iraqi actors and external alliances to forge relationships at the expenses of other actors and the country. Powerful neighbours have therefore been able to project their interests and gain receptive actors in Iraq.

Iran is the most powerful external force on Baghdad, and Turkey on Erbil. Iran has a strategic, multilayer rapport with the Shia elites and factions, considering not all Iraqi Shia elites and factions have same ties with Tehran. Turkey is more economically engaged with the KR-I; their relationship includes security and some political aspects with the KDP. Moreover, in Iraqi Kurdistan, the PUK has a cordial relationship with Turkey but is not strategically similar to the KDP. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has alliances in Iraq with Arab Sunni and Kurdish elites and factions to counterweight the Shia domination and Iran's influence. However, the KSA has far less leverage than Iran and Turkey. Syria before the Civil War covertly destabilised Iraq by its interferences, whereas since the Syrian Civil War Iraq's actors namely factions within the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) are operating in Syria alongside Assad's regime. Iraq's actors in policy making have been disparate by having different positions and alliances with the aforementioned states. This dissertation does not argue that Iraqi elites and political factions are puppets of the regional powers (apart from a few), but rather that there are convergences of interests, and sometimes similar visions and worldviews; for example, between al-Maliki and some of Tehran's key elites, who pull Iraq's foreign policies in different directions.

Research contribution

This thesis makes key contributions in two interrelated areas: Iraq's and Iraqi Kurdistan's foreign policies. Through original research and fieldwork, it has investigated foreign policy-making processes; orientations; performances; coordination, contradictions and different interpretations of the Iraqi constitution in the federal

government of Baghdad and the KRG in Erbil. The thesis has also mapped out the structure and actors – including decision makers, core executive bodies and their roles – in Iraq's foreign policy making. Another major contribution is the dissertation's analysis of challenges to formulating and implementing foreign policy for the weak state of Iraq.

From a theoretical perspective, the dissertation's main contribution is the synthesis of NCR theory (for the federal government in Baghdad) and paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy concepts (to explain the KRG's foreign relations and policy). These explain Iraq's policies as a whole, as well as the divisiveness in the federal government's foreign policy making by scrutinising the domestic situations and politics for the analytical framework, which differs from the *Innenpolitik*, approach by incorporating external factors (as independent variables) in shaping and understanding a state's foreign policy making. The theoretical synthesis contributes to explain intricate foreign policy making processes that includes central and sub-states and has the tools to pull the extensive empirical details in its analysis together. This could be applied to states with similar attributes such as Syria's future where Damascus' elites have a realist world view and Syrian Kurdistan "Rojava" has already interacted with external states and might achieve some sort of autonomy in Syria's future.

The fieldwork – which included 40 elite interviews conducted in Baghdad, the KR-I and Europe – revealed various perspectives that enriched the thesis. In Chapter 4, for example, the interviews contributed to understanding the role of – and extremely poor coordination between – Baghdad's policy makers, bureaucratic bodies and diplomats. A further original contribution is the presentation of elites' conflicting perspectives regarding the constitution in the context of foreign affairs.

Elite interviews were useful not only for providing information, experiences and views but also for comparison purposes, which emphasised the dilemma of making and implementing foreign policy. Elites' contributions have been discussed, compared and critically viewed throughout the research, providing an original analysis. The value of utilising interviews conducted between 2013 and 2016 is because it does not represent a short time period or juncture in Iraqi politics; it is a continually evolving situation, and slight changes in dynamics and contributions reflect the time the thesis covers.

The arguments, originality and contribution of this thesis are based on solid foundations; they represent the outcome of the elite interviews and observations of foreign policy making in Baghdad and Erbil. Besides utilising key scholars' work,

methods used included native resources and key actors' experiences and perspectives; these methods should be duplicated in similar approaches in which a lack of literature is apparent, in order to enable an accurate and in-depth analysis. Another methodological strategy was utilising local published resources, local academic and government websites and Arabic and Kurdish publications. This yielded consistently seminal work, consolidated the key arguments of the thesis and provided unique information and evidence to furnish the analysis. Arabic and Kurdish sources that are unavailable in English have thus also enriched the originality of this thesis.

As yet, no literature tries to provide a similar picture of foreign policy making in Iraq; hence, this thesis makes a valuable contribution to this area. Its methodology and theoretical implications pave the way for further research in the same subject, and/or in similar countries with similar attributes. This is further outlined later in the conclusion.

Responses to potential objections

The aim of this research was not to produce definitive solutions to the challenges of Iraq's foreign policy making. Nor does the research provide absolute answers, such as the exact measure of regional powers' interference in Iraq's policy making.

The author identifies five potential objections to this dissertation. First, why doesn't the thesis discuss Iraq's modern history, state formation and deformation? The author recognises the importance of Iraq's history, state formation, deformation and its development, which are one of the reasons for Iraq's fragmentation. However, the research does not aim to engage deeply in these discussions, which would require different research objectives, methodology, questions and arguments. The author believes discussing these issues will not contribute to this particular thesis because the focus is on the actors that formulate foreign policies post-Saddam. Furthermore, existing literature discusses Iraq's history, state formation and deformation, such as Tripp (2002, 2007) and Dodge (2005c). Inclusion of these issues would have made the focus of the thesis overly broad, and diverted from its aims.

Second, why does the thesis not have a specific chapter or section that focuses on the role of the US in Iraq? This dissertation does not exclude the US's role in Iraq's foreign policy making, the US's relationship with Iraqi elites, role in reconstructing the federal

government's bodies and ties with the KRG were discussed throughout the thesis, the author did not investigate US–Iraqi relationships in a separate section or chapter. This is because there is already a considerable amount of research regarding the US's role in Iraq in terms of building its governmental organisations, security and military establishment and engagement in other areas of politics (for example, Allawi, 2007; DeFronzo, 2010; Shareef, 2014; Barakat, 2008). The author recognises the US's influence on policy making and reconstructing Iraq's bureaucratic bodies, elevating a number of new elites and shaping its security policies which is discussed in the thesis. However, this has significantly reduced since the US's withdrawal. The thesis took into account Iraq's status as an occupied country where the elites did not have complete freedom in formulating policies. Nevertheless, the author argues that those elites although they where promoted by the US-led coalition's invasion, were not the US's puppets as they had their own agendas, interests, and approach that were not be similar to the US's plan in Iraq. Overconcentration on the US's role would also require a different set of questions, another methodology, a different purpose and even a different thesis.

Third, is investigating both Baghdad's and Erbil's foreign policies too broad a topic for one piece of research? Ignoring the KRG's foreign relations and policy would ignore the fact that Iraq is a divided country in which two governments create and practice distinctive foreign policies. The KRG is a non-sovereign entity, and officially still part of Iraq. It is therefore rational to address Baghdad and Erbil in one context. Indeed, the originality of this thesis includes addressing both Baghdad's and Erbil's foreign policies in one research effort. We cannot comprehend Iraq's splintered foreign policies without addressing the KRG's foreign affairs, as the federal government and the KRG create two major, disparate governmental foreign policies in one sovereign country. The author's aims, questions, hypothesis and arguments reflect the international activities of these two governmental capitals.

Fourth, why does the thesis discuss the constitutions of Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan? Is this not distracting, and again too broad? The author argues it is impossible to clearly understand the roles of elites, bureaucratic bodies and organisations in a foreign affairs context without addressing the Iraqi constitution. One of the insurmountable challenges of having a coherent foreign policy is different interpretations of and loopholes in the Iraqi constitution. Elites' lack of consensus partly emanates from daily disputes on different interpretations of the Iraqi constitution, which affects many policies.

Fifth, why does the thesis not discuss the developments in 2017 such as the responses of the international community and superpowers to the KRG's non-binding independence referendum or split of Ammar al-Hakim from ISCI and the creation of the National Wisdom Movement (*al-Hikmah*)? Simply, the thesis covers the time period post-Saddam up until the end of 2016 and these incidents occurred in 2017.

Opportunities for further research

This research can be continued through both empirical and theoretical studies. The author proposes four directions, which could be studied separately or jointly.

The first area expands on one of the outcomes of this thesis: the Iraqi-based Armed Non-States Actors' (ANSAs) influence on, and interference in, policy making.[134] Thus, a study of the trajectory of Iraqi ANSAs' ties with external powers and transnational relationships and goals could be conducted. For example: Iraqi Shia militias and their leaders' strong ties with Iran and relationships with Hezbollah, the Shia resistance in Bahrain, and Houthis in Yemen; Arab Sunni militias and their leaders' ties with Turkey, KSA, Jordan, Qatar and Kuwait, such as Haras al-Watani, loyal to Atheel al-Nujaifi and backed by Turkey. Although this thesis explored these ties and relationships insofar as they contribute to the Iraqi policy-making dilemma, further studies could focus on those relationships. Questions could include: how do Iraqi ANSAs' external relations further shape and affect the Iraqi state? What are the prospects for these relationships, particularly after Daesh? To what extent are Iraqi ANSAs involved in international relations? What are their domestic and transnational long-term interests?

A second area for future research could explore the federal government's foreign policy trajectory and orientations in the new shift of power, both regionally and globally. This research could focus on Iraq's foreign policy making and behaviour in the era of President Donald J. Trump, and in the context of the continuous rise of Russia in the Middle East. It could further explore Iraq's adaptation to the emerging rapprochement and negotiations regarding Syria, led by Moscow and Ankara and joined by Damascus,

[134] The Rule of Law in the Armed Conflict Project (RULAC), Geneva call (2015) and a number of scholars (such as Gaicca, 2014; Schneckener, 2006) identify Iraqi armed groups as ANSAs. Iraqi ANSAs have been labelled differently over time, especially during the ongoing political and security shifts in Iraq.

Iran and the Syrian rebels. What is Baghdad's position and its prospects in foreign policy regarding the new rapid changes in the Middle East and beyond?

The third direction is the evolution of the KRG's foreign policy after the non-binding independence referendum of September 2017, in which Masoud Barzani promised new changes. Such research could investigate Erbil's foreign policy behaviour and how regional and international powers respond to the KRG in the new era of the Middle East. Questions could include: what is the future of the KRG's new foreign policy objectives, interests and trajectory after the referendum?

The fourth potential research area relates to theorists developing a strand within traditional international relations (IR) schools that could comprehensively explore a fragmented state with more than one government's foreign policies. The author had to utilise NCR, paradiplomacy and protodiplomacy to competently explain this thesis. Developing new applicable and comprehensive theories that match the research areas or changing dynamics would enrich the study of foreign policy making in Iraq and IR in the Middle East.

Final words

This final part of the thesis includes the author's closing remarks. This thesis took the author on a journey that started by raising questions about the dilemma of foreign policy making in Iraq and ended with addressing the research questions, key findings and contributions. The thesis focused on pre-existing challenges that emerged during and after 2003, and their effects on foreign policy making in Iraq. However, it neither offered a remedy to these challenges nor studied everything related to foreign policy making. Instead, the thesis offered an empirical and theoretical explanation for the phenomena of fragmented foreign policies, with a focus on certain areas that presented a complicated puzzle for scholars and policy makers alike. Iraq's key foreign policies challenges are political; they are driven by personal, partisan and ethno-sectarian interests, as well as geopolitical complications and rivalries.

Studying foreign policy making in Iraq is contrary to the study of other traditional countries as the methodology, theories and concepts are challenging and require flexibility in grasping traditional foreign policy ideas. Iraq's survival demonstrates its

resilience, despite its weak foreign policy and fragmented state. This original thesis enriches the field of IR in the Middle East and the study of foreign policy where there are states with some similar attributes, such as Lebanon and, potentially after the civil war, Syria.

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   Iraqi MP and member in the Foreign Relations Committee in the Iraqi Council of Representatives. Spokesperson of the Al-Mutahidoon List and Secretary-General of the Al-Mustakbel National Gathering.

2. Abbas Al-Bayati
   18 October 2014. The Iraqi Council of Representatives, Baghdad.
   Iraqi MP, member in the Foreign Relations Committee and Committee of Defence, a prominent Shia in the State of Law coalition.

3. Hassan Khudair Chuird Al-Hamdani
   2 August 2015. The Iraqi Council of Representatives, Baghdad.
   Chair of the Foreign Relations Committee in the Iraqi Council of Representatives (2013 – 2016). Iraqi MP who was from al-Iraqiya List.

4. Fareed Khalid Sha'lan Al-Ibrahimi
   2 August 2015. The Iraqi Council of Representatives, Baghdad.
   Member in the Committee of Tribes, and Sheikh of al-Ibrahimi tribe.

5. Ahmed Madlul Al-Jabra
   2 August 2015. The Iraqi Council of Representatives, Baghdad.
   An Iraqi MP from al-Shammar tribe and Al-Mutahidoon List, a member in the Committee of Tribes in the Iraqi Council of Representatives.

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   Iraqi MP and Chair of the Committee of Tribes in the Iraqi Council of Representatives (2013 – present). Sheikh of the Abu Numer tribe in Anbar province.

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   Kurdistan Regional Government's Prime Minister.

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14. Mohamad Sabir Ismail

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    Ambassador to the United Nations in Genève and Chief of Iraq's mission in the UN Genève (2011 – 2016). Formerly Iraq's Ambassador to China (2005 - 2010).

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    Deputy Minister of Department Foreign Relations (2009 – 2015).

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    Iraq's Ambassador to the UK (2015 – present).

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    17 May 2015. Copenhagen, Denmark.
    Charge de' Affaires to Denmark (2015 – present)
    The Deputy Permanent Representative – Mission of the Republic of Iraq to the United Nations in New York (2011 – 2015).

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    24 March 2016. Via Skype.
    Iraq's Ambassador to Georgia (2006 – 2011). Former senior diplomat in Netherlands.

36. Sarko Osman Mohamad.
    28 October 2014. Sulaymaniyah, KR-I.
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    Iraqi MP in the State of Law Coalition. Member in the Foreign Relations Committee in the Iraqi Council of Representatives.

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    Manager in Consulate Directorate in Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2005 – present). Iraq's Consul to Washington D.C. and Moscow during Saddam's regime.

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Appendix A: Sample of interview questions

Friday 25th November 2016

His Excellency Ambassador Lukman Faily

Iraq's foreign policy post-2003

1. Does Iraq have two governmental foreign policies: one from the sovereign federal government and the other from the sub-sovereign KRG?

2. How incoherent are Baghdad's foreign relations and policies? What are the main reasons for Baghdad's splintered foreign policy?

3. Can we say that Iraq has foreign policies rather than a foreign policy?

4. What are Baghdad's foreign policy priorities? Please, could you rank or list the foreign policy priorities? What is the highest priority, is it security or recovering international ties including the seats in IGOs and lifting the UN sanctions?

5. Are all the Iraqi elites united on the foreign policy priorities? If yes, which ones? If not, why?

6. Is there competition within and between Baghdad's foreign affairs core executive bodies?

7. Is there any overlap of authority between the Presidency and the Prime Minister about formulating foreign policy?

8. What are the differences between PMs Ayad Allawi, al-Maliki and Haider al-Abadi in foreign policies? Are Ayad Allawi and PM Haider al-Abadi more pragmatic and pro-west in their foreign policies than other PMs?

9. Studies have found that some Iraqi non-state actors (e.g. AAH) have their own external ties, agendas and interests and the argument is that those actors undermine Iraq's foreign policy strategy. Do you agree, if not, why?

10. Is the relationship between Iraq and the US one of Iraq's foreign policy priorities?

11. Does the US have an influence on Iraqi decision makers? If not, do Iraqi elites take the US into account when they take decisions in foreign affairs? What does Iraq want from its relationship with the US? Is it security cooperation or something else?

12. How do you view the KRG's foreign relations, do you believe that the KRG has a foreign policy?

13. Are there external interferences and influences from the US and Iran on Iraq's foreign policy making?

14. Can you describe the links between the external powers and Iraqi actors: do external powers have agents, allies, partners and proxies in Iraq that implement their agenda and/or common interests?

15. Which external powers have an influence on Iraqi politics directly and/or indirectly? Can you rank them?

16. What are the practical obstacles of designing and implementing a coherent foreign policy in Iraq?

17. What are your recommendations for a coherent Iraqi foreign policy?