AVRUPA GÜÇLERİ VE I. DÜNYA SAVAŞI SONRASINDA ARAP ORTADOĞUSUNDA ZAYIF DEVLETLERİN DOĞUŞU

ÖZ

1914 yılında patlak veren I. Dünya Savaşı'ndan bir yüzyıl sonra, savaş sonrasında Avrupalı güçler tarafından oluşturulan Arap ulus devlet sistemi baskı altındadır. 'İslam Devleti', Irak ve Suriye'nin bugünkü sınırlarının sonunu getirebilir. Bu çalışma bu devletlerdeki direnç eksikliğinin nelerden kaynaklandığını sorusuna eğilmektedir. 'Yapay' devletler olarak oluşturulukları ve hala da öyle oldukları yönündeki cevap tatmin edici değildir. Önce Büyük Britanya ve Fransa, ardından demokratik olmayan rejimler tarafından alınan ilk tercihler devlet toplumlarının kırılganlığına katkıda bulunmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: I. Dünya Savaşı, Sykes-Picot, Milletler Cemiyeti Mandaları, Suriye, Irak, İslam Devleti

القوى الأوروبية وولادة الدول الضعيفة في الشرق الأوسط العربي، في اعقاب الحرب العالمية الأولى
كودرون هارير
خلاصة

بعد مرور قرن على نشوب الحرب العالمية الأولى في عام ١٩١٤، فان نظام الدول القومية العربية التي اقيمت بعد تلك الحرب من قبل القوى الاوروبية غدت ترزح تحت ضغوط كثيرة. ويمكن لما يسمى بـ"دولة الإسلام" ان يزيل الحدود الحالية للعراق وسوريا. وتعمل هذه الدراسة على ايجاد ثمة اجابة على سؤال مفاده: من اين ينبع نقص قوة المقاومة والصمود لهذه الدول. ولا شك ان الإجابة التي تتلخص في ان اهذه الدول انشئت بصورة مصطنعة وانها لا تزال كذلك حتى اليوم ليست بإجابة مقنعة. ان المبادرات الأولى المتخذة من قبل بريطانيا العظمى وفرنسا اولا ومن بعدها الانظمة غير الديمقراطية، قد ساهمت في هشاشة مجتمعات الدول.

الكلمات الدالّة : الحرب العالمية الأولى، سايكس – بيكو، دول انتداب عصبة الأمم، سوريا، العراق، داعش.

EUROPEAN POWERS AND THE NAISSANCE OF WEAK STATES IN THE ARAB MIDDLE EAST AFTER WORLD WAR I

ABSTRACT

Hundred years after World War I broke out in 1914, the Arab national state system which was created by European powers after the war is under pressure. The so called "Islamic State" could lead to the end of Iraq and Syria in their present borders. The paper examines the question where the lack of resilience of those states stems from. The answer that they were created as and still are "artificial" states is not satisfactory. Early policy choices, first by Great Britain and France, then by undemocratic regimes, contributed to the fragility of the state societies.

Keywords: World War I, Sykes-Picot, League of Nation Mandates, Syria, Iraq, Islamic State

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The year 2014 marks the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the First World War. In the Middle East, the commemoration falls into a very sensitive period of time. The region is witnessing what could be the breakdown of the order which was established by the European powers after the end of the Great War, as it was called at that time, in 1918. Two of the states which have been created from the spoils of the Ottoman Empire, Syria and Iraq, lie in shambles. The Iraqi-Syrian border partly does not exist anymore. The national states which for decades were held under the tight control of strong regimes have shown a striking lack of resilience, and poor sustainability, as their regimes were gone or grew weak. They have proven to be highly vulnerable, their futures as unified states in the borders given to them after World War I seem uncertain. This paper deals with the question where this lack of resilience derives from. Naturally, there is no simple answer, the causes certainly are multiple: a mix of unfavourable preconditions and bad turns taken throughout the history of the 20th century.

The creation of Iraq and Syria was the result of the first large-scale modern Western military intervention in the region: the war of the Entente Powers against the Ottoman Empire – and later also against local populations, in disregard of the spirit of US president Woodrow Wilson's 14 points speech of January 1918. In it Wilson had demanded respect for the "interests of the populations concerned".[1] The French had to crush a revolt in Syria, to impose their will, the British in Iraq.

The "Arab Spring" movements since 2011 by some were identified as a "second Arab revolt" – aiming at ending once and for all the postcolonial period by toppling the undemocratic regimes of the 20th century.[2] In 2011, only the regimes were challenged, but a few years later also the state-system itself which is the product of the First World War, comes under pressure. Today's disintegration again started with a massive military intervention: with the invasion of Saddam Hussein's Iraq by the United States of America together with some allies, including Europeans, in March 2003. The so called "Islamic State", *Daesh*,[3] which had its beginnings as "Al-Qaida in Iraq" in 2004, can be called a late paradox product of this intervention – and one should expect other paradox results of the present intervention against *Daesh*.

There are some striking parallels between the British role in Iraq after 1917 and the US endeavours after 2003. Both, UK and US, sported the claim of

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1 The text of Wilson's speech is available at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/wilson14.asp All download quotes for this paper were last checked on January 3, 2015.

2 See e. g. Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Contradictions of the Arab Spring", *Al Jazeera online*, November 11, 2011, http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/11/20111111101711539134.html

3 Daesh is the acronym of ad-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa ash-Sham, Islamic State in Iraq and the al-Sham region (Greater Syria). In 2014 Daesh dropped "fi al-Iraq wa ash-Sham", but the acronym stayed in use.

ending an unrightful oppression, as British General Stanley Maude declared after he entered Baghdad in 1917: "Our armies do not come into your lands as conquerors or enemies, but as liberators."[4] A few years later in the capitals of both countries, UK and US, political discussions followed about the wisdom of imperial overreach, costly adventures and doubtful commitments: "We cannot act alone as the policeman for the whole world", said the opposition leader and later conservative British prime minister Bonar Law in 1922.[5] And in both cases the former liberators tried to disengage and get rid of the burden without giving up their influence.

"Artificial" statehood?

In the western media but also in the Middle East the Arab national states often are dubbed "artificial" and the whole Arab statehood concept "unnatural". This stands in an old tradition: Arab nationalists like Sati al-Husri (1880 –1967) were convinced that the European powers had carved up what was a cultural entity and supposed to become a political one.[6] Today the imposition of the state order after World War I sometimes is identified as the root cause of the weakness of the states overrun or threatened by the "Islamic State". However, it is hard to see what presumably more resilient "natural" and "non artificial" states and borders should be exactly: formed according to which criteria, geographical, tribal, ethnic, religious? Do not many other successful states in the international system stem from war and conquest? Why should Basra, Bagdad and Mosul, with old historical connections, not fare well together? Do not the Arab states by now have their own separate histories during which their populations showed deep loyalty and attachment to their countries? Did not, as Adeed Dawisha points out, even early Arab nationalist societies feel "the strain of regional loyalties", like Syrian or Iraqi?[7]

Undoubtedly, the denial of a big Arab nation state has been a festering wound for old Arab nationalists. However, it is questionable to claim that this denial condemned nation states like Syria and Iraq from the outset. I would rather prefer to call those states "impeded" or even "prevented" or "aborted" – or, as what happens today, "disowned". They were exogenously created, but this would not be enough for them to be doomed, there must be more: Also after their creation, foreign interests – and home-made bad policies – interfered seriously with the will and needs of their populations and prevented them growing together and develop national identities which are

4 General Stanley Maude's declaration is reproduced e. g. in Anthony Shadid, *Night Draws Near: Iraq's People in the Shadow of America's War*, (London: Picador, 2006), p. 464.

5 Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq - The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 24.

6 Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century - From Triumph to Despair*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 3.

7 Dawisha, op. cit., p. 30.

strong enough to sustainably transcend other identities and resist crises like the current ones.

Nevertheless, there was damage done and it can be blamed on the conflicting British promises during World War I, in the continuation of "The Oriental Question" of the 19th century, who would inherit the remains of the Ottoman Empire after its long expected demise. It is a story of lies, betrayals and misconceptions. Ironically enough, the British were not only playing double games, they were deceived too: they fell to the claim of a young Arab nationalist, Mohammed al-Faruqi, who succeeded in making them believe that a huge majority of Arab soldiers in the Ottoman army was ready to turn against their masters if an Arab revolt was proclaimed by Hussein bin Ali, the Sharif of Mecca. Faruqi introduced himself to the British as the Sharif's confidant and as the British' confidant to Hussein – "a great hoax" as David Fromkin called it.[8] His exaggerations resulted into the Clayton memorandum[9] which strongly recommended British policy makers to support Hussein, in the belief that a powerful organisation waiting to cooperate existed behind enemy lines. In the Hussein-McMahon correspondence between July 1915 and January 1916 the British pledged their support of an Arab revolt against the Ottomans – and outlined a future Sharifian Arab government (open to many different interpretations of what they really meant and what was included or excluded).

Dysfunctional bureaucracy

One might identify another parallel between the British of that time and the Americans ninety years later: the bureaucratic and political fissures in both administrations which led to conflicting statements and also domestically contested policy decisions. In the British case this was the competition between the Arab Bureau in Cairo on one and the India office on the other hand and the Foreign Office in London as a third party plus other London offices.[10] In the case of the US invasion of Iraq it was the deep enmity between State Department and Pentagon – which resulted in the ousting of professional diplomacy from the Iraq file and with it of a lot of Middle East knowhow.[11] In both cases the divisions within the bureaucracy undermined attempts to build functioning states.[12] After 2003, many Iraqis could not believe that the poor results of reconstruction efforts were the consequence of the dysfunc-

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8 David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace. The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East*, (New York: Holt, 1989 (paperback edition of 2009), p. 177.

9 Gilbert Clayton, British intelligence officer in Cairo, sent a secret memorandum to Lord Kitchener, then Secretary of State for War.

10 See e. g. Fromkin, op. cit., p. 145.

11 See e. g. Jeffrey Record, *Dark Victory - America's Second War against Iraq,* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press 2004), p. 130.

12 Dodge, op. cit., p. X.

tional system of the occupier: Thus, the conspiracy theory started to flourish claiming that the US wanted to prevent Iraq to recover.

In 1915, Britain's India Office was totally against and the Foreign Office at least sceptical about the Arab Office's plans to create an Arab caliph – one of "true race", as the Earl of Kitchener wrote[13] – in the person of the Hashemite Hussein bin Ali. The India Office's man for the rule on the Arab peninsula and for partnership with the British was Abdulaziz Ibn Saud – who had for years written letters to the British, without being listened to – and who finally became handy at the outset of the war, to harass the Ottomans and their allies, the house of Rashid in Hail.[14] He suffered set-backs at the beginning, but later would also expel the Hashemites from the Hijaz. Today many identify the Wahhabi ideology – the 18th century Salafism of Muhammad Ibn Abdulwahhab – as the origin of the destructive radical Jihadism embodied by the "Islamic State".[15]

Syria and Iraq have been mentioned as the states whose borders are crumbling, however *Daesh* has its sights also on the two states of the before mentioned dynasties: the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan – founded by one of the sons of Sharif Hussein, Abdullah bin Hussein – and Saudi-Arabia, the state assembled by Ibn Saud and proclaimed kingdom in 1932. Both belong to the list of countries which *Daesh* sees as colonial creatures. It is of a certain irony that the historically difficult relationship between the Sauds and the Hashemites has never been better than just now.

There were several reasons for the British Arab Bureau in Cairo to engage with the Arabs: The disaster of the ongoing battle of Gallipoli changed the British view of what the Ottoman Empire still could achieve militarily.[16] Also the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force was in dire difficulties in Iraq after the defeat in al-Kut.[17] The British feared an Ottoman attack on the Suez Canal and even more that such an attack could ignite an anti-British revolt in Egypt. The Ottoman Empire had proclaimed a Jihad and also the Germans were eager to "revolutionize" the Muslims of the Middle East against the British.[18] One other motive for a certain political sector in Britain – represented by the

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13 Timothy J. Paris, *Britain, the Hashemites, and Arab Rule 1920-1925: The Sherifian Solution,* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 314.

14 Fromkin, op. cit., p. 107.

15 Among many others, the Beirut based political analyst and Middle East expert Alastair Crooke. See "You can't understand ISIS if you don't know the history of Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia", *Huffington Post*, August 27, 2014. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alastair-crooke/isis-wahhabism-saudi-arabi-a_b_5717157.html

16 Fromkin, op. cit., p. 166.

17 Ibid., p. 202.

18 See e. g. Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War 1914 – 1918,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, third edition 2014), p. 100.

British liaison officer in the Arab camp, T.E. Lawrence – were anti-French sentiments: If the Arabs got Syria, the French would not.[19] The British-French competition in the Middle East lasted well until after the Second World War.

There are still different views on the question, if the British support for Sharif Hussein at the end was a miscalculation.[20] Without doubt, the British alliance with the Arabs was at least a very important piece of war propaganda. But for sure it was a political misunderstanding: What the British looked for at that time was a kind of Arab pope for the Muslims – and this was, in fact, also the wish of Panislamists like Rashid Rida (1865-1935).[21] Instead, with the Hashemite they got an Arab politician, and not a very successful one. Even if there was a big amount of Arab resentment against the Ottomans and from a certain point in the history the wish to get rid of their rule, this did not mean that the Arabs agreed to support all together one of their own.

The British in the meantime tried to square the circle and to reconcile their promises to the Arabs with their commitments towards their ally, France. The diplomat and presumed Middle East expert Mark Sykes was tasked to negotiate the future frontiers of Syria with his French counterpart, Francois Georges-Picot.[22] In the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916 the United Kingdom and France defined their future areas of control and influence. Originally the deal included also the approval of the Russians – who themselves held old ambitions to get the filet pieces of the Ottoman Empire. The Russian plans – like attacking the Bosphorus – were never realized and therefore are not being recounted and evaluated any more: Sean McMeekin calls this an "outcome bias".[23] The outbreak of the revolution in Russia led also to the publication of the mutual Anglo-French commitments.

Sykes-Picot, the original sin

Today, Sykes-Picot in the media is often quoted as a synonym for the borders which were drawn by the European Powers between the new Arab states after the War. Of course this is not correct. The agreement between Sykes and Georges-Picot first of all covered only the area between Palestine to Iraq.[24] The

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19 James Barr, *A Line in the Sand - Britain, France and the Struggle that Shaped the Middle East* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011), p. 39.

20 See e. g. John Taylor's polemical article against Fromkin who is accused of belittling the Arab military contribution: "Deconstructing A Peace to End All Peace", July 2012, http://original.antiwar.com/john-taylor/2012/07/15/deconstructing-a-peace-to-end-all-peace/

21 Dawisha, op. cit., p. 21.

22 Fromkin, op. cit, p. 189.

23 Sean McMeekin, "The War of the Ottoman Succession - The Forgotten Attempts to seize Istanbul in the First World War", *Art and Thought, 100ᵗʰ Anniversary Issue: 1914 – The First World War and the Reshaping of the East,* 51ˢᵗ year, No. 100, 01/2014 – 07/2014, Goethe-Institut München, pp. 22-27.

24 Florence Gaub, Patryk Pawlak, "Sykes-Picot and Syria", *EUISS Alert,* No. 34, October 2013, http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Alert_34-Sykes-Picot_and_Syria.pdf

projected zones of interest and control do not coincide with the later states. Sykes-Picot never was implemented in the original of 1916, the most obvious example being Mosul which was supposed to be in the French zone but which France later gave up in exchange of British support regarding Alsace-Lorraine.[25] It is also not correct that the borders which were drawn following the 1920 San Remo conference were totally made up: more often than not they followed old Ottoman district boundaries.[26] Between Sykes-Picot and the implementation of the actual state order, several UK policy changes took place.[27] However, Sykes-Picot does remain a document which illustrates the complete disregard of the European powers for the wishes and aspirations of the populations living in the Middle East and as such it has become a code for imperial power. This may not be academically correct but it has a powerful historical influence – even *Daesh* propagandists refer to it and it will have not much effect to tell them that they got it all wrong.[28]

The Balfour Declaration of 1917 on the other hand appealed only to a – then small – part of the population in the region. In it the British foreign ministry held out the prospect of "the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people" in Palestine, excluding anything "which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities."[29] Also here, the background was clear: to encourage Jewish cooperation in Palestine – this was not so difficult in the face of the policies of Turkish governor Cemal Pasha towards the Jews, many of them citizens of enemy countries who feared the same fate as Armenians –, and to win over the support of the international Zionist movement which was supposed to have influence on the American government.[30]

The contradictoriness of the British promises to the Arabs and the Jews is well documented in a letter which the head of the Arab Bureau in Cairo, David Hogarth, had to deliver to Hussein in January 1918 (he had already proclaimed himself "King of Arab Lands", but was recognized by the British only as "King of Hijaz").[31] Hogarth's account shows that the British knew well that

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25 Barr, op. cit, p. 71.

26 Gaub/Pawlak, op. cit.

27 Toby Dodge, "Can Iraq Be Saved?", *Survival: Gobal Politics and Strategy*, Volume 56, October-November 2014, pp. 7-20, http://www.iiss.org/en/publications/survival/sections/2014-4667/survival--global-politics-and-strategy-october-november-2014-be95/56-5-02-dodge-d058

28 David L. Philips, "Extremists in Iraq Need a History Lesson", *CNBC online*, July 2014, http://www.cnbc.com/id/101818814

29 For the text see e. g. http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/E210CA73E38D9E1D052565FA00705C61

30 Fromkin, op. cit., p. 299.

31 For the significance of the later so called "Hogarth message" see Elie Kedourie, *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth - The McMahon-Husayn Correspondence and its Interpretations, 1914 – 1939*, (London: Routledge, 1976, edition of 2014), p. 284.

not all commitments could be honoured: He reported that Hussein "would not accept an independent Jewish State in Palestine, nor was I instructed to warn him that such a state was contemplated by Great Britain".[32]

A rare public acknowledgement in this regard came from British Foreign Minister Jack Straw ninety years later:

> A lot of the problems we are having to deal with now, I have to deal with now, are a consequence of our colonial past… The Balfour declaration and the contradictory assurances which were being given to Palestinians in private at the same time as they were being given to the Israelis – again, an interesting history for us but not an entirely honourable one.[33]

Bassam Tibi draws a direct link between the history of the contradicting promises during World War I and the fact that the Middle East, perhaps like no other region in the world, is so full of conspiracy theories.[34] The common sentiment is that there is always a presumed hidden agenda – or several – behind the officially proclaimed one. If these theories contradict each other they do not become less credible – perhaps even the contrary. Also today, in the face of the advance of *Daesh*, the region abounds with conspiracy theories. The "Islamic State" proclaims a war against the "Crusader-Zionist-Safawid" coalition, and many Arab and Iranian Shiites are convinced that the same "Islamic State" is a joint venture of the Israeli Mossad with the Saudi king to fight the Shiites. Many Sunnis think it is a US-Israeli invention which gives them the pretext of a "war against the Sunnis" and again others think it is a project to create the Kurdish state which was denied to the Kurds after 1918 – to complete the World War I mission of dividing and weakening the Middle East.

Divide et impera

This paper looks only into the first years of Iraq and Syria. In November 1918 the Anglo-French Declaration still pledged that the UK and France would "assist in the establishment of indigenous governments and administrations in Syria and Mesopotamia", but despite all reassurances the French had already decided to rule Syria directly.[35] Both, France and Great Britain, proceeded to implement their ideas even before the Council of the new League of Nations approved their mandates. After an ultimatum to the Arab Syrian Govern-

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32 Sahar Huneidi, *A Broken Trust. Sir Herbert Samuel, Zionism, and the Palestinians*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2001), p. 66.

33 http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1413237/Straw-blames-crises-on-Britains-colonial-past.html

34 Bassam Tibi, Die Verschwörung - Das Trauma arabischer Politik, (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1993).

35 See the text at http://de.scribd.com/doc/71915217/The-Anglo-French-Declaration-Nov-7-1918#scribd

ment, the French intervened militarily and defeated the Arabs at the Battle of Maysalun in July 1920. They deposed the Arab government and in August removed Faisal from Damascus.

The dream of a big unified Arab state or even of a "Greater Syria" – which the 1919 King Crane Commission had reported as the wish of the people[36] – was frustrated, but even Syria in its French mandate borders did not really get a chance. France's obligation, according to the duties of a Mandatory as stipulated by the League of Nations, was to render "administrative advice and assistance until such time as [the states are] able to stand alone".[37] France was supposed to guide Syria on its way to be accepted as an independent member of the League of Nations. Instead the Mandatory was caught in fighting Arab nationalism and as a counter measure fostered ethnical and sectarian divisions.[38] One old trick was geographical division, granting the minorities, especially the heterodox sect of the Alawites, special autonomous forms of administrations. The rise of the Alawis in the ranks of the Syrian military was a late consequence of French *divide et impera* policies in Syria. Today the "Islamic State" – and even less radical Sunnis – see the Assad family with its Alawi roots as instrument of the imperial West.[39]

In Iraq, the British – who at the outset of the war still thought of annexing Basra and establishing a protectorate over Baghdad – had understood that British rule had to be justified on different grounds than the "rights of conquest".[40] But it took some time after the war until everybody accepted what Sykes wrote in 1918, namely that "imperialism, annexation, military triumph, prestige, white man's burden… expunged from the popular political vocabulary…".[41] The British had decided "to go it slowly" with the Arab participation in governing the country – a revolt which had to be put down was the result.[42]

One element of British rule was the revision of the Ottoman tribal policy which had aimed at weakening tribal leaders and bringing tribes under gov-

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36 Eugene Rogan, *The Arabs - A History*, (New York: Basic Books, 2009), p. 159.

37 For the text of the Covenant of the League of Nations see http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp

38 Ayse Tekdal Fildis, "Roots of Alawite-Sunni Rivalry in Syria", *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XIX, No. 2, Summer 2012. http://www.mepc.org/journal/middle-east-policy-archives/roots-alawite-sunni-rivalry-syria?print

39 An Azhar graduated Sheikh, Alawi Amin, told the Lebanese newspaper *As-Safir* in July 2014 that Daesh was "a terrorist group which was born out of colonialism and U.S. and Western intelligence for the purpose of slitting the throats of Muslims and dividing the Islamic nation." "Grand Sheikh Of Al-Azhar: Islamic State Barbaric, Distorts Islam", http://www.rferl.org/content/under-black-flag-egypt-sheikh-tayeb/26723627.html

40 Dodge, op. cit., p. 9, p. 13.

41 Ibid., p. 13.

42 Ibid., p. 16. Dodge quotes Arnold Wilson, Civil Commissioner in Iraq, 1918-1920.

ernment control. The British did the contrary. They made tribal sheikhs – of their liking – stronger, with a separate penal code for tribes, the infamous Tribal Criminal and Civil Disputes Regulation which granted judicial authority to tribal leaders (Saddam Hussein did a similar thing 70 years later).[43] "Using the sheikhs" helped to reduce British personnel costs but it did not help the social cohesion of the new state. After 2003 the US first worked mainly with Shiites and Kurds and "used" Arab Sunni sheikhs only later, against Al-Qaida after 2005.

Also the king of Iraq was a British invention, Faisal, who had to be compensated for the loss of Damascus – nevertheless he duly started soon to struggle for greater power and autonomy.[44] But there were losers. The Shiites did not get the dividends of their involvement in the revolt and, although already a majority in the country, never got on board of the new state. A disillusioned Faisal deplored in his memorandum of 1932 that "there is no Iraqi people in Iraq" and depicted a Sunni governed state with an alienated religious majority, the Shia, and a substantial alienated ethnic minority, the Kurds.[45] Iraqis did not grow together. After the end of the monarchy in 1958, they would break up mainly along political lines – nationalists against communists. After the demise of the big ideologies and the breakdown of the Iraqi state during the 1990s due to the UN sanctions, and the chaos after the US invasion of 2003, they resorted to their sectarian, ethnical and tribal affiliations.

A "quasi-state"

The abrogation of the mandate was a key demand of Faisal and Iraqi politicians. Already in 1922 the British government – also under domestic political pressure – entered a treaty relationship with Iraq. Iraq had to pay half of the costs of the British residency with obvious consequences for the economic development of the country.[46] When Iraq in 1932 entered the League of Nations it did so as a *de jure* independent and self-determined nation state. The reality, however, was quite different. Iraq was ruled by a small clique of mainly Sunni politicians who depended completely on British support. The state in fact did fulfil only one of the five criteria for independence, formulated by the League – which was having a settled government and an administration operating essential services. Iraq was a "quasi-state".[47]

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43 Ibid., p. 63 and p. 83.

44 Ibid., p. 20.

45 Ali A. Allawi, *Faisal I of Iraq*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), p. 537.

46 For the early treaty relationship see e.g. Karol Sorby, "Iraq from Faysal's Ascendancy to the Throne to the Ratification of the First Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, 1921-1924", *SAV (Slovak Academy of Science) Journal*, 2012, p. 199-219. http://www.sav.sk/journals/uploads/0919090804_Sorby_199-219.pdf

47 Dodge, op. cit., p. 31.

Also Mosul was given to Iraq on false grounds: The League of Nation commission, which in 1925 was sent as fact finding mission, attested some progress but also the overall instability of Iraq. For adding Mosul to the young state, it recommended to the League to put conditions: a long mandatory relationship between Iraq and UK, necessary for the consolidation of the state. The British agreed to 25 years.[48] They wanted Mosul badly for Iraq, not only because of the oil – one of the driving forces of UK policies already during the war – but also as reinforcement of the Sunni sector in the Iraqi society.

Equally the commitments of the US towards Iraq after 2003 were downgraded step by step. At the beginning the aim was the establishment of a sound, secure and friendly democracy, at the end Washington would have been glad to leave a decently stable Iraq "which can defend itself and is not a danger to its neighbours".[49] This was not to be. The Iraqi state could not and cannot fulfil the functions of a state – coercion of power, defence of its borders, provision of infrastructure and last but not least of legitimacy in the eyes of its inhabitants.

Hanna Batatu's picturesque description of the political violence in Mosul in 1959 shows how in situations of conflict every possible fault line in such a split society breaks open. At the end everybody is fighting everybody, sects, ethnicities, tribes, families, social classes, urban and rural people, town quarters.[50] It was then – and it is now – difficult to recognize, less comprehend, all levels of conflict in Iraq.

The "offer" of *Daesh*

55 years after those events, a part of the Arab Sunnis in Mossul decided that they would fare better if they link their fate to the absurd organisation of the "Islamic State" rather than stay with the Iraqi state and its central government which they did not consider any more their own. *Daesh* is fought by a mixture of forces which in fact looks like anything but not like the army of a regular state: regrouped Iraqi troops, Kurdish peshmerga, autonomous Shiite militias, tribal forces, Iranian advisors, and air strikes by a US led coalition which includes Arab Sunni states (as is known since a Jordanian pilot was captured by *Daesh* after his aircraft went to ground).[51] Also if *Daesh* is defeated, the trust

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48 Ibid., p. 32.

49 Yoel Guzanzky, "The Day after the US Withdrawal from Iraq*", INSS Insight,* No. 288, October 2011, http://www.inss.org.il/index.aspx?id=4538&articleid=2397

50 Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq - A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of its Communists, Ba'thists, and Free Officers*, (NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 866.

51 See e.g. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/dec/24/islamic-state-shot-down-coalition-warplane-syria

of the Sunnis into the state will not be automatically restored. The former masters of the state have disowned it.

The US intervention of 2003 changed the strategic balance of the region completely. In the eyes of many Sunni Arabs, Iraq – which was held in the Sunni Arab "orbit" by the Tikriti Saddam Hussein – shifted to a different identity, from a Sunni Arab to an Iraqi Shiite. It is not any more the same state. *Daesh* is a materialisation of Sunni fears, and an attempt to reverse the new facts.

The danger of regional contagiousness is obvious. In Jordan, a recent poll shows that 38 percent of the population do not consider *Daesh* a terrorist organisation[52] (and not few of those who do consider it a terrorist organisation think that it has been created by the US). The attractiveness of *Daesh* cannot be explained on religious grounds, also if the fight against Shiites, Christians and not recognized religious communities might attract some radicals. The Muslims of Jordan do not have misgivings about their religious identity, it is the state which suffers from a lack of legitimacy in the eyes of some. Certainly this was not caused by the founding history alone but also by later shortcomings of the state. But the narrative that this state has to be annihilated because it was an exogenous creation by "crusaders" is appealing to some Jordanians.

The belief that the home state, the *watan*, is only a step to something bigger was instilled to the populations of the region by Arab nationalism – the founding fathers being deeply convinced that the creation of the Arab states were an imperialist project.[53] However, the "super legitimacy" of one single Arab Nation state is not available any more. What is waiting behind "the facade of a multiplicity of sovereign states" which are "deviant and transient entities: their frontiers illusory and permeable; their rulers interim caretakers, or obstacles to be removed", as Walid Khalidi wrote?[54] After the unfulfilled dream of political unity came Nasser's postulate of "Arab solidarity" which however did not defeat Israel in 1967. The Arab defeat instead boosted the rise of political Islam. The last illusions started to crumble in 1990, after Saddam Hussein's invasion of neighbouring Kuwait, followed by a US-led war against Iraq with Arab participation. The deathblow came with the revolts of 2011 which led to the suspension of Syria – the cradle of Arab nationalism – as a member of the Arab League. And all of a sudden an offer comes around which is called "Islamic" and "state", indigenously and not exogenously created, politically genuine and culturally authentic for those who believe in it. An organisation like *Daesh* can succeed only if the ground is prepared. And even if its rise certainly is multi-causal, the preparation started hundred years ago.

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52 It is a poll by the Center for Strategic Studies, University of Jordan. See David Schenker, "There is a Worrisome Support in Jordan for the Islamic State", *New Republic*, October 2014, http://www.newrepublic.com/article/119909/islamic-state-isis-support-jordan-worrying-poll
53 Dawisha, op. cit., p. 3.
54 Ibid., p. 10.

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