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Political Psychological Factors in the Polarization of Iraqi Politics (2003-2006)[1]

Irak Siyasetinin Kutuplaşmasında Politik Psikolojik Faktörler (2003-2006)

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Abstract

A new political structuring took place in Iraq after Saddam Hussein's regime. During the democratic transition period, sub-national political movements came to the fore along with the United States (USA). Institutions of the Iraqi state after Saddam Hussein were formed in the 2003-2005 transition period. It is understood today that the structuring formed in that period did not make Iraq successful. Iraq is described as an unstable country. The activities of terrorist organizations and social upheavals show that Iraq is an unstable country. However, in the 2005 elections, a large part of Iraqi society cast their votes for sub-national parties. The study aims to analyze the reasons behind the social support of ethnic parties which do not allow Iraq to be a successful state. Vamık Volkan has demonstrated through his studies that under certain conditions subnational groups are polarized and act in line with their own broad group identity. For this purpose, political psychological concepts were used to understand Iraqi society within the conditions of the period. The data reflecting the political psychological attitudes of Iraqis were collected and the reasons for social polarization and support for ethnic parties were analyzed. This study was concluded that when a new situation arises in a country and sub-national groups feel threatened, they tend to polarize and reflect it on their political behavior.

Keywords: Iraq, Security, Social Polarization, Ethnic Conflict, Political Psychology.

Öz

Saddam Hüseyin rejimi sonrası Irak'ta geçiş döneminde yeni bir siyasi yapılanma oluştu. Demokratikleşmeye geçiş sürecinde, Amerika Birleşik

Devletleri (ABD) tarafından ulus-altı siyasi hareketler ön plana çıkarıldı. Saddam Hüseyin sonrası devlet kurumları 2003-2005 yılları arasında geçiş sürecinde inşa edildi. Söz konusu dönemde oluşan yapılanmanın Irak'ı başarılı kılmadığı günümüzde anlaşılmaktadır. Irak istikrarsız bir ülke olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Terör örgütlerinin faaliyetleri ve toplumsal ayaklanmalar Irak'ın istikrarsız bir ülke olduğunu göstermektedir. Ancak, Irak toplumunun büyük bir çoğunluğu 2005 yılında yapılan ilk seçimde ülkeyi başarısızlığa götüren söz konusu ulus-altı siyasi partilere oy vermiştir. Bu çalışmada, Irak Devleti'ni başarılı kılmayan ulus-altı siyasi partilere verilen toplumsal desteğin sebepleri irdelenmiştir. Vamık Volkan, belli koşullarda ulus-altı grupların kutuplaştığı ve kendi geniş grup kimliği doğrultusunda hareket ettiğini çalışmalarıyla ortaya koymuştur. Bu doğrultuda, politik psikolojik kavramlara başvurularak Irak toplumu dönemin şartları içinde anlamaya çalışılmıştır. Çalışmada, Iraklıların politik psikolojik tutumlarını ölçecek veriler toplanmıştır. Ardından toplumsal kutuplaşma ve ulus-altı partilere desteğin nedenleri analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmada, bir ülkede yeni bir durum ortaya çıktığında ve bu durum ulus-altı gruplarda tehdit hissi uyandırdığında, ulus-altı grupların bu durumu politik davranışlarına yansıttıkları sonucuna varılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Irak, Güvenlik, Toplumsal Kutuplaşma, Etnik Çatışma, Politik Psikoloji.

Introduction

After the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, a new political order emerged in Iraq. In the new order, subnational actors came to the fore. The identity-based politics of the new sub-national[1] actors (elites) that emerged in 2003 as a result of the conditions of the period have not been met by Iraqis in recent years. Iraqi voters, who participated in the 2018 elections in Iraq by 44 percent, do not see existing political actors as part of the solution. In particularly, Iraqi youth demonstrate their political attitudes with street demonstrations, and these demonstrations have been going on since 2018. Demonstrators draw attention to the insufficiency of basic services such as electricity and water, foreign interventions, corruption scandals, and the insecurity caused by militia forces. These political actions show that they have begun to change Iraqi politics and also indicate the shift from identity-based politics to issue-based politics. In other words, politics based on ethnic identities that are tried to be shown as democracy did not bring the expected prosperity to Iraq. So the question at this point is what kind of motivations were behind Iraqis' support to ethnic parties in the past.

We can ask this question by generalizing it independently from Iraq. "Why do people need to form a political union with their ethnic groups?" Among the theories of ethnicity, primordialism and instrumentalism are prominent in the literature. Primordialists see this as a natural process. According to Clifford Geertz (1996), ethnic identity is given to innate individuals with blood ties, and everyone is born in a community that follows a certain religion, speaks a language and even its dialectic has traditions, and develops behavioral practices (Geertz, 1996, p. 42). The political identities of individuals are also shaped within the group. Instrumentalists say there is no historical continuity in this regard and criticizes the primordialists. For example, the Shi'a and Sunnis in Iraq have not always created separate political organizations. Nevertheless, it is not possible to indicate that Shi'a and Sunnis are in constant conflict in Iraq. The Shiites took part in the state during the Monarchy and Ba'ath governments, which were perceived as Sunni power (Batatu, 1989, pp. 180-184). Even Salih Jabr, who was a Shi'a, was appointed as the Prime Minister of Iraq (Kedourie, 1988, p. 249).

Instrumentalists have targeted group elites as the cause of ethnic

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[1] In this study, the term ethnic groups will be used instead of sub-national groups. The term ethnic group can be used for groups that differ in language and religion/sect. For example, even though the conflicts in Northern Ireland stem from sectarian differences, they are considered within the context of ethnic conflicts.

polarization. The elites need the support of large groups to achieve their own political goals. It can also make the group identity instrumentalized to act in its favor. For example, in the 1980s, Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic attacked the Croats, referring to the past Croatian and Serbian conflicts, to expand his area of power (Jesse and Williams, 2010, p. 12). It has been criticized that the instrumentalist approach ignores the dimension of emotion in individuals about ethnicity and focuses on the orientation of interests and elites to ethnic groups. For example, in some cases, subnational groups pursue their leaders unconditionally, whereas in other cases we can see that it can be the opposite (Varshney, 2009, p. 282). However, we can see that the elites do not change in Iraq but voters' voting behavior is changing and there is a serious decline in the rate of participation in the elections.

Ethnic conflict approaches that examine psychological factors prefer to deal with the individual and society. Psychological approaches advocate the notion that polarization and conflict arise in certain situations. It is seen in many examples that the politicization of ethnic groups and the polarization of the society are not permanent. The desire of individuals to act with the ethnic group arises in "certain" situations. For that reason, answers are sought in some studies in the field of political psychology where individuals act together with the ethnic group. Vamık Volkan (2005) has worked essentially in this area. In this study, the rising ethnic nationalism and polarization in Iraq will be tried to be explained through Volkan's academic works since Volkan focuses on the origins of insecurity and its impact on broad group identity.

The study will try to test the polarization and voter behavior in Iraqi society. First of all, the concepts used by Vamık Volkan will be emphasized to look at the political psychological origin of polarization in Iraqi politics. Secondly, we will try to explain how Volkan explained the processes behind the creation of social polarization. Third of all, the reality of the social traumas that Volkan emphasizes in Iraq will be discussed. At the same time, we will try to explain how a great part of the Iraqi society was traumatized with examples. Afterward, the political system that emerged in Iraq after 2003 and the social insecurity process it generated will be explained and discussed in the next section. Finally, the problematic legacy and the reflection of the failed transition process in Iraqi society will be discussed in the last section. Studies that embody the insecurity and anxiety feelings of the Iraqi society between 2003 and 2006 will be evaluated.

Political Psychological Reasons of Social Polarization

When do subnational groups worry about each other in a country, and their boundaries become thicker and polarized? Vamık Volkan looks for the answer to this question by using political psychology methods. Volkan sees the sense of belonging to groups such as tribes, religions, sects, and races defined as subnational groups, not as good or bad, but as a normal process. A learns from his family who they and others are when he or she gets around 3-4 years old. Hence, your "large group identity" is formed and you share this identity with people you do not know within the same group in this process. Your large group identity includes common geography, language, religion, sect, rituals, symbols, and memories. Thousands and even millions of people who do not know each other define themselves as "us" under the large group identity. In the process of defining the group, it is also determined who is in and outside the group (Volkan and Harris, 1995, pp. 146-150).

According to Volkan, group identity is not something we consciously focus on the flow of our daily lives. It does not defend that individuals live by constantly thinking about their large group identity symbols and rituals. When a new situation arises and one can feel a threat or anxiety over the large group identity and "regression" occurs. "Regression" is a process without thought at its origin. It is a situation seen in every group. During this process, large group identity members were asked "who we are?" questions themselves, and group-specific identity elements are experienced more intensely. For example, we cannot wake up in the morning with a strong feeling of being Syrian, Vietnamese, or American. On the way to our work, even if we see any symbols on the identity of the group, such as a flag, we may not think of belonging to the group.

Vamık Volkan tries to explain when and why the group identity can be important. Volkan likens the group identity to breathing in ordinary times. People constantly breathe to live, but we do not realize that we breathe unless someone reminds us. People give weight to their breathing only when they are concerned. For example, a person cares more about his breathing when is diagnosed with pneumonia or when he is about to choke due to a fire in a closed environment. The group identity is similar and we remember our belonging to this group only when the group is under an attack. Consequently, we recall the emotional bond we have to the group and how much we are similar to the other members (Volkan, 2005, p. 14).

In the decline period, group members recall the identity of their ancestors

who have experienced similar traumas to unconsciously suppress anxiety (Göka and Göral, 2003, p. 91). Thus, according to Volkan, after the feeling of anxiety, our commitment to our sub-national identity increases and we develop new political attitudes. Some of those; loyalty to the leader increases, exclusion of moderate ones within the group, and increased polarization if you have traumatic memories in the past with neighboring communities with which you interact. At the same time, more focus on the differences against the groups that are defined as "others" and much more emphasis on traditions (Volkan, 2005, p. 87).

Volkan comes up with another concept here. If traumatic events experienced by the large group in the past are passed down from generation to generation, it is called "selected traumas". Hence, one will relive the traumas that are included in the large group identity during the periods when the feeling of anxiety prevails as if they were experienced recently (Volkan, 2014, pp. 24-26). This situation is also called "time collapse". A psychological concept called "a time collapse" describes trauma and pain experienced hundreds of years ago and the feeling of experiencing it as if it had happened recently. An experience explaining this situation is observed in the ritual repetitions of the pain that occurred as a result of the killing of Ali ibn Abi Talib, centuries ago, by Shiite Muslims (Çevik, 2010, p. 63). Volkan determined that the societies that experienced these processes thickened their boundaries with other societies they lived with. As a result, he stated that social polarization has increased.

Failure of the State, Insecurity and Fear in Iraq

There was no necessity for politicization for all ethnic identities in the world. Therefore, why some ethnic groups become politicized has been the subject of research. When the politicization process of ethnic groups is examined, answers are obtained that psychological factors have an important place. Kurubaş (2008) states that the politicization process of ethnic groups started with the triggering of a feeling of fear within the group. When ethnic groups do not feel secure, they embrace their identity and act on the basis of political goals and ethnic identity (Kurubaş, 2008, p. 20).

Fear deactivates the mind, distancing people from being a consciously moving subject. It brings together people who have similar fears. Fear creates a compromise between group members against the same threat. Because history is filled with examples of societies that are dispersed, enslaved, or dissolved in other people because they could not provide their unity and solidarity in time (Çetin, 2012, pp. 48-75). The traumas

experienced by ethnic groups affect the political- psychological situation of the groups by reproducing themselves in cases where a feeling of fear occurs. In short, the feeling of fear triggers the politicization process of sub-identities.

Another question that needs to be asked at this stage is in which societies and when such collective fears emerge. Fear is most often experienced when it is unclear which danger will come from which side, which is called an anarchy environment. Since social traumas are common in countries with a weak state background, ethnic groups are increasingly concerned about life, culture, and economic security in the case of anarchy.

Security was the most important problem in Iraq after the US invasion. A survey on the most important problems of Iraqis was conducted by Oxford Research International in 2004. Respondents pointed out the lack of security in the country as the biggest problem among the 22 options (BBC News, 2004). The survey concluded that the biggest problem after the security problem is unemployment. In another survey, 94 percent of the respondents stated that Iraq has turned into a more insecure country after the invasion in the survey made by Gallup Poll Company after the invasion (Diamond, 2005, p. 26). The dismissal of the security forces of the state in the process of debasing is the main reason for this situation. The existence of militia forces other than the state's security units, concerns about the unreliability of the state's security units, and the traumas caused by the massacres that all groups have suffered in the past, increase the fear of life safety of Iraqis.

It has to be noted that, militia forces gained more importance with the post-invasion security gap. Kurdish groups have militia forces called Peshmerga. Although Peshmerga is officially linked to the central government, in practice it acts independently according to the command chain of the regional Kurdish administration (Diamond, 2005, p. 170). On the other hand, there are other militia groups apart from Peshmerga such as Bedr Brigade affiliated to the Hekim group and the Mahdi army affiliated to the Sadr group in Iraq. Apart from these, there are approximately 20-30 militia forces, whose numbers vary according to the period and are also connected with leading political movements. It is known that militia forces do not act only for security purposes and occasionally take illegal actions (Abdullah, 2011, p. 127). The inadequacy of the central government's security forces and the fact that the militia forces continue their existence more strongly without sticking to the law causes the security dilemma in Iraqis.

Vamık Volkan states that when there are new anxious developments that can be explained through identities, individuals return to their large group identities. When subnational groups in Iraq return to their large group identities, they recall social traumas. This causes them to draw large group boundaries again with thick lines, which leads to polarization. Subnational groups in Iraq such as Shiites, Kurds, Turkmen, and Assyrians have been massacred in Iraq. The losses of the Shiites in the 1991 uprising came to the fore as the most concrete trauma of the Shiite society with the fall of the regime after 2003. Mass graves opened during this period have become the symbol of victimization of the Shiites. Mass graves opened in the south of Iraq led to the renewal of the suffering experienced at that time. The painful feelings of that period were re-experienced in the Shi'a society after the invasion, along with television programs, conferences, and memorials (Haddad, 2011, p. 163). The suffering experienced during the uprising was reduced to the sectarian ground in this process and turned into social trauma for the Shiites.

An air attack was carried out on March 16, 1998, in Halabja and chemical weapons were used. This attack on civilians had a traumatic effect on the Kurds to be exemplary by order of Saddam Hussein. Today, the pain of the period has been kept alive with many museums, sculptures, and academic studies. Even those who survived the attack due to the usage of chemical weapons in the attack on Halabja are experiencing various health problems today. One of them, Aras Abid Ekrem, stated in an interview with Chicago Tribune that he had health problems, but the most permanent wound was psychological traumas caused by the attack (Inanç and Özel, 2006, pp. 99-102). Representing the third largest ethnic group in Iraq, Turkmens were also exposed to massacres. Turkmen, who constitute an important population of Kirkuk, decreased the trust in other groups and especially Kurds due to the massacre they suffered on 14 July 1959. Turkmen blamed the nationalist Kurds, acting together with the Iraqi Communist Party, for this massacre, in which they lost their leading leaders. As Prof. Suphi Saatçi stated, Turkmen do not trust the Kurds because of the traumatic effects of the 1959 Massacre on the Turkmen society (Hasasu, 2014). This issue will be discussed in more detail as a case in the last section.

On the other hand, Assyrians in Iraq were also exposed to violence during the Baath regime as well as in the post-2003 period. As it can be seen in the examples of Kurds and Turkmen, during the Baath regime, Assyrians and other Christian minorities were also considered as parts

of a homogeneous nation since they were forced to assimilation through "Arabization" and "Baathist" policies. Although the Assyrians wanted to continue their existence as one of the ancient indigenous peoples of Iraq, they gradually lost their identities with the rigorous policies of the administration (Georgis, 2017, pp. 77-81). Therefore, the Assyrians saw the US Invasion in 2003 as a chance to revive their identity at first, but the violent events that emerged later turned into a versatile trauma upon them.

These violent events led Assyrians to remember Simile Massacre which is a social trauma among Assyrians that passed from generation to generation. Simile Massacre was a massacre committed by the armed forces of the Kingdom of Iraq led by Bakr Sidqi during a campaign systematically targeting the Assyrians of northern Iraq in August 1933. The phrase is used to describe not only the massacre in Simele but also the killing rampage that took place among 63 Assyrian villages in Northern Iraq (Dohuk and Mosul districts) that led to the deaths of between 600 and 3,000 Assyrians (Zubaida, 2004, pp. 363-382). As a result, it can be observed that the remaining Assyrians and other Christian minorities are still experiencing similar traumas and they have certain mistrust against the central government since the central government cannot totally provide their security in Iraq.

Meanwhile, in the post-2003 period, with the prevalence of the Shi'a elite in the governments, the Sunni's rhetoric and social traumas increased. It has been seen from the discourses on the official television channel of the state, which is a propaganda tool, that the state has lost its neutrality in the direction of the Shiites. The state's official TV channel al-Iraqiya used the term "terrorist" for Sunni warriors but "militia" for Shiite warriors during the civil war (Haddad, 2014, p. 99). Apart from this, the adoption of the approach of "All Sunnis are guilty until proven guilty" in the post-invasion bailing process has damaged the trust link between the state and the Sunni section (Wing, 2013).

Iraq after 2003 and Problems

This section will focus on three issues that explain the "new situation" of Iraq. The first is the invasion process of Iraq. The second is that insecurity becomes the biggest problem in society due to the unpreparedness and depolarization policies in the invasion process. America's decision created the conditions for chaos and a wholly sectarian atmosphere in Iraq (Abdullah, 2006, p. 88). Finally, sharing the new Iraqi Interim Government by sub-state groups and laying the foundations for the

new Iraqi policy.

The decision and process of the US to invade Iraq directly affected the process of restructuring Iraq later. The invasion of Iraq without the support of both the domestic and international public opinion of the US has restricted the post-invasion movement area. Apart from that, the invasion process cannot be said to be successful. In the coming years after the invasion, the US officials stated that the invasion of Iraq without taking sufficient precautions and proper planning in the memoirs and their statements caused anarchy in Iraq. The state's dysfunction and anarchy situation enabled local ethnic leaders to institutionalize as new elites in Iraq. Local leaders, who emphasized the continuity of the national union and were fed from the conflict instead of the national elite prone to cooperation, were more effective in the restructuring process.

The US and Coalition Forces did not have a legal basis for the invasion of Iraq, as well as a viable management plan for post-invasion. This situation had a direct impact on post-invasion Iraq's restructuring process. First of all, Coalition Forces failed at the first stage in maintaining order in Baghdad. In other words, the Coalition Forces could not resolve the post-invasion authority gap. Because it was insufficient about the military capabilities required to provide authority during the invasion process. The negative consequences of the operation with at least 500,000 troops with 173,000 troops and the subsequent reduction of the number of troops to 139,000 could not escape being overshadowed by more important issues in the country (Dodge, 2012, p. 37).

The USA, especially in Vietnam, has an experience that can see the possibility of things not going well in cross-border military operations. The views of Casper Weinberger and Colin Powell on this issue are important and these views are called the Weinberger-Powell Doctrine. Weinberger, who was the Defense Minister during the Ronald Raegan era, explained in six articles under which conditions and how a transnational military operation could be successful (Record, 2007, p. 81). Powell was serving as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during Operation Desert Storm (US military action against Iraq after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait) in 1991. Powell wrote an article for Foreign Affairs in which he cautioned his audience against repeating the mistakes of Vietnam in the former Yugoslavia (Record, 2007, p. 83). The Weinberger-Powell Doctrine covers issues such as the pre-military operation, the operation process, the creation of a new administration in the intervened country, the support of the US public to the military operation, and the US leaving

the country in which it intervened when necessary. Due to his military experience, mainly in Vietnam, US Secretary of State Powell expressed his views before and after the war that the existing military capacity was insufficient to control 25 million Iraqis. Moreover, he did not have the idea that a stable democracy could exist in Iraq after the military operation (Record, 2007, p. 86). In a meeting with President Bush, Powell likened Iraq to a crystal glass and said, "If you strike a blow to Iraq, you will shatter it and anarchy will occur in the country" (Bowen, 2009, p. 3).

George Bush stated that a free country to be created in Iraq, in the heart of the Middle East, will be the turning point for a global democratic revolution (Diamond, 2005, p. 12). In other words, fighting against authoritarian structures such as the Taliban and Saddam Hussein regimes had become a target of the US's National Defense Strategy. The US and Coalition Forces invaded Iraq in March 2003, claiming that weapons of mass destruction exist. The Coalition Forces launched the war on 20 March with the attacks of the air force. Then, on April 9-10, ground forces advanced to Baghdad without encountering any resistance. Thus, the USA gained control over Iraq in a very short time. The USA administration announced on May 1, 2003, that it had gained control in Iraq (Arı, 2004, pp. 607-609). It is important to note that although the US captured Baghdad in a short time, it took time to rule over Western Iraq.

After the US invasion of Iraq, there were problems with the internal security of Iraq. Two factors stand out among the reasons for the internal problems related to the internal security of Iraq. Firstly, after Saddam Hussein left, the dissolution of the security and intelligence units opened up even greater opportunities for those who wanted to create chaos inside. Dismissed officers also became part of the chaos (Thompson, 2015). Secondly, invading Iraq with insufficient military capacity. Insufficient military capacity led to the inability to control Iraqi border regions after the invasion. Armed groups from other countries are one of the important causes of chaos and violence in Iraq after 2003 since the borders cannot be controlled. According to Abdullah, the fact that the borders were uncontrolled led to the fact that all states with a secret agenda regarding Iraq, as well as terrorist organizations, transferred arms to Iraq and increased conflicts in Iraq (Abdullah, 2011, p. 99). Another important issue caused by insufficient military capacity is that gang and local militia forces increased their effectiveness in different parts of the country during this period. Such security problems have profoundly affected the socio-psychological state of Iraqis and shaped their post-2003 political tendencies. Due to the absence of the state and

order, local armed organizations that performed the functions of the state, especially security, gained power. Coalition Forces have not been successful in issues such as authority, order, and stability that they had to build before a democratic system in Iraq due to their insufficient military capacity (Marr, 2012, pp. 260-263).

The fact that the invasion is against international law has had a direct impact on the US's policies and process of establishing order in Iraq. In this process, the USA needed the support of the United Nations (UN) again to get out of the invasion situation, overcome the difficulties in Iraq, and regain international support. The road map drawn by the UN is built on creating a temporary administration and transferring sovereignty to Iraqis without building a healthy order and stable environment in Iraq (Allawi, 2007, pp. 105-106). The US administration, without establishing an institutional state structure and improving structural problems in Iraq, has attempted to organize the political process within the framework of primary identities and handed over the political institution to Iraqi politicians prone to conflict. This situation led to negative consequences in terms of the unity and political stability of the country in a short time.

Coalitional Provisional Authority was created to ensure the transition process. American diplomat Paul Bremer was appointed as the head of the Provisional Coalition Administration. Bremer made important moves to determine Iraqi politics in the new process. The first one is the process of the removal of former Baathist members of the Baath Party from their duties, called "De-Ba'athification", and then the Interim Governing Council was created under the Coalitional Provisional Authority. The de-Ba'athification Commission set to work eliminating the jobs of 30,000 to 50,000 people (Abdullah, 2006, p. 98). As a result of the removal, the central state bureaucracy during the Ba'ath era was completely liquidated together with law enforcement officers in Iraq. This practice led to the formation of a security vacuum in Iraq and the importance of militia forces. During the appointment of Temporary Council members within the framework of Bremer's other activity, as mentioned above, their ethnic, religious, and sectarian identities were taken into account. Accordingly, the 25-person council consisted of 13 Shiite, 5 Sunni, 5 Kurdish, 1 Turkmen, and 1 Christian (Assyrian) member. The profile of the new management members has shown that Iraqi politics will be shaped by ethnic and secterian identities (Trip, 2007, p. 284).

The religious leader Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, whose name is considered important in Iraq, wanted the constitution to be made by the Iraqis, not

the USA (Cole, 2006, pp. 10-11). After the Interim Governing Council, on January 30, 2005, a provisional assembly was elected to establish the constitution. In this election, Iraqis gave their votes to ethnic parties. Therefore, the constitutional negotiations proceeded in this line. However, the Iraqi Constitution was not prepared after long negotiations. The Constitution in Iraq was prepared in a few weeks in 2005 and presented to the public for approval. For comparison, the constitutional negotiations in Tunisia recently took two years. The negotiations that started in Iraq in May 2005 ended in August and were presented to the referendum. The US administration assumed that sections that were missing in the constitution would complete new legislation over time. However, ethnic parties with a lack of negotiation experience in compromise could not complete the missing parts in the constitution (Musing on Iraq, 2014). As a result of the suspect counts, the constitution was approved and went to the election again to determine the Iraqi administration. As a result of the election, the parties representing sub-national identities received 92 percent of the total votes (Abdullah, 2006, p. 111). With these results, it was observed that polarization increased in society. The transition process after the Saddam regime in Iraq was not very healthy. As a result of this process, ethnic parties fed from the conflict dominated Iraqi politics and there was not a strong constitution to stop them.

Lack of Confidence in Iraq and Its Reflection on Political Behavior

The fall of Saddam Hussein's regime led to dramatic changes in Iraq, and politics, as well as elections, came back to the lives of Iraqis after many years of authoritarian Baathist regime. Nevertheless, it did not take so long for the social traumas to be remembered, and months after the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime, insecurity had become a primary concern for many Iraqis (Fontan, 2007, p. 217). As a consequence, we aim to focus on the polls and elections that were held between 2003 and 2005 to have a deeper understanding of the lack of confidence among different groups and its reflection on political behavior in Iraq. However, first of all, interviews with Iraqi Turkmens will be mentioned to show the link between traumas and insecurity.

Vamık Volkan stated that past traumas have revealed the feeling of insecurity. Turkmens are one of the communities subjected to the massacre in Iraq. Tunahan Hazır has researched the origins and the details of the 1959 massacre using the oral history method. He has conducted in-depth interviews with ten people that witnessed the massacre and he has presented this data on the trauma caused by the massacre in his

work (Hazır, 2020). In the study, the witnesses were asked about the transfer of memories of the massacre from generation to generation and all of the witnesses stated that the process and feelings of the massacre were passed on to the next generations (Hazır, 2020, pp. 78-82). Another question was asked whether there was a feeling of distrust towards the Kurds because of the massacre. All of the witnesses expressed a feeling of insecurity (Hazır, 2020, pp. 76-78). In this sense, as Volkan has stated, it is also seen in the Turkmen example that there is a link between trauma and insecurity.

The remnants of the Baathist regime were alive in 2003-2004, and strong polarization showed itself quickly, due to xenophobia and existing demagogues in the society. As Inglehart et al. (2006) underlined, existential insecurity is permeable to xenophobia and strong-in group solidarity (Inglehart, Moaddel and Tessler, 2006, p. 495). As a result, mass fears which are directly linked to strong-in group solidarity led to polarization and then to insecurity in Iraq. According to a survey that was conducted in 2004 by World Values Surveys, the Iraqi public showed higher levels of intolerance of foreigners than any other 80 societies that have been part of the survey (Inglehart et al., 2006, p. 496).

The polarization and negative sentiments among groups affected political behavior in Iraq as well as parliamentary elections in January 2005 which were held to create an assembly to write a new constitution. Strong-in group solidarity was manifested by high levels of national pride as well as extremely high levels of solidarity with one's ethnic group within Iraq as Inglehart et al. underlined (Inglehart et al., 2006, p. 496). Consequently, the elections showed the levels of polarization and distrust among groups, and low turnout amongst Sunni Arabs threatened the legitimacy of the elections, with voter turnout as low as 2% in Al Anbar Governorate (Lemieux, 2011, pp. 32-52). At the same time, parliamentary elections' legitimacy affected by violence as well since more than 100 armed attacks on polling places took place. These attacks resulted in 44 deaths and insecurity became the top issue in Iraq and led to politics based on ethnic parties (Lemieux, 2011, pp. 32-52). In order to understand the whole situation more deeply, we believe that it is a necessity to look at the polls that were conducted after the January 2005 elections.

There were two detailed surveys which were conducted by International Republican Institute after the January 2005 elections and before the December 2005 elections in Iraq. The first survey was conducted from

April 10 – April 20, 2005, with 2,705 valid interviewees in 15 of 18 governorates, excluding Dohuk, Ramadi, and Mosul for security reasons (International Republican Institute, 2005(a)). Interviewees were asked a variety of questions related to economic, social, and political matters in Iraq. One of these questions was related to Iraq's future direction and %52 of the respondents saw insecurity and violence as the main reasons for Iraq to have a wrong future (International Republican Institute (a), 2005).

Another question in this survey was related to identities and interviewees were asked whether their ethnic group, their tribe, their religion, or their country strongly identify them. According to survey results, %51 of Iraqi Arabs responded that their country strongly identifies themselves (International Republican Institute, 2005(a)). Nevertheless, the results showed that Iraqi Kurds had different perceptions compared to Iraqi Arabs. Iraqi Kurds believed that their ethnic group and their tribe strongly identify them and almost %47 of them responded to the survey in this way (International Republican Institute, 2005(a)).

The second survey was conducted from November 1 – November 11, 2005, with 2,725 valid interviewees in 17 of 18 governorates, excluding Al Anbar / Ramadi for security reasons (International Republican Institute, 2005(a)). Hence, this survey was relatively more representative compared to the previous one that was conducted in April 2005 since it excluded major governorates of Dohuk and Mosul in Northern Iraq. The structure of the survey was similar to the previous one and interviewees were asked a variety of questions related to economic, social, and political matters in Iraq. Nevertheless, this time the answers of the respondents were distributed according to their geographical locations. As a matter of fact, this survey was able to show the perceptions more clearly compared to the one in April 2005.

The same question which was related to the future direction of Iraq was again asked the interviewees in this survey. According to survey results, %79 of the respondents that were located in Northern Iraq (Kurdish populated areas) believe that Iraq was going in the right direction and at the same time, %66 of the respondents that were located in Southern Iraq (Shi'a Arab populated areas) gave a same positive response to the question (International Republican Institute, 2005(b)). However, the perceptions of the respondents that were located in Central Iraq (Sunni Arab populated areas) were quite different.

According to survey results, %55 of respondents that were located in Central Iraq said that Iraq was going in the wrong direction and in

addition to this, %80 of respondents who were Sunni Arabs that were located in Northern Iraq responded the same answer (International Republican Institute, 2005(b)). Hence, these results show us that there were clear differences in the perceptions among different groups in Iraq, and in fact, this was an indicator of polarization in the society. In addition to this question, interviewees were asked about the main issues in Iraq which had an impact on their daily lives in Iraq. According to survey results, %55 respondents mentioned insecurity as their main concern which affected their daily lives in Iraq (International Republican Institute, 2005(b)). This was followed by unemployment and high prices/ low wages as the other issues that had an impact on respondents' daily lives in Iraq.

Hence, these responses show that insecurity increased from April 2005 until November 2005 and it started to have more impact on the daily lives of Iraqis. Furthermore, interviewees were asked whether the new constitution represents them or not. The results were varied but some indicators showed that representation was geographically uneven distributed. As an example, %46 interviewees in Salahaddin Governorate responded that the new constitution represents the will of only certain ethnic and religious groups whereas %85 interviewees in Babil Governorate responded that the new constitution does not represent the will of the Iraqi people at all and %79 interviewees in Ninewa Governorate responded that the new constitution represents the will of only certain ethnic and religious groups (International Republican Institute, 2005(b)).

It has to be noted that, all of these three governorates have a significant Sunni Arab population. However, one can notice that the answers were way different in the governorates which have a significant Shi'a Arab or Kurdish population. As an example, %98 of the respondents in Erbil Governorate and %74 of the respondents in Basra Governorate said that the new constitution represents the will of the Iraqi people (International Republican Institute, 2005(b)). For that reason, one can notice that the new constitution was not appreciated by all the groups in Iraq and it had led to even more polarization in Iraq. Though Iraqis went to parliamentary elections within a polarized environment and we will analyze the election results of December 2005, below.

The Parliamentary Election in Iraq was held in December 2005 and election results showed clear polarization among groups since ethnic parties won the majority of the seats. Ethnic and sectarian parties dominated the Iraqi

Parliamentary Elections and these parties won 250 of 275 seats in the parliament. United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) won 128 of 275 seats with %41.2 of all votes and UIA received the majority of the votes from Southern Iraq where Shi'a Arabs are populated (Iraq Officials, 2006). On the other hand, the Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan (DPAK) won 53 of 275 of the seats with %21.7 of the all votes and DPAK received the majority of the votes from Northern Iraq where Kurds are populated and the Iraqi Accord Front won 44 of 275 of the seats with %15.1 of the all votes and Iraqi Accord Front received the majority of the votes from Central Iraq where Sunni Arabs are populated (Iraq Officials, 2006).

Conclusion: Lessons from Iraq

The first election in which the current political actors (political parties) were selected was the 2005 election in Iraq. Today, Iraqi youth are not satisfied with the current political structure and they express their dissatisfaction through street demonstrations. Although the current political system has been consolidated since 2005, the people today show that they are not satisfied with this system with street demonstrations. protestors are chanting slogans which are criticizing ethnic and sectarian politics. The fact that the turnout in the Iraqi national elections held in 2018 was below 50 percent is also perceived as a reaction to the current system. For that reason, this study aims to examine the factors that determined voter behavior in 2005.

We have used Vamık Volkan's theoretical works in this study since he focuses on the reasons behind ethnic groups' solidarity. Volkan concludes that when ethnic groups are concerned, they act together. The Invasion of Iraq caused the state to collapse and led anarchy to appear suddenly. It has to be noted that an insecure environment that is developed in the vacuum after an authoritarian government's collapse can trigger conflicts and negatively affect the restructuring of the state. This kind of result has been seen with the collapse of the state in Iraq. The new actors who made politics with confidence in ethnic, secterian and tribal ties became the new actors of the transition to democracy. These actors were giving priority to building their own communities instead of healthily rebuilding the state and they led to a competition among ethnic and sectarian groups in the transition process, which worried Iraqi people.

In the last part of the study, data on the causes and existence of social polarization are presented. Tunahan Hazır examined the effect of the traumatic social memories of Iraqi Turkmens on their current political attitudes by interview method. In his study, it was concluded that Iraqi

Turkmens did not trust the rest of the society, especially the Kurds. The result obtained in this study is thought to be generalizable to the entire Iraqi society. Because, as explained in the study, all communities in Iraq have traumatic memories. The effects of this situation on post-occupation Iraqi politics are also important. The biggest reason for these actors to gain power in society is the feeling of fear that occurs in society. As we have discussed above, it was observed that there was a sense of fear and insecurity in the society in the polls that were conducted before 2005. In the study of Inglehart, Moaddel and Tessler, it has been revealed by numbers that in-group solidarity is high in Iraqi society and that outsiders are not tolerated.

Two surveys conducted by the International Republican Institute were used in the study. In these studies, the political thoughts of Iraqi society were tried to be obtained. In both surveys, questions were asked in the context of what the society saw as a problem and their perspectives on the new constitution. In the study, the differences in political thoughts between Iraqi cities were revealed. The differences in the approach of Iraqis from different identities to the events were analyzed with the survey results. Accordingly, the sharp polarization in the society was tried to be shown with the survey results.

Finally, the results of the December 2005 national elections were evaluated in the study. In the election, the lists representing a certain social identity, instead of the lists that made politics with national identity, were put forward with numbers that were supported by the society. Vamık Volkan's theory, the post-2003 political conjuncture in Iraq, and the results obtained in social studies provide us the following conclusion regarding the reason behind the voter behavior; Iraqi citizens did not make their choices considering the election programs of the parties in the election processes instead Iraqis voted their fears in the elections.

Declaration

In all processes of the article, TESAM's research and publication ethics principles were followed.

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