Imagining the Iraqi National Identity Before and After the US Invasion of 2003
Perception of the Sunni-Arab ethnicity

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Upphovsrätt

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Preface

Five years at the university is coming to an end. This master thesis in politics is my last work for achieving a masters degree.

I would like to thank everyone who helped me produce this study. First, I would like to thank the informants in this study. Your stories are a ground pillar. Secondly, I would like to thank everyone who helped be encounter the informants. Finding informants was hard and nearly made me change the thesis’s aim, but because of assistance from helpful persons the study was made possible. Thirdly, I would like to thank my tutor Khalid Khayati for your helpful guidance. Fourthly, I would like to thank everyone who read my thesis before publication and helped be improve the language and make the thesis easier to read and understand. Lastly, I would like to thank all my closed ones for your support. Thank you all!

I hope that the reading of this thesis will be interesting and educating.

May Iraq find its peace.
Abstract

This masters thesis analyses how Iraqi national identity is constructed before and after 2003. It explores what relation the national identity has to Sunni-Arab ethnicity.

The study is qualitative and uses social constructivism as a methodological outline. Qualitative interviews are done with six Iraqi-Arab-Sunnis living in Sweden. Diaspora is not an analytical scope. The theoretical framework consists of Benedict Anderson’s theory about nations and nationalism where imagined communities is a key concept. Furthermore, Thomas Hylland Eriksen’s theory about ethnicity and nationalism where social identification is a central concept.

Drawn conclusions are that Iraqi nationalism, partly constructed by Sunni hegemony, is the main identification and what the community is imagined from. Sunni ethnicity is mostly rejected, and a Sunni community barely exists. Unlike previous research which argues that Sunnis have redefined themselves through Sunni ethnicity. Iraqi nationalism is constructed against the anomaly which is other nations Iran and the US. It is also constructed by idealizing and remembering the past from a nationalistic perspective. It is constructed as kinship, as equal and with pride. However, the Sunni hegemony implies that Iraqi nationalism is not equal but privileges Sunni ethnicity. Sunni ethnicity is barely visible, but mostly post 2003 through victimhood. Sunni ethnicity was under communicated before 2003 but is over communicated after 2003, especially amongst national institutions. An exclusion of Sunni ethnicity occurs amongst national institutions post 2003.

**Keywords:** Iraq 2003, Nationalism, Sunni, Ethnicity, Construction.

**Wordcount:** 24 981
The toppling of Saddam Hussein’s statue in Firdson Square, Baghdad, Iraq 2003. Photography by Gilles Bassignac.¹

-But do you know what a nation is? Said John Wyse.

-A nation? said Bloom. That's when the same people live in the same place.

-Damn, Ned said and grinned, then I am a nation because I have lived in the same place for five years now.

Everyone laughed at Bloom, and then he tried to wriggle:

-Or living in different places.

-It suits me, Joe said.

- James Joyce²

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Table of Content

1. Introduction ............................................................................................................................................. 1
   1.1 Aim and Research Questions .................................................................................................................. 3
   1.2 Limitations ............................................................................................................................................... 3
   1.3 Previous Research .................................................................................................................................... 4
   1.8 Disposition .............................................................................................................................................. 8

2. Methodological Framework ...................................................................................................................... 10
   2.1 A Qualitative Research .......................................................................................................................... 10
   2.2 Social Constructivism as a Methodological Outline .............................................................................. 10
   2.2 Presenting the Sunni-Arab Informants .................................................................................................. 11
   2.3 Method of Collecting Data: Interviews .................................................................................................. 12
   2.4 Ethical Discussion .................................................................................................................................... 14
   2.5 Method of Analysing Data: Thematic analysis .................................................................................... 15
   2.6 Diasporic Informants ............................................................................................................................. 17
   2.7 The Relevancy of the Theoretical Approaches .................................................................................... 18

3. Theoretical Framework ............................................................................................................................... 20
   3.1 Introducing Nationalism and Ethnicity ................................................................................................. 20
   3.2 Nations and Nationalism as Imagined Communities ............................................................................ 21
   3.3 Ethnicity and Nationalism as Social Identifications ............................................................................ 23
   3.4 Linking Imagined Communities and Social Identifications ................................................................. 25

4. From the Birth of the Modern Iraqi Nation to the Fall of the Baath Regime: Sunni Hegemony ... 27
   4.1 Colonial State .......................................................................................................................................... 27
   4.2 Independence .......................................................................................................................................... 28
   4.3 Iran and Kuwait ....................................................................................................................................... 29
   4.4 The Beginning of the Shift ....................................................................................................................... 29
   4.5 US-invasion of Iraq ................................................................................................................................. 30
   4.6 New State and Civil War .......................................................................................................................... 31
   4.7 Continued Uncertainty ............................................................................................................................. 32

5. Analysis of the Sunni information’s statements: Iraqi national identity ..................................................... 34
   5.1 Perception and Imagination About the National Identity in Relation to the Anomaly ............. 35
   5.2 National Institutions and How They are Perceived ............................................................................. 50
   5.3 Idealizing the Past and Imagining the Present .................................................................................... 64

6. Conclusions .................................................................................................................................................. 69

References ...................................................................................................................................................... 72

Books ............................................................................................................................................................ 72
Journal Articles .......................................................................................................................... 73
Online Sources .......................................................................................................................... 74
1. Introduction

When and why a nation is constructed is a prolonged and complicated discussion. The same goes for what role nationalism and ethnicity has for the nation and its population. Benedict Anderson considers the nation as an expression of an imagined community. The birth of the modern Iraqi nation traces back to the end of the Ottoman empire during World War 1 by the hands of the United Kingdom (UK) and local Arab rebels. Since then, the modern Iraqi nation has during various times communicated diverse social identifications such as nationalism and ethnicity which influences how the imagined community is expressed. However, a Sunni hegemonical construction of the imagined community Iraq has stayed since the birth of the nation until the United States (US) invasion of Iraq in 2003.

The invasion traces back to 1990 when Iraq occupied Kuwait because of an oil and economy strife. The US responded by pushing Iraq out from Kuwait. Afterwards sanctions were imposed against Iraq which took its toll on Iraq’s economy. The US wanted to topple Saddam Hussein. Information that weapons of mass destruction existed in Iraq led to UN investigation. The task was not easily implemented because Iraq did not fully cooperate. Yet in the end the inspection was fulfilled. The UN inspectors concluded that Iraq was free from weapons of mass destruction. The US was however still sceptic. In 2000 the George W. Bush administration came in power, who had long searched to overthrow Saddam. In 2003 the US gave Saddam an ultimatum to leave Iraq which Saddam refused. Consequently, a US led force (mainly supported by the UK) occupied Iraq. The Baath regime (Saddam was the leader of the Baath party) fell and a new ruling coalition was installed by the US. Saddam got captured and executed. Iraq erupted into civil war. Iraqi institutions such as schools, hospitals and government buildings were ransacked and burned. The war had in 2004 left 30 000-100 000

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6 Tripp (2007), pp. 250ff  
7 Tripp (2007), p. 267  
8 Tripp (2007), pp. 268f  
9 Tripp (2007), pp. 272f  
10 Tripp (2007), pp. 270f  
11 Tripp (2007), pp. 274f  
12 Tripp (2007), pp. 282ff  
13 Tripp (2007), pp. 313f  
14 Tripp (2007), pp. 247f  
15 Tripp (2007), pp. 274f
dead Iraqis.\textsuperscript{16} Exiled leaders during Saddam’s regime returned to Iraq. The state who was previously influenced by the Sunni hegemony shifted into Shi’a taking the power. Shi’a actors saw their chance to fill the power gap after the US invasion.\textsuperscript{17} US but also Iran assisted Shi’a actors in taking power. A de-Baathification process started which meant that the army got dispended and ex Baath members were banned from holding higher official positions. This resulted in 300 000 unemployed armed youth and 30 000 well experiences administrators losing their jobs.\textsuperscript{18} Since the US invasion in 2003, Iraq has been in a chaotic situation. High corruption, poverty, low democracy, low freedom of speech, wars, conflicts and the rise and fall of Daesh. Iraq is still searching to stabilize its nation.

The US invasion of 2003 is a critical event and changed the construction of social identifications. One major change was the fall of Sunni hegemonical control over the state.\textsuperscript{19} How has Iraqis that identify with Sunni ethnicity perceived the change and their identification before and after 2003? There is an understanding in previous research that Sunnis have redefined themselves through ethnic identification and deserted the national identification.\textsuperscript{20} This thesis questions if the change of identification has occurred in such manner. The thesis explores the Iraqi case and how Sunnis perceive their social identification and imagined community before and after 2003. Are there changes in the perception and construction of Iraqi nationalism and Sunni ethnicity before and after 2003? Have national institutions changed since 2003? have ethnic symbols become more common? How do the informants interpret their history?

Why is the Iraqi case important and deserves academic attention? Because events in Iraq (more broadly the Middle East) have destroyed millions of lives, led into poverty, suffering, refugee crisis, war and death. Events that have also affected non-Middle Eastern countries such as throwing “western” political agendas into a focus on refugees, nationalism and ethnicity. More knowledge is needed regarding the perception of Iraqi nationalism and Sunni ethnicity to better understand the Iraqi case. For now, there is a lack of research.

\begin{enumerate}
\item Tripp (2007), pp. 294ff
\item Tripp (2007), pp. 281ff
\item Haddad (2016-Jan-07)
\end{enumerate}
1.1 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is to analyse how the Iraqi nation has been and is imagined among the Sunni-Arab ethnicity before and after the US invasion of 2003. More specifically, this study intends to know if there is a shift of identification among the group and if so, what are the main causes of such an alteration or continuity. Additionally, this thesis proposes to relate national identity and national imaginations among the Sunni-Arab ethnicity to the changes in power relations and ethnic dominance. The perception and imagination of Sunni-Arab ethnicity about the belonging to and imagination about the Iraqi nation will be depicted by means of semi-structured qualitative interviews.

Perceiving for a Sunni-Arab perspective, following questions will be responded by the thesis:

- What are the central features of the Iraqi national identity before the US invasion of 2003?
- What are the central features of the Iraqi national identity after the US invasion of 2003?
- How can we discuss the juxtaposition between the Iraqi national identity the Sunni-Arab ethnicity?
- How can we relate the shift of the imaginations on national Iraqi identity to the shift of power relations and ethnic dominance taking the modern history of Iraq into consideration and specially the historical part after the US invasion of 2003?

1.2 Limitations

In this subchapter the limitations of this thesis are presented. The limitations state what approach and methodological choices are done that impacts what this thesis is able and not able to study.

In this thesis a social constructivist approach is taken. Therefore, social constructive theories about the nation, nationalism and ethnicity by Benedict Anderson and Thomas Hylland Eriksen are used to understand why and how the Sunni informants perceive their identification and thus how Iraqi nationalism and Sunni ethnicity is constructed. The analysis of the construction wonders against which anomaly identification and community are constructed and the meaning of the construction. Furthermore, how the informants perceive national institutions, but also how the past is perceived and glorified. The construction of nationalism and ethnicity is analysed because it enables me to answer mine research questions. Nationalism in this thesis is
not understood as an ideology but as a national identity, as kinship (based on Andersons theory). A different theoretical approach would result in different understanding of Iraqi nationalism and Sunni ethnicity.

Choosing Iraqi-Arab-Sunnis as informants in individual interviews which produce the data for this thesis is another limitation. This means that the perception of the Sunni identification is demarcated to the informants. It is possible that the analysis would be different with other Sunni informants. It also means that the analysis is done from a Sunni perspective. Furthermore, it states that an Iraqi Shi’a or an Iraqi Kurd perspective which would also be interesting are excluded. The reason for the limitation is to sharpen the aim and to easier analyse without a wide and non-guiding aim. But also, because the Sunni perspective is extra interesting since it explores how Sunnis perceive their identification after the fall of the Sunni hegemony. What is Sunni and Shi’a? They are different branches of Islam. All informants live in Sweden. The informants fled Iraq around 2006-2015. This means that the informants are diaspora. A subchapter explaining the meaning and impact of diasporic informants can be found under chapter Methodological Framework. Diaspora does not serve as an analytical tool.

The focus on 2003 is chosen because, as already shown, changes in Iraq related to Iraqi nationalism and Sunni ethnicity occurred. Before 2003 implies the time which the informants have lived and witnessed until 2003, thus mainly the period of the Baath regime 1968–2003. After 2003 focuses on 2003 until 2019.

I will strive for fullest possible objectivity. But I believe that no one can ever be totally objective because my understanding is partly based on my knowledge and knowledge around me. I am influenced by “obvious” truths and norms that exist in society.

1.3 Previous Research

This subchapter presents what previous research has concluded regarding the subject of the thesis. Previous research includes three sub-subchapters. First sub-subchapter Nationalism and Ethnicity Before 2003 discusses Iraqi nationalism and Sunni ethnicity pre 2003. The sub-subchapter Nationalism and Ethnicity Before 2003 discusses the same as the first but after 2003. Last sub-subchapter Concluding Reflections reflects previous research.

There is a vast research field exploring Iraq pre- and post 2003. Yet a big field does not equal all knowledge collected. Previous research is collected through different academic journals and academic search engines. Words such as Sunni, Iraq, identity, national, post 2003, pre 2003,
2003, nation, nationalism, state, inclusion, exclusion and sectarianism have been searched for. It is hard to determine when the collection is saturated. Fullness of previous research has been concluded by articles slowly being harder to find and mostly showing same findings as already read research.

Nationalism and Ethnicity Before 2003

Haddad states that the Sunni population was included (while Shi’as were excluded) and favoured by the Baath regime. During the period of the Baath, Iraqi nationalism was mainly constructed by Sunni ethnicity. Sunni ethnicity became the norm, it was “invisible” and “objective”. National truths were based on Sunni ethnicity.²¹ Haddad compares Sunni identity to Franz Fanon’s “whiteness” in race relations. “Whiteness” was “universal” and “objective”, “whiteness” became the norm”. Through colonialism “whiteness” came in touch with other social identifications and defined them as sectarian, subjective and ethnic etcetera. The empowerment of “whiteness” turned a blind eye to “whiteness” also being subjective. Similar empowerment occurred in Iraq regarding Sunni ethnicity.²² Adeed Dawisha writes that Saddam ruled in the name of Arab nationalism but unlike previous regimes Saddam’s politics strongly boosted sectarian divide of Shi’as and Sunnis by favouriting Sunnis.²³ Al-Qarawee argues as Haddad and Dawisha that during Baath regime the Sunni hegemony increased and formed Iraqi nationalism.²⁴ Charles Tripp agrees, yet states that only few Sunnis were directly privileged, it was Saddam’s network rather than all.²⁵ Jochen Hippler discuses alike Tripp and concludes that Sunnis were also excluded, yet less than Shi’as.²⁶ According to Dawisha, Saddam did not have a Sunni agenda and did not speak about Sunni ethnicity openly. However, the exclusion still occurred.²⁷

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²² Haddad (2014), pp. 148f
²⁵ Tripp (2007), p. 318
²⁷ Dawisha (2009), p. 208
Nationalism and Ethnicity After 2003

Al-Qarawee writes that in 2003 the Sunni hegemony fell and thus also Iraqi nationalism, the ground pillar for a nation state.28 As a result, as Haddad states, post 2003 an exclusion of Sunni population begun.29 Al-Qarawee agrees but also points out that it does not mean that Shi‘as and (Kurds) are fully privileged.30 According to Haddad, Iraqi nationalism and the strong central state (Baath) was replaced by ethnic, religious, sectarian identifications boosting their community and trying to fill the gap Iraqi nationalism.31 The thoughts of a “common”/”objective” (Sunni based) identification disappeared and certain “subjective” ethnic politics have been institutionalized since 2003.32 The Sunni identification (previously invisible and national) was reconstructed through sectarian ideas.33 Missy Ryan also concludes that Sunni identifications is constructed by ethno-sectarian ideas. 34 According to Tripp Sunnis redefined themselves as victims through Islamist discourses.35 Ryan writes that people vote for parties that represent their issue and can protect them from a imagined threat.36 According to Haddad a common misunderstanding is that sectarianism did not exist pre 2003. However, sectarianism did exist and was mostly practiced by Shi‘as. Because the Iraq nationalism excluded Shi‘a ethnicity and therefore sectarian Shi‘a identification rose.37 Sunnis however lacked visible ethnic (not “common” as the nationalism) institutions, imagination, political consciousness pre 2003 since Sunni identification was “whiteness”.38 Lack of Sunni ethnicity (not “common”) resulted in Sunnis having harder to unite and mobilize post 2003.39

Sectarianism has been empowered by existential fear40, cycle of violence and revenge. Eleven years of violence has forced Iraqis to understand themselves in terms of sectarianism for self-interest and survival reasons.41 Haddad states that Sunnis were more critical against Saddam before 2003 than after because their situation has worsened post 2003.42 The increased

28 Al-Qarawee (2010) pp. 34ff
29 Haddad (2016-Jan-07)
30 Al-Qarawee (2010), pp. 39ff
31 Haddad (2014-Aug-05), p. 6
32 Haddad (2014), pp. 152f
33 Haddad (2014), p. 145
36 Ryan (2010), 65ff
37 Haddad (2014), p. 146
38 Haddad (2014), p. 150
39 Haddad (2014), pp. 147ff
40 Haddad (2014), pp. 168f
41 Haddad (2014), p. 150
42 Haddad (2014), p. 147
sectarianism post 2003 is partly because of failed nation-building and enforced notions of what national identity is by Baath regime. Liora Lukitz argues alike Haddad that during Saddam’s regime no actual working common nationality was constructed, instead sub-national loyalties were stronger.

According to Haddad Sunnis interpret themselves as excluded by a post 2003 Shi’a state which creates an imagination of victimhood amongst Sunnis. The victimhood is legitimate but also exaggerated. The exclusion has created a dilemma amongst Sunni whether to reject the state or to participate to change it. An example of rejection is the boycott of constitutional election 2005 that Tripp mentions. Hippler states that the nation state and national identification is based upon views on the state, state rejection means rejection of the nation state and national identification. According to Haddad Sunnis interpret post 2003 order as an US and Iranian occupation. Prejudice between Sunnis and Shi’as increased after 2003. Sunnis view Shi’as as related to the occupation, fall of state, post 2003 and Iran while Shi’as see Sunnis as Islamists, terrorists and Baathists.

Haddad writes that in the beginning of post 2003 Sunnis did identify themselves as sectarian because sectarianism was viewed was forbidden by Saddam’s regime. However, around 2014 acceptance grew. There were still critics, but many accepted the language of sectarianism amongst Sunnis. In the parliament election 2014 Sunni politicians ran on Sunni victimhood and sectarianism. Sunnis started framing their imams and House of Prophet as group-defying symbols. Poems dedicated to historical Sunni people was made and Facebook groups were named after them. Banners in the streets that express Sunni ethnicity showed up. Unlike prior 2003 when Sunni ethnicity “did not exist”, after 2003 Sunni ethnicity has become a specific identification.

Concluding Reflections

Previous research has an alike focus as this thesis. Yet has often other focal points. Focus is on democratization and state-building. Nationalism and ethnicity are related to democracy and
state-building. For example, the rise of conflict and polarization between Sunnis and Shi’as decreased the chances for building an inclusive democracy. Furthermore, alienation from a national identification and increased Sunni and Shi’a imagination influences the desires to build a federal Iraq rather than keeping a strong central state according to al-Qarawee. The perception of nationalism and ethnicity is important and should be explored by a thesis specifically demarcated to do so. Research that focuses on Sunni ethnicity and Iraqi nationalism pre- and post 2003 exist but in lesser degree, Haddad has written several articles and Ryan, Dawisha and Tripp. Research often states that the general presentation of Sunni ethnicity and Iraqi nationalism does not fit all and there are internal splits amongst Sunnis and Shi’as. Through in-depth interviews differences can be highlighted.

The concept sectarianism is commonly used in research, especially by Haddad who claims that sectarianism is falsely understood as sect related violence and hate or empowerment of self-centric actors. Sectarianism should rather be defined as anything sect related. At the same time Haddad states that the use of the them often confused rather than explains. I do not use the concept because it does not make the construction of identification and communities clearer. Instead I believe that ethnicity (and nationalism) should be used. Because I believe that Sunni is a form of social identification called ethnicity but also influences and is influenced by Iraqi nationalism. One reason why I define Sunni as an ethnicity is because Eriksen’s theory about ethnicity is a helpful analytical tool. Secondly, because the theory fits the Sunni situation, it should mean that Sunni can be classified as an ethnicity according to Eriksen’s theory. Sectarianism also gives a rather negative and narrow understanding of Sunnis in Iraq. Haddad states that sectarianism is not only evil sect violence yet connecting Sunni with sectarianism over and over can construct Sunnism as evil sectarianism.

1.8 Disposition

This subchapter states how the thesis is disposed. The rest of this thesis consists of five chapters. First chapter Methodological Framework displays what methods and approaches are used to conduct the study and what consequences they have. Second chapter Theoretical Framework presents what theory is used to understand the case Iraq 2003 thus theories about nationalism and ethnicity. Third chapter From the Birth of the Modern Iraqi Nation to the Fall of the Baath

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52 Al-Qarawee (2010)
54 Haddad (2016-Jan-07)
55 Haddad (2014), p. 146
56 Haddad (2014), p. 146
Regime: Sunni Hegemony discusses nationalism, ethnicity and regimes in Iraq from early 1990s to post 2003. Chapter Analysis presents my analyse of the informant’s stories. The analysis is divided into three themes. The research questions and other conclusions are presented in Conclusions. There is a reference list in the end.
2. Methodological Framework

In this chapter the methodological process of this thesis is discussed. What methodological choices have been done and why? There are eight subchapters in this chapter. Firstly, A Qualitative Research shortly presenting what qualitative research means for this study. Secondly, Social Constructivism as a Methodological Outline explains the meaning of the adopted social constructivist approach. Moving on, Presenting the Sunni-Arab Informants presents the informants and how they were contacted. Afterwards, Method of Collecting Data: Interviews is presented which discusses the method of collecting data. Moving on, Ethical Discussion where ethical dilemmas regarding sensitivities of the Iraqi case is reflected upon. Afterwards comes Method of Analysing Data: Thematic analysis where the analytical method is discussed. The two last subchapters Diasporic Informants and The Relevancy of the Theoretical Approaches presents two methodological dilemmas.

2.1 A Qualitative Research

This thesis is a qualitative research. Qualitative approach means that this study focuses on in-depth rather than generalizing knowledge. Alan Bryman states that there is no detailed definition of qualitative research, instead it is rather open. Focus on words instead of numbers (quantitative) is one definition. For my case this means that the goal is not to find how identification is perceived by most Sunnis. The goal is to deeply analyse the perception.

2.2 Social Constructivism as a Methodological Outline

What does it mean that this thesis is based on social constructivism? Tom Andrews writes that Vivien Burr, Thomas Luckman and Peter L. Berger play a crucial role in developing social constructivism. Andrews states that there are several variants of constructivism. The approach in this thesis is a general social constructivist approach. Social implies that reality is constructed trough social processes not individually. General implies features that according to Andrews all constructivist approaches share. Thus, that an objective reality exists yet humans do not have “clear” connection with the objective reality instead reality is subjectively interpreted. Subjective interpretations produce subjective knowledge of objective reality. Subjective knowledge is formed trough (according to social constructivism) social processes. Truths are influenced by the social context humans live in such as norms. A social constructivist approach

focuses on the subject, the human, and asks what kind of knowledge is constructed and how.\textsuperscript{58} Andrews states that social constructivism is not an ontology since it focuses on how knowledge is constructed and thus it is an epistemology. Yet I would argue that social constructivism is (also) an ontology because it discloses how the world (or social world) is constructed. Alan Bryman states that epistemology concerns questions about how knowledge is defined.\textsuperscript{59} Ontology regards questions about how the world or social world is constituted and how it functions, what is the essence or existence.\textsuperscript{60}

How is social constructivism applied in this thesis? Theoretically by using theories about nationalism and ethnicity that argue in lines with social constructivism that nationalism and ethnicity are constructed by social processes and are not essential or natural. Both Anderson and Eriksen state that nations exist but do not exist naturally. Nations are not historically destined but constructed throughout history. Anderson and Eriksen also state that neither nationalism nor ethnicity is naturally bound to an individual or group. Nationalism and ethnicity are instead constructed and bound to individuals and groups through social constructions. For more about how nations, nationalism and ethnicity is socially constructed see chapter \textit{Theoretical Framework}. Why does social constructivism match the Iraqi case? Because the analysis looks for the construction of nationalism and ethnicity.

Social constructivism is applied methodically by interviewing the human subject to understand nationalism and ethnicity because it is the human subject that constructs knowledge.

\subsection*{2.2 Presenting the Sunni-Arab Informants}

In this subchapter the informants are presented. The informants are the people who I interviewed. Six informants participated in this study, one interview with each. The requirements for the informants were that they are Iraqi-Arab-Sunnis, lived in Iraq pre 2003 and fled/moved from Iraq after 2003. Thus, the informants are diaspora (se discussion in subchapter \textit{Diasporic Informants}). The method of selecting informants was target-oriented, choosing informants based on their relevance for the research questions according to Bryman.\textsuperscript{61}

The informants are (names are anonymised, age and job title are approximate) Ikram, male and age 31, stylist. Samir, male and age 60, engineer. Ziyad, male and age 55, military advisor.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{58} Tom Andrews, "What is Social Constructionism?" in \textit{Grounded Theory Review} Vol. 11 Iss. 1 June (2012) pp. 41ff
\textsuperscript{59} Bryman (2011), pp. 29f
\textsuperscript{60} Bryman (2011), pp. 35f
\textsuperscript{61} Bryman (2011), p. 134
\end{flushleft}
Kadir, male and age 47, social worker. Ruba, female and age 45, librarian. Mahmoud, male age 50, psychologist.

All lived in bigger cities in Iraq. Tripp states that the role of Sunni ethnicity differs in bigger and smaller cities. It could be interesting to analyse the difference, but it is not done in this thesis.

The method of contacting informants was snowball selection. Bryman states that snowball selection is when the researcher contacts one or several relevant persons who helps the researcher encounter other informants. Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann state that there is no specific number of how many informants should be included in a qualitative interview study. To many interviews results in too much data to analyse. To small number of interviews results in not enough data to answer the research questions. The number of informants in this study were manageable in relation to given time and the number of informants resulted in enough data to answer the research questions.

2.3 Method of Collecting Data: Interviews

In this subchapter the method of collection is presented. Qualitative research interview is the method for gathering data. The data is the information/stories/statements given by the informants during the interviews. Kvale and Brinkmann state that qualitative interviews seek to understand how the world and knowledge is constructed from the informants’ perspectives.

All interviews were done during Spring 2019. Three interviews were around 40 to 50 minutes. One was two hours including two minor pauses. Two interviews were done in Swedish, two in English, one in Arabic and one in Arabic and English. The interviews in Arabic had a translator because I do not speak Arabic. The translators knew the informants from before, thus the informants seemed comfortable. Including a translator as a communicator of the informants’ stories can affect the statements because it is the translator communicates the informants’ stories. I do not believe that the translator willingly influences but it could happen unconsciously. Eva Fägerborg that there is a power balance between the interviewer and the informant. There are also different interpretations of same terms. This is something I tough about before and during the interviews, specially when a translator was included.

64 Kvale, Brinkmann (2014), p. 17
65 Eva Fägerborg, "Intervjuer" in Etnologiskt fältarbete (red.) Lars Kaijser, Magnus Öhlander (2011) Lund: Studentlitteratur, pp. 92ff
The interviews were recorded with permission from the informants. One interview was done on the phone because of travel distance. To interview by phone can be a lesser method of interviewing because the body language cannot be seen. Kvale and Brinkmann write that he body language is a port for deeper understanding the informants’ reactions and feelings.66

The interviews had a semi structured guide which implies that the interview questions/guide were/was neither fully spontaneous nor fully prewritten according to Bryman.67 Four themes were made which the interviews circulated around. The themes were based on the research questions, which is a usual method according to Kvale and Brinkmann.68 The themes are Sunni ethnicity, Iraqi nationalism, inclusion-exclusion, comparison between Sunni ethnicity and Iraqi nationalism. All four themes were discussed pre- and post 2003. These themes should not be confused with themes deriving from the thematic analysis (see subchapter Method of Analysing Data: Thematic analysis). After this subchapter, theme/themes will refer to the analytical themes. The themes were open, prewritten closed (backup) questions were also used. Jacobsen states that open themes give informants room to speak/interpret while closed are more controlling.69

Follow up questions were improvised depending on what the informant answered, thus the method of quizzing according to Kvale and Brinkmann70 or mirroring according to Jacobsen71 was used. Other types of commonly used questions were; silence (sometimes a question is not needed to make the informants speak more)72 and summary questions (questions that summarize what the informants recently spoke about, yet carefulness is taken not to put words in the informants’ mouths).73

The quotes presented in this thesis are reversed linguistically because colloquial can be non-educational. However, major carefulness is taken in not changing the meaning of the informants’ statements. Using certain words, expressing in a special way and expressing sounds such as “ah” etcetera can be important for the meaning of the statements according to Fägerborg.74

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66 Kvale, Brinkmann (2014), pp. 131ff
68 Kvale, Brinkmann (2014), p. 174
70 Kvale, Brinkmann (2014), p. 176
71 Jacobsen (1993), pp. 87f
72 Kvale, Brinkmann (2014), p. 177
73 Jacobsen (1993), p. 129
74 Fägerborg (2011), p. 107
2.4 Ethical Discussion

In this thesis an ethical discussion is presented. The informants of this study are protected by ethical guidelines of Swedish humanities and social science. The individual protection requirement grants four ethical safeties.\(^{75}\) Firstly, informants need to be given all relevant information regarding their participation.\(^{76}\) Secondly, informants need to approve their participation. The approval can be taken back during the process of the thesis.\(^{77}\) Thirdly, informants are anonymous.\(^{78}\) Fourthly, interviews and data are only used for research reasons.\(^{79}\) The guidelines are followed to fullest possible extent.

Another ethical dilemma is that the subject of the thesis is sensitive for informants. A seventh interview was planned but the informant disproved because the subject was too personal. One informant mentioned, as can be seen in the quotes below, the sensitiveness of the subject. It was personal and brings back trauma as can be seen in the quote below.

*If we think about the situation [post 2003] all the time we only feel sad about what has happened. We try not to think about it... Now when I talk with you I remember everything that happened during this time and it affects us very much. I feel depressed when I remember. I don’t want to remember. I don’t want my children to feel it. [...] It is catastrophic, it affects. We feel sad, very sad about what has happened. To think about it usually... no no.*

- Ruba

The same interview was stopped after the informant expressed the toughness of talking about the subject. Jan Krag Jacobsen writes that it is usual for interviews to include sensitive themes. Then it is important that I, the interviewer, do not seem nervous so it reflects. It is impossible to fully ensure no anxiety amongst the informants instead the researcher should focus on trying to bring the informants back from anxiety. Jacobsen states that ethical dilemmas always exist and should exist because it shows that the interviewer tried to collect necessary data and not only asked easy and flat questions.\(^{80}\) To further ensure that informants are affected to least possible extent, four actions were taken. Firstly, before the interview started, I tried to

\(^{76}\) Vetenskapsrådet (2002), p. 7
\(^{77}\) Vetenskapsrådet (2002), pp. 9f
\(^{78}\) Vetenskapsrådet (2002), p. 12
\(^{79}\) Vetenskapsrådet (2002), p. 14
\(^{80}\) Jacobsen (1993), pp. 92ff
familiarize” break the ice” by easily conversing with the informant about other subjects and then shifting to explaining (already done when informants contacted but to a lesser extent) the purpose of the interview and thesis and being open to answer questions they have. Secondly, I strengthened that they were anonymous and that the interview could be cancelled at any time, that they could skip questions and that there are no wrong answers. Thirdly, during the interview I tried to examine if the interview was getting to sensitive, then I could switch question or as I did once, end the interview.

2.5 Method of Analysing Data: Thematic analysis

In this subchapter the method of analysis is presented. Method for analysis is thematic analysis. Guidelines for thematic analysis are mainly based on Braun and Clarke’s paper for thematic analysis in phycology and beyond. But also inspired by Magnus Öhlander who discusses thematic analysis from an ethnologic perspective. Ethnology means the study of humans in relation to culture or cultural aspects such as values, norms and ideas etcetera, fieldwork (observations and interviews) being a usual method. Öhlander writes that the method is about finding themes based on their relevance for the thesis. Before presenting (but also after) six phases of thematic analysis there is a broader discussion of the method.

Braun and Clarke state that thematic analysis can be used in a realistic/essential (present reality) or in a constructivist approach (how reality is constructed). It is important that the researcher is transparent in his or her approach. I use more of a constructivist approach thus how nationalism and ethnicity is imagined and why. Braun and Clarke state that thematic analysis can be sematic or latent, the best is a combination. Semantic analysis describes what the informants are saying. Latent analysis looks beyond what informants are saying it analysis underlying ideas and is mostly constructivist. I use a combination by shifting between describing what the informants are saying and why. I started noting themes after two interviews.

The six phases, taken from Braun’s and Clarke’s paper, are:

84 Öhlander (2011), p. 278
85 Braun, Clarke (2008), p. 83
86 Braun, Clarke (2008), p. 87
Phase one implies familiarising with the data.\textsuperscript{87} Which in my case was done by transcribing the data. Taking notes of potential themes started.

Phase two is coding the data.\textsuperscript{88} I coded by carefully reading each quote in each interview and trying to understand what they were expressing. Notes were taken.

Phase three is searching for themes.\textsuperscript{89} I did it by trying to fit the coded data into themes. The themes were created in a balance between theory and data. At this phase I had around 14 themes.

Phase four is reviewing themes.\textsuperscript{90} I did it by once again going through the coded data and the themes. I put different coded quotes into different themes. Then I used mind maps and schemes to converge the themes. I ended up with four themes. Then I went through if the themes matched the data and if the theory fitted the themes.

Phase five is defining and naming the themes.\textsuperscript{91} Themes defined and named by describing (for myself) what the core of each theme is, why they are interesting and how the themes vary from each other. I ended up with three themes by converting two into one. The reason was that two themes were to similar.

Phase six is producing the report.\textsuperscript{92} I started by putting forward quotes into each theme and then removing supernumerary quotes. The quotes were set in an order based on what the analysis in each theme wants to present. Some quotes fitted in more than one theme, when this happens the quote was either not used or put in the theme it fitted the most. Lastly, I wrote the report.

Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke state that thematic analysis is criticized by Holloway and Toders and also by Ryan and Bernard for not being an accomplished/own method instead being a part of other analytical methods. The reason is because finding themes or coding the material is used in other analytical methods as a “first step”. Qualitative analytical methods can according to Braun and Clarke be divided into methods that provide a theoretical understanding and those who do not. Thematic analysis does not provide a theoretical or ontological perspective and can therefore be used in other analytical methods as a “first step”. Yet Braun and Clarke argue against the criticism and state that the method is an analytical method that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{87}Braun, Clarke (2008), p. 90f
\item \textsuperscript{88}Braun, Clarke (2008), p. 92f
\item \textsuperscript{89}Braun, Clarke (2008), p. 93f
\item \textsuperscript{90}Braun, Clarke (2008), p. 94f
\item \textsuperscript{91}Braun, Clarke (2008), p. 96f
\item \textsuperscript{92}Braun, Clarke (2008), p. 97
\end{itemize}
provides helpful tools in analysing the data. Öhlander writes that a theoretical perspective must be added to deeper understand the themes. The advantage and the reason for my usage of thematic analysis is that I do not want an analytical method with a theory/ontology that overlaps my theoretical framework. Instead, as Öhlander states, I will apply a theory on the method. I want to put focus on the theoretical framework in understanding the data. I also use thematic analysis because I find it that I understand the method and can use it. Why use an article explaining thematic analysis by psychologists when this thesis is done in the frames of political science? Firstly, because the method can according to Braun and Clarke be used in other sciences. I see no reason after reading the text why political science would be excluded. Secondly, because the article puts forward a well-developed reflection upon what approaches exist in thematic analysis and how to practically implement the method, better than other I have read.

### 2.6 Diasporic Informants

Is it a methodological problem that the informants are diaspora? Would it be more satisfying to interview Iraqis still living in Iraq? In the quote below, one informant states her caution in talking about the context in Iraq after the years when she had left Iraq.

> I left Iraq 2006. I cannot say anything about what happened after. I don’t want to say anything. I only say what I have witnessed. I hear people talking about what is going on now but I don’t know what is true.

- Ruba

Focusing on diaspora is not a methodological problem but a methodological alternative. It is true that interviews with Iraqis still living in Iraq would be satisfying but a trip to Iraq or Skype calls with Iraqis in Iraq was not possible because of prerequisites. However, interviews with diaspora still upfils the purpose of the interviews and data. The imagination of the informants’ social identification does not disappear when they became diaspora, as is shown in the analysis. The claim of a diasporic nationalistic and ethnic connection with Iraq can be strengthen with a relevant theory. Anderson has a concept called long-distance nationalism that states that there is a nationalistic connection between diaspora and the homeland. Because of the development

93 Braun, Clarke (2008), p. 78f
94 Öhlander (2011), p. 279
95 Braun, Clarke (2008), p. 78f
96 Braun, Clarke (2008), p. 77
of communication such as newspapers and social media (se chapter *Theoretical Framework*) diaspora can live their political life in their homeland from another nation. The connection with the homeland can be stronger than the nation they are living in. A informant gives an example of diaspora in the quote below.

*Iraqis... when we are outside Iraq we help each other. We like each other very much. It becomes a lot of love and solidarity.*

- Ikram

Another aspect to keep in mind, even though it does not serve as an analytical perspective, diasporas tend to idealize their homeland and their past. Khalid Khayati and Magnus Dahlstedt provide deeper understanding of Anderson’s long-distance nationalism. Khayati and Dahlstedt state that people in long-distance nationalism tends to mythologize and idealize the past as “normal” nationalism. Idealization of the homeland is also lifted by acknowledged diaspora theorist William Safran according to Khayati and Dahlstedt. Safran means that diasporas tend to idealize their homeland and past from victimhood perspective. As is shown in chapter *Analysis*, the informants express both idealization of their past and homeland and idealization through a victimhood perspective. Diaspora could be an explanation yet idealization of the homeland and past exist within “normal” nationalism to, as is shown in chapter *Theoretical Framework*.

### 2.7 The Relevancy of the Theoretical Approaches

Are nationalism and ethnicity the most relevant social identifications for understanding Iraq pre and post 2003? Eriksen states that the researcher finds what he or she searches for. The researcher constructs the nationalism and ethnicity that is analysed. Nationalism and ethnicity does not naturally lay in the world, instead they are constructed trough social processes (se chapter *Theoretical Framework*).

I believe that social identifications such as sex, class, nationalism and ethnicity all could tell an interesting story about Iraq. Yet I believe that nationalism and ethnicity is relevant for the case

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100 Khayati, Dahlstedt (2013), p. 87
101 Eriksen (1998), pp. 197f
Iraq because how nationalism and ethnicity been constructed in Iraq and what consequences it has had. This is discussed in chapter *Analysis*.

Sectarian social identification exist as can be seen in Previous Research. Haddad states that not all Sunnis are sectarian.\(^{102}\) It is possible that the concept sectarianism only tries to discuss a minor part of Sunni population. Thus, it is legitimate because more than one social identification exists, sectarianism being one. Yet a repetitive framing of Sunni through sectarianism, creates sectarianism as a vital concept in understanding Sunni identification. As has been argued in chapter *Previous Research*, sectarianism does not “best” explain Sunni identification thus overusing it can create a confusing construction of Sunni identification by the researcher using the concept sectarianism, therefore it is not used.

\(^{102}\) Haddad (2014), p. 146
3. Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the theoretical framework. Two social constructive theories about nationalism and ethnicity are included. Firstly, Benedict Anderson’s imagined communities. Secondly, Thomas Hylland Eriksen’s social identification. Below is a presentation of these in a subchapter each starting with Anderson. First subchapter introduces the field of nationalism and ethnicity. Second subchapter presents Anderson’s theory. Third subchapter discusses Eriksen’s theory. Fourth subchapter links Anderson’s and Eriksen’s theories to construct a theory for this thesis.

3.1 Introducing Nationalism and Ethnicity

Research about nationalism and ethnicity increased in late 90s and is today a popular theme. Theories about nationalism and ethnicity can according to Sverker Sörlin be divided into either premodern which mean that the concepts are essential and “destined”. Or modern which implies that the concepts are constructed and “made up”. Anderson and Eriksen belong to the modern category.

Anderson together with Ernst Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm makes three major modern thinkers of nations and nationalism. Anderson’s classical book *Imagined communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* explores how the withdrawal of the old order consisting of religious script-language, monarchical rule and a certain interpretation of time resulted in the construction of nations and nationalism. Not how official nationalism, political nationalism held by for example political parties, originated but how nations became the norm value of mankind and how nationalism became as kinship. Print-capitalism (art of mass printing and force of finding new markets) based on folk-language is the main reasons for the withdrawal of the old order and the construction of nations. The print constructed new sources for humans to imagine communities from. As a result, folk-language nationalism unconsciously grew. This was aided by the rise of liberalism and enlightenment, questioning the rule of the

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103 Eriksen (1998), p. 9
105 Sörlin (2015), p. 31
106 Anderson (1993), pp. 46 and 71f
107 Anderson (1993), p. 113
108 Anderson (1993), p. 21
110 Anderson (1993), p. 56
monarch.\textsuperscript{111} Nations were first born in America,\textsuperscript{112} and later spread by imperialism and colonialism. From America concepts of the national state, republic institutions, citizenship, sovereignty, flags, national anthems rose and concepts of monoracial states, absolutism, submissive, royal heritage diminished.\textsuperscript{113} Anderson is fascinated about why people are willing to die for a imagined community.\textsuperscript{114} This rather short presentation of Anderson’s theory may be uncompelling, the fault is mine not Andersons. The reason is because I do not tend to analyse the origin and spread of nations as Anderson. The origin and spread are deeply discussed in the book.

The second book \textit{Ethnicity and Nationalism} is written by Eriksen. Both Anderson and Eriksen have an anthropological approach.\textsuperscript{115} Peter Metcalf writes that anthropology comes from Greek and means “people study”. Anthropology studies people in relations to their context.\textsuperscript{116} Michael Herzfeld describes social and cultural anthropology as studying how society and culture affect each other.\textsuperscript{117} Anderson in comparison to Eriksen constructs a new theory on a lot of own material. Eriksen presents previous studies on ethnicity and nationalism. However, Eriksen also makes own reflections, conclusions and often takes clear standpoints. Most importantly Eriksen draws connections between ethnicity and nationalism.\textsuperscript{118} The reason for using Anderson’s and Eriksen’s theories is because they provide helpful assistance in understanding the Iraqi case. Anderson’s theory provides well-grounded and acknowledged reflections upon the construction of nations and nationalism while Eriksen’s theory adds needed thoughts about the construction and relation between ethnicity and nationalism.

3.2 \textit{Nations and Nationalism as Imagined Communities}

Anderson states that nationalism is usually thought of in political terms, nationalism is often compared to liberalism and Marxism. However, this is wrong. Nationalism is not a political ideology as fascism. Instead, nations are cultural artefacts of particular kind.\textsuperscript{119} Nations and nationalism should be compared to religion and kinship. Anderson defines nations as an imagined political community. It is imagined as sovereign and limited. It is imagined because

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{111} Anderson (1993), pp. 71f
\item \textsuperscript{112} Anderson (1993), pp. 85f
\item \textsuperscript{113} Anderson (1993), pp. 85f
\item \textsuperscript{114} Anderson (1993), pp. 19ff
\item \textsuperscript{115} Eriksen (1998), p. 10 and Anderson (1993), p. 21
\item \textsuperscript{116} Peter Metcalf, \textit{Anthropology: the basics} (2005) Oxfordshire: Abingdon p. 21
\item \textsuperscript{117} Michael Herzfeld, \textit{Anthropology: Theoretical Practice in Culture and Society} (2001) Malden: Blackwell Publisher p. X
\item \textsuperscript{118} Eriksen (1998)
\item \textsuperscript{119} Anderson (1993), p. 19
\end{itemize}
inhabitants will never meet most citizens yet still share a feeling of belonging. Nations are imagined sovereign because the idea is born during the dawn of enlightenment and liberalism. Nations are imagined as limited because they are surrounded by other territories and communities. Nations are imagined as communities because even though the exploitations that inhabitants may suffer in the nation it still consists of a deep fellowship. With the concept imagined, Anderson means that nations are neither made up nor false yet not essential and natural. They exist through imagination. According to Anderson it is not nations that make nationalism but nationalism that constructs nations and states.

After that nations had become the norm political nationalism was created. Political nationalism was used by monarchs, inspired by other nationalistic models, to legitimate their continually rule. Political nationalism is a way to consciously create national identity/nationalism and legitimate once rule. Travels to major cities, education, the nation map, population/census, national symbols, national museums/interpretation of the owns national past became important aspects of the construction of nations and nationalism.

Language should not be understood as national symbols (flag, anthem, tradition) are by political nationalistic ideologies instead the language is a way through how communities are imagined. In the Iraqi case, Arabic is the national language. Iraqi-Arab-Sunnis and Iraqi-Arab-Shi’as amongst others use the Arabic language as their main language.

What about criticism against Anderson’s theory? Barbara-Ann J. Rieffer criticizes Anderson for neglecting the role of religion in nationalism. Rieffer states that Anderson explains the construction of nations and nationalism as based on the spread of print-capitalism, a common language and the creation of a bureaucratic state. According to Rieffer however religion has an important role in constructing nationalism. Depending on how and how much religion influences nationalism will result in how it is formed. Religion can influence nationalism on three levels. In the last level where religion influences the most there is a bigger like hood that discrimination and conflict will be pointed towards the opposite group/the opposite religion.

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120 Anderson (1993), p. 21
121 Anderson (1993), p. 22
122 Anderson (1993), p. 10
123 Anderson (1993), p. 110
124 Anderson (1993), p. 71f
125 Anderson (1993), pp. 158–176
126 Anderson (1993), pp. 129f
128 Rieffer (2003), pp. 224ff
Rieffer provides interesting input to Anderson’s theory. However, it is not specifically religion that impacts nationalism in relation to the other. The imagination of one’s self-community is done in relation to the other community even if the other is ethnic or nationalistic communities. The more threatened the imagined community feels from the other, no matter if it is ethnicity, religion or another nationalistic community, the more chance of a strengthen sense of belonging to the own community and the more chance that a conflict emerges between the two communities. This critique towards Rieffer is supported by the subchapter below where it is argued that ethnicity is created in relation to the other/ anomaly.

3.3 Ethnicity and Nationalism as Social Identifications

Eriksen interprets ethnicity as a social identification\textsuperscript{129} that is formed by the social context it functions in.\textsuperscript{130} Ethnicity does not essentially exist within groups instead ethnicity is constructed. It is constructed in relation to the anomaly. Ethnicity becomes relevant in meetings with other ethnicities\textsuperscript{131} where both ethnicities interpret themselves as parts of different ethnicities.\textsuperscript{132} As Anderson argues about imagined communities,\textsuperscript{133} Eriksen states that ethnicities are limited because they do not wish to include all humans and are surrounded by other ethnicities.\textsuperscript{134} The contact in which ethnicities are made does not demand human meeting. Other tools of communications are also relevant. It can be communicated through media or symbols etcetera.\textsuperscript{135} The boundaries of the relation between two ethnicities are not static but dynamic and flexible. They change as the context changes.\textsuperscript{136}

Eriksen states that ethnicity can be over communicated and under communicated. The first implies that symbols interpreted as ethничal are visible while under communicated means the opposite.\textsuperscript{137} Ethnicity becomes more relevant when the ethnicity feels threatened by the anomaly.\textsuperscript{138} A undermined ethnicity will under communicate its distinctiveness but then over communicate it if the ethnicity is later superior.\textsuperscript{139} The dominated and dominator group are usually in conflict. The dominator sees its ethnicity as universal and objective while the

\textsuperscript{129} Eriksen (1998), pp. 50f
\textsuperscript{130} Eriksen (1998), pp. 42f
\textsuperscript{131} Eriksen (1998), p. 19
\textsuperscript{132} Eriksen (1998), p. 22
\textsuperscript{133} Anderson (1993), p. 22
\textsuperscript{134} Eriksen (1998), p. 81
\textsuperscript{135} Eriksen (1998), p. 31
\textsuperscript{136} Eriksen (1998), pp. 42f
\textsuperscript{137} Eriksen (1998), p. 32
\textsuperscript{138} Eriksen (1998), p. 127
\textsuperscript{139} Eriksen (1998), p. 107
dominated interprets it has particularistic and subjective. Ethnical groups often interpret themselves as biologically self-reconstructive, as natural, having a common heritage, language, religion or/and culture. Ethnicity can by the group be seen as being related to race and blood. Ethnicity can (as Anderson’s imagined community) be a metaphoric kinship. Stereotypes follow ethnic groups. Stereotypes can be positive and negative, they can be lifted by members of the ethnicity and/or put on the ethnicity by outsiders. Dichotomization and complementation are two different ethnic relations. The first relation is when differences are strongly held, where stereotypes and conflicts exist and competition between ethnical groups. Complementation is when ethnicity is less visible, and minorities integrate to the majority. Complementation can however be a method for the majority to exploit and discriminate minorities by claiming goodwill and integration. According to Eriksen, Cohen sees ethnicity as a political organisation organised by a will to maximize resources. Maximization of resources is not only rational and economical but group symbols and wills.

Eriksen states that ethnicities redefine history. As imagined communities do according to Anderson, Eriksen states that historical events can for a group be forgotten and unimportant yet after changes in the context/relations same events can become group defining. The group will then claim that the new definition has always existed. Nationalistic symbols claimed by nationalism to be old and nationalistic are often neither. When symbols are redefined, they get a new meaning and create a nationalistic community.

Eriksen writes that according to I.M Lewis tribalism, ethnicity and nationalism are the same, the difference is their size not their function. However, Eriksen states that nationalism and ethnicity have different relations to the modern state. Eriksen writes that ethnicity can be linked to a certain national state but does not have to. Alike Anderson’s claims about political nationalism, Eriksen writes that nationalism is partly a method for the ruling class to remain

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140 Eriksen (1998), p. 149
141 Eriksen (1998), pp. 47f
142 Eriksen (1998), pp. 79
143 Eriksen (1998), pp. 89
144 Eriksen (1998), pp. 34
145 Eriksen (1998), p. 39f
146 Eriksen (1998), p. 63 0
147 Anderson (1993), pp. 171ff
148 Eriksen (1998), pp. 53f
149 Eriksen (1998), p. 130
150 Eriksen (1998), p. 125
152 Anderson (1993), p. 110
in power.\textsuperscript{153} Eriksen states that nationalistic communities are constructed in relation to the other, other nations.\textsuperscript{154} Before one could not decide where a Norwegian dialect ends and where a Swedish begins. Yet with the map of the nation/s one can point it out exactly.\textsuperscript{155} The map as a concretization of the nation is also pointed out by Anderson.\textsuperscript{156}

\section*{3.4 Linking Imagined Communities and Social Identifications}

This subchapter links the theories above. The creation of a theory from Anderson’s and Eriksen’s reflections is based on balancing between what parts from the theories are most relevant for the Iraqi case and what parts from the theories are central for each theory.

Eriksen states that that the difference between ethnicity and nationalism is their relation to the nation. Nationalism is always connected to a nation while it is not a demand for ethnicity because ethnicities do not always claim a nation.\textsuperscript{157} But the theoretical assumption of how nationalism and ethnicity is constructed are alike. Therefore, in my theory I interpret that Anderson’s and Eriksen’s theoretical assumptions can be used to analyse both nationalism and ethnicity. What does this mean for the analysis? It means that nationalism and ethnicity are social identifications. It also means that there exist/can exist an imagined community based on nationalism but also an imagined community based on ethnicity. As a side note, Margaret Moore also argues that communities can be based on ethnicity.\textsuperscript{158} Back to linking Anderson’s and Eriksen’s theory. There is no natural or static connection between nationalism and ethnicity. The relation is that ethnicity can define themselves through nationalistic grounds by claiming nationalism and a nation. At the same time nationalism can define itself through ethnic agendas.

Iraq can be imagined as a community connected to the social identification nationalism and/or ethnicity. Iraq can me imagined as an Iraqi nationalistic community or/and as a Sunni community. Communities interpret themselves as sovereign which means that they have the right to rule themselves and not by outsiders. According to Anderson and Eriksen nationalism and ethnicity does not interpret itself as universal but limited in relation to the other.\textsuperscript{159} Eriksen

\begin{thebibliography}{10}
\bibitem{153} Eriksen (1998), p. 134
\bibitem{154} Eriksen (1998), p. 139
\bibitem{155} Eriksen (1998), p. 131
\bibitem{156} Anderson (1993), p. 164–171
\bibitem{157} Eriksen (1998), p. 12
\bibitem{158} Margaret Moore, \textit{The Ethics of Nationalism} (2001) Oxford: Oxford University Press p. 10
\end{thebibliography}
argues it is in relation to the other that the self-identification is constructed.\textsuperscript{160} Identifications and communities are therefore understood as being created in relation to the anomaly.

To make the theoretical framework more concrete here comes an example of the social construction of nationalism and ethnicity. If an ethnic community exist but an anomaly threatens it through a nationalistic frame, the ethnic community can redefine themselves as a nationalistic community (depending on if the ethnic group can claim a nation). The boundaries and relations of the community will then change and nationalism will be overcommunicated. The community will try to maximize its interests which will be nationalistic interests. The history will be redefined, a nationalistic history will be communicated. Stereotypes can be held about the anomaly which strengthens the solidarity amongst the own community. Nationalistic and ethnic communities can perceive themselves as natural and biological. Both nationalism and ethnicity can be kinship rather than a political ideology. Yet nationalism can also be political when an actor consciously tries to construct and frame certain nationalism in a certain way. A dominating nationalistic or ethnic community can communicate its self-distinctive towards the other nationalistic or ethnic community to push it away (dichotomization). But the dominator can also try to integrate the dominated group into the own community (complementation).

National institutions influence the construction of identifications and communities and vice versa. What are institutions? According to Jeffrey T. Checkel social constructivism defines institutions as a set of rules and norms which construct and reconstruct how groups act and think.\textsuperscript{161} The reason for using the word institution in this case is mainly because a collective name is needed for media, the map, cities, education and the state to make the thesis more educational. But also, because institutions can be defined broadly and because media etcetera can be related to Checkel’s definition.

Does the theory match the data, because of the theory being on a macro (nationalism) level while the data is on a micro (informants) level? The answer is yes. As is shown in the analysis, the informants’ statements are influenced by the theories and the other way around.

\textsuperscript{160} Eriksen (1998), p. 19
4. From the Birth of the Modern Iraqi Nation to the Fall of the Baath Regime: Sunni Hegemony

This chapter presents parts of Iraqi history. Iraq’s history regarding how the nation and social groups have developed is treated in academic literature. The literature focuses on periods from the late (around early 1900) the Ottoman rule of Baghdad, Basra and Mosul (major cities in what is to become Iraq) to Baath rule and often to post 2003. Haddad writes that sectarian relations in Iraq today are connected to the historical process of the same relations.162 To understand Sunni identification in Iraq one must understand the past. Ryan comes to the same conclusion as Haddad.163 The purpose of this chapter is therefore to present needed background of Iraqi nationalism and Sunni ethnicity to more deeply understand Iraqi nationalism and Sunni ethnicity pre- and post 2003 and its historic context. Without this chapter or instead with a minor background subchapter in the introduction, important and interesting background to the aim of this thesis will be lost. Is it a bit ironic to adopt a critical approach of understanding a nation’s history in previous chapters and then in this chapter discuss historical parts of Iraq? The answer is yes, a bit. However, this chapter is based on what research that treats the historical relation of Iraqi nationalism and Sunni ethnicity. With a critical mind I have read the research which I deem as trustworthy and from there I have written this chapter.

This chapter includes seven subchapters which present different periods. The subchapters are presented in a chronological order and these are the following subchapters: Colonial State, Independence, Iran and Kuwait, The Beginning of the Shift, US-invasion of Iraq, New State and Civil War and lastly Continued Uncertainty.

4.1 Colonial State

Ferhat Pirincci writes that major cities in today’s Iraq, Baghdad, Mosul and Basra were in the early 1990s part of the Ottoman Empire. The region was called Mesopotamia, as the ancient city. During World War I the UK together with local Arab rebels defeated the Ottoman regime in the region and took control of Baghdad, Mosul and Basra.164 According to Martin Walker, the UK became new rulers of the region but in 1920 after several local upspring, the UK appointed King Faisal the first, from the Hashemite family, as ruler yet the UK remained

162 Haddad (2014-Aug-05), pp. 1f, Haddad (2016-Jan-07), pp. 3ff
163 Ryan (2010), pp. 65ff
164 Pirincci (2007), pp. 93f
indirectly rulers of the newly formed nation.\textsuperscript{165} Unlike the usual interpretation, Liora Lukitz argues that Iraqi nationalism did not arrive from anti-colonialism instead the first national institutions were formed by the UK. The UK did not create institutions based on the will of the inhabitants or on nationalism and ethnicity.\textsuperscript{166} Lukitz states that the political power was given to a Sunni minority.\textsuperscript{167} According to Haddad, Sunni privilege can be traced to the Ottoman Empire (but is mostly bound to the building of modern Iraq).\textsuperscript{168} Haddad states that with the forging of the Iraqi state in 1921 a feeling of nationalism but also political, economic rights and citizenship was born. But also a exclusion of Shi’a as to fully exercise their national rights which constructed a sectarian identity.\textsuperscript{169} According to Pirincci, as Haddad and Lukitz state, after that the UK appointed King Faisal 1 as ruler, a Sunni elite was given the political power, ignoring what ethnic boundaries already existed in the newly formed nation.\textsuperscript{170} Lukitz writes that later through Pan-Arabism (transnational Arab nationalism) the Sunni minority found legitimacy for their power and ways of shaping Iraqi nationalism.\textsuperscript{171}

Dawisha writes that the power was concentrated within a Sunni elite and prejudice against Shi’a existed yet rulers in the period during the Hashemite Kingdom until Baath, even during Saddam, did not make policies based on Sunni or Shi’a agendas but on Iraqi agenda. Speaking in terms of Iraqi nationalism rather than “Sunnism”, “Shi’ism” or “Kurdism”.\textsuperscript{172}

4.2 Independence

According to Pirincci, independence was given to Iraq in 1932 but the UK kept influence by striking deals with King Faisal 1. The Hashemite rule continued till 1958 when the military lead by General Abdul al-Karim Qassim trough a coup took the power from King Faisal 2.\textsuperscript{173} Lukitz states that the new regime, especially officials Bakr Siddiqi and Hikmat Sulaiman, adopted a Iraqi first approach in politics.\textsuperscript{174} Later in 1968 coup D Etat took place and the socialist and nationalist Baath party took power from Qassim’s regime. Ahmad Hasan al-Bakir was made president and party leader. Yet Saddam’s (member of the Baath party) influence rose fast and

\textsuperscript{166} Lukitz (1995) pp. 144f
\textsuperscript{167} Lukitz (1995), pp. 144f
\textsuperscript{168} Haddad (2014-Aug-05), p. 4
\textsuperscript{169} Haddad (2014-Aug-05), p. 2
\textsuperscript{170} Pirincci (2007), pp. 93f
\textsuperscript{171} Lukitz (1995), pp. 144f
\textsuperscript{172} Dawisha (2009) p. 208
\textsuperscript{173} Pirincci (2007), pp. 93f
\textsuperscript{174} Lukitz (1995), p. 143
in 1979 a bloodless coup overthrew al-Bakir and made Saddam president.\textsuperscript{175} Haddad states that the idea of the rule not being inclusive of all Iraqis rose.\textsuperscript{176} Lukitz states that no common Iraqi national identification was ever truly shaped to which all ethnic identities are sub-categorized to.\textsuperscript{177}

4.3 \textit{Iran and Kuwait}

Tripp writes that in the major and vital war between Iraq and Iran (1980-1988) Saddam believed that some Shi’a were loyal to Iran not Iraq which led to further exclusion of certain Shi’a tribes and groups while favouring other Shi’a tribes and groups.\textsuperscript{178} Later, after the Iran Iraq war stopped, an oil dispute (Kuwait lowering its oil price threatening the Iraqi economy) mainly between Iraq and Kuwait led to a war between the two nations. The war (1990) ended by a UN approved army, led and consisted mainly by US, forced Iraq out from Kuwait by attacking Iraqi forces in Kuwait and dropping bombs in Iraq.\textsuperscript{179} During the Iraq Kuwait war, some Shi’a rebelled against Saddam. Parties such as al-Dawa and SICRI (major Shi’a parties post 2003) organised rallies and helped rebels across the Kuwait-Iraq border. Saddam answered the upspring by mass slaughtering both Shi’a civilians and militants.\textsuperscript{180}

4.4 \textit{The Beginning of the Shift}

The situation between Sunnis and Shi’a worsened during Saddam, especially after the Kuwait war according to Dawisha. As previously told, some Shi’a in southern Iraq rebelled against the Baath regime after the Kuwait war. Saddam answered by deploying military and killed 30 000 Shi’a. Around 70 000 fled to Iran.\textsuperscript{181} Tripp writes that after the Kuwait war, US and other western countries imposed sanctions on Iraq.\textsuperscript{182} Plans for the US led intervention in Iraq begun in 1988 when the US funded oppositions groups in Iraq with 100 million dollars.\textsuperscript{183} After information about Iraq reinstalling their program to develop weapons of mass destruction and that some already existed was spread. UN answered with wanting to send nuclear inspectors to Iraq. The Baath regime did not cooperate.\textsuperscript{184} With George W. Bush’s presidential victory in the US 2000 an administration came in power who had long searched to overthrow the Baath

\begin{footnotes}
\item[175] Pirincci (1997), pp. 94f
\item[176] Haddad (2016-Jan-07) pp. 7ff
\item[177] Lukitz (1995), p. 147
\item[178] Tripp (2007), pp. 243ff
\item[179] Tripp (2007), pp. 239ff
\item[180] Tripp (2007), pp. 244ff
\item[181] Dawisha (2010) pp. 252f
\item[182] Tripp (2007), pp. 268f
\item[183] Tripp (2007), p. 267
\item[184] Tripp (2007), pp. 268f
\end{footnotes}
regime. After 9/11 Bush declared war on terrorism. Saddam, unlike other Arab leaders, chose not to condemn the attack but rather to state that the attack was a consequence of US politics/actions in the Middle East.\textsuperscript{185} In 2001 plans to invade Iraq was submitted to Bush. However, at this point Saddam allowed UN inspectors to enter the country. The inspectors did not feel well taken care of, yet the inspectors finished their work and no weapons were found. But the US was sceptic towards the UN reports. In 2002 the US congress approved to take military actions against Iraq.\textsuperscript{186}

4.5 US-invasion of Iraq

Tripp states that in 2003 the US asked for approval from the UN Security Council to overthrow Saddam, but France and Russia vetoed. Instead, the US formed a collation outside the UN with mainly UK.\textsuperscript{187} 2003 March 17th, an ultimatum was given to Saddam that he and his family needed to leave Iraq in 48 hours. Two days later, with Saddam still in Iraq, operation “Iraqi Freedom” begun. By April 7 Basra was captured and 9 April Baghdad was occupied. Saddam fled Baghdad. Estimated 173 US and UK forces died, 7000-12 000 Iraqi soldiers and 4000-7000 Iraqi civilians. After the invasion of Iraq, huge lootings of ministries, schools, universities, official buildings, hospitals etcetera took place. With the US and the UK troops watching, Iraqi institutions were ransacked and destroyed by Iraqi citizens.\textsuperscript{188} Hippler agrees and writes that after 2003 all mechanism of social integrations and state apparatus collapsed. Offices were looted and burned down. Military, police, ministries, civil personal did not show up for work. The loss of political institutions, social integration, security, start of war and looting made the nation traumatized and stateless. Kurdish region in the north did better.\textsuperscript{189} Tripp states that the invasion of Iraq was bloody and the results were collapse of Baath regime and Iraqi institutions.\textsuperscript{190} Missy Ryan states that political actors who rose after 2003 had fought Saddam pre 2003 and were hiding or in exile right before 2003.\textsuperscript{191} Tripp states that Shi’a parties such as al-Dawa and SCIRI restarted. These two parties had a positive attitude against the US intervention. Yet anti-US and anti-Iran Shi’a actors also rose such as Muqtada al-Sadr.\textsuperscript{192}

\textsuperscript{185} Tripp (2007), pp. 270f
\textsuperscript{186} Tripp (2007), pp. 272f
\textsuperscript{187} Tripp (2007), pp. 272f
\textsuperscript{188} Tripp (2007), pp. 274f
\textsuperscript{189} Hippler (2005), p. 84
\textsuperscript{190} Tripp (2007), pp. 274f
\textsuperscript{191} Ryan (2010), p. 66
\textsuperscript{192} Tripp (2007), p. 280
The US installed a Collation Provisional Authority (CPA) to govern, Iraqis were given positions as advisers. Paul Bremer the third, the second and longest chief of the governing council, started the de-Baathification process, banning the Baath party and all its associations. Members were forbidden to have any higher official positions. The army got disbanded. This resulted in 300 000 unemployed armed youth and 30 000 well experiences administrations losing their jobs. Later, the US installed the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC). The IGC was given orders to construct a new constitution for Iraq and let the population vote for it. IGC consisted of 13 Shi’a, 5 Sunni, 5 Kurd, 1 Turkmen, 1 Assyrian Christian. Haddad writes that the CPA council strengthen ethnic non common identification politics because it was based on certain ethnicities getting a certain number of seats. Dawisha states that after the installations of CPA the nation state was for the first time officially divided on different ethnicity. Tripp writes that civil war was ongoing. Shi’a actors (accepted by the US) constructed new Iraqi institutions while Sunnis exclusion increased. Both Sunni and Shi’a death squads rose, performing attacks on civilians and militants. Many foreign fighters had crossed the un-protected border of Iraq to fight against the US. Water and electricity minimised. Public infrastructure was destroyed.

### 4.6 New State and Civil War

In 2004 28th of July Paul Bremer handed over sovereignty to new prime minister Ayad Allawi. Allawi did not show mercy on the opposition and did not shrink the Sunni Shi’a divide. Corruption rose. Allawi rested upon US support and advice when making bigger decisions. In 2004 Allawi declared martial law and demanded the population of Falluja (mostly Sunni) to evacuate because of Islamists/foreign fighters were inside the city. Around 70-80% evacuated yet few fighters were found and killed. The figure of how many had died since the US led invasion is unclear, some argue that 30 000 Iraqis had died while some say 100 000, in 2004. In 2005 a vote for a new constitution happened. Most Sunnis and Sunni parties boycotted because lack of trust for the state which led to a major Shi’a and Kurd victory. Shi’a Islamist parties such as SCIRI and al-Dawa won. Later in 2005 an election for a first Iraqi parliament since 2003 was set. Sunnis participated in this election because the boycott led to more exclusion. Most Shi’a and Sunni voted in Sunni and Shi’a ethnic lines. Same parties as in the constitutional vote came in power, yet Islamist and nationalist Sunni parties entered the scene.

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193 Tripp (2007), pp. 281ff
194 Haddad (2014), p. 155
195 Dawisha (2009), p. 200f
196 Tripp (2007), pp. 287f
197 Tripp (2007), p. 292
Allawi gave the prime minister post to his fellow party member, Nuri al-Maliki.\textsuperscript{198} Dawisha writes that Shi’a United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) got most votes, led by Grand Ayatollah Ali-al-Sistani and ran politics based on Shi’a issues.\textsuperscript{199} Tripp states that some Sunnis were included in the regime.\textsuperscript{200} By the end of 2006 more Iraqis were armed than during the end of Saddam’s regime. During 2006 and 2007 the killings rose. In 2006, hundred Iraqis died every week and 2 million had fled since 2003. Al-Maliki was accused for making Shi’a militant groups grow while excluding Sunnis.\textsuperscript{201}

Tripp writes that Saddam was captured December 2003 and in October 2005 the trial begun against Saddam for slaughtering Shi’as in 1982. In summer 2006 a second trial against Saddam begun for slaughtering 100 000 Kurds in 1988. December 2006 Saddam was sentenced to death. The execution got televised. US and new Iraqi regime wanted to show its victory while Saddam saw an opportunity to raise support but failed to do so. The government of 2005 had failed to bring security to Iraq. Instead non common ethnic imagination rose, and Sunni Shi’a relations worsened.\textsuperscript{202}

4.7 Continued Uncertainty

In 2010 there were signs of unification between Sunni and Shi’a. Dawisha writes that parties in the 2010 parliament election talked about Iraqi issues rather than Sunni or Shi’a agendas.\textsuperscript{203} Haddad also states that unification grew 2008-2010.\textsuperscript{204} Yet before 2010, around 2007 the divide was at a high point according to Dawisha.\textsuperscript{205} Haddad states that sectarianism increased again 2014.\textsuperscript{206} Al-Maliki’s politics during the second term (from 2010) increased the Sunni Shi’a split and brought Iraq closer to Iran, a Sunni sectarian fear. Mansour writes that Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi (elected 2014) continued Sunni exclusion and sectarian divide. Sunnis believe that a Shi’a elite is monopolizing the power and that sectarian Shi’a militants are included in the official forces.\textsuperscript{207} BBC writes that the Iraqi government declared victory over Daesh in the end of 2017. Daesh who proclaimed its caliphate in 2014 is still active but holds minimum

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{198} Tripp (2007), pp. 294ff
\item \textsuperscript{199} Dawisha (2009), p. 253
\item \textsuperscript{200} Tripp (2007), p. 303
\item \textsuperscript{201} Tripp (2007), pp. 308f
\item \textsuperscript{202} Tripp (2007), pp. 313f
\item \textsuperscript{203} Dawisha (2009), p. 254
\item \textsuperscript{204} Haddad (2016-Jan-07), pp. 17ff
\item \textsuperscript{205} Dawisha (2010), pp. 253f
\item \textsuperscript{206} Haddad (2016-Jan-07), pp. 17ff
\item \textsuperscript{207} Mansour (2016-Mar-03), p. 1
\end{itemize}
In 2018 Adel Abdul-Mahdi was elected new prime minister according to Al-Jazeera.

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5. Analysis of the Sunni information’s statements: Iraqi national identity

This chapter presents the analysis of the informants’ stories. Chapter Analysis is divided into three subchapters. All three subchapters are divided into sub-subchapters. The two first subchapters are also divided between before 2003 and after 2003. The last theme cannot be divided into pre and post 2003 because the informants’ interpretations of the past is done in the present (after 2003). There is an introduction to each theme in the beginning of each subchapter. The introduction states the connection between theme and theory. The introduction also presents the main arguments in the theme. The writing in this chapter, especially in the first subchapter shifts from showing quotes and doing minor reflections to showing less quotes but doing major reflections.

On next page is an analytical scheme (table 1), the top states the three themes and under are keywords for each theme. The keywords are divided into before and after 2003.
Table 1. Analytical Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes:</th>
<th>Perception and Imagination About the National Identity in Relation to the Anomaly</th>
<th>National Institutions and How They are Perceived</th>
<th>Idealizing the Past and Imagining the Present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keywords After 2003:</td>
<td>Inclusion and exclusion, Iran and America, foreign occupation, foreign fighters, Muqtada, explosion of imam Ali, communication Sunni ethnicity.</td>
<td>Media, state and politicians, education, cities, the map, foreign occupation, Sunni exclusion, political nationalism, ethnic communication, rejecting the state.</td>
<td>Saddam and the Baath, Iran versus Iraq in the past, Sunni and Shi’a in the past, Iraqi nationalism, glorifying and defining the past.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1 Perception and Imagination About the National Identity in Relation to the Anomaly

The first subchapter treats theme one Perception and Imagination About the National Identity in Relation to the Anomaly. The theme’s overall connection to the theoretical framework is that the theme is based on the construction of identification and community in relation to the anomaly. The theme analyses how the informants construct self-identification, community and the anomaly. This theoretical assumption derives mostly from Eriksen who states that social identification becomes alive in the boundaries and relation to the anomaly.\(^{210}\) Anderson does

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\(^{210}\) Eriksen (1998), pp. 42f
not make same direct connection but states that communities are limited since other communities exist around them both physically and socially\textsuperscript{211}.

The main argument in this theme is that the informants’ identification and community both before and after 2003 are mainly influenced by Iraqi nationalism and the anomaly is mostly other nations such as Iran and America. In contradiction to previous research that generally argues that Sunnis have redefined themselves through Sunnism and imagine Shi’as as their threat,\textsuperscript{212} Iraqi nationalism is constructed through other nations as the anomaly. The imagined community is strong as kinship even though exploitations occur after 2003. Sunni ethnicity is under communicated (invisible) both before and after 2003, yet more visible post 2003 when it is constructed through victimhood. A Sunni community barely exist but to minor extent through victimhood post 2003. However, Sunni is also imagined as the anomaly after 2003, when talking about foreign Sunni extreme fighters. Eriksen states that the boundaries between the own group and the anomaly are flexible\textsuperscript{213} which explains why the informants construct several anomalies and in diverse ways. Iraqi nationalism is invisibly influenced by Sunni ethnicity pre 2003. It could be argued that Sunni hegemony influences Iraqi nationalist post 2003 but such conclusions cannot be drawn with the data available.

**Before 2003: Sunni and Shi’a inclusion or exclusion?**

Previous research claims that Shi’as were excluded and Sunnis privileged during Saddam’s rule.\textsuperscript{214} Haddad states that the Baath regime favoured Sunnis. Tripp, Dawisha, al-Qarawe, and Hippler all argue that Sunnis were included and Shi’as secluded. The informants disagree.

\textit{Saddam discriminated but did not discriminate Shi’a and so, only those who did not believe in his party […] he only wanted you to say that Saddam is the leader. If you involve in politics problems can come. Saddam wanted power and got power sick.}

\begin{flushright}
- Kadir
\end{flushright}

From Kadir’s statement there is no sign that exclusion was directly based on Shi’a ethnicity. Instead exclusion was based on political thinking. Opposing Saddam’s rule meant exclusion no matter the ethnicity. Similar statements are given by other informants. A common example of

\begin{flushright}
\textbf{References:}\textsuperscript{211} Anderson (1993), p. 22  
\textsuperscript{213} Eriksen (1998), pp. 42f  
\end{flushright}
Iraqi nationalism as inclusive and not based on certain ethnicity is the inclusion of Shi’as in Saddam’s regime. see Mahmoud’s, Samir’s and Ziyad’s quotes below.

The leaders of Baath party were Shi’as. There is no discrimination against Shi’a because they were a part of Baath party and part of even intelligence and secret police.

- Mahmoud

If you come and see before 2003 and see the ministers 70% of them are Shi’a.

- Samir

No before 2003 there is no discrimination. I said to you before that there is a list from 2003 of wanted military men [A US list of wanted ex Baath military], more than 50% are Shi’a.

- Ziyad

According to the informants Shi’as were included in the government, police and intelligence and were therefore not excluded. The exclusion that existed was based on non-ethnic political opposition against Saddam’s politics. The informants’ statements challenge the arguments of previous research. The conflict between the informants and previous research can be explained. Haddad states that the Shi’a exclusion was based on Sunni hegemony. Sunni ethnicity was the main ethnicity which itself constructed Iraqi nationalism by influencing national truths etcetera. Because Sunni ethnicity was invisible Iraqi nationalism which was imagined through it did not become Sunni Iraqi nationalism but common Iraqi nationalism. Sunnis become blind for their own subjectivism.215 Because the informants are Sunnis it is possible that the Sunni hegemony makes it harder to see Shi’a exclusion pre 2003. Ikram explains that Shi’as were proud of being Iraqi nationalists before 2003. Shi’as did not feel excluded.

Shi’as were proud [Ikram hits himself on the chest] before 2003.

- Ikram

In the quote above, Ikram implies that Iraqi nationalism and the community it imagined did not exclude Shi’as. Tripp states that not all Sunnis were directly privileged before 2003 but only

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215 Haddad (2014-Aug-05)
Saddam’s network.\textsuperscript{216} Hippler writes as Tripp but that Sunnis were also excluded to an extent.\textsuperscript{217} This could be a reason why the informants did not express that different ethnicities were certainly privileged from Iraqi nationalism pre 2003, because the informants did not belong to Saddam’s personal network. Kadir gives an example of this in the quote below.

\begin{quote}
We never thought that we are Sunnis and we never got anything special from Saddam, we did not get houses and so forth.
\end{quote}

- Kadir

Kadir states that Sunnis did not get anything certain from Saddam’s regime. If it is true that Iraqi nationalism did not exclude Shia and privilege Sunni, does that mean that the Sunni hegemony did not exist? Not necessarily. Sunni hegemony does not directly imply a visible direct privilege of Sunni ethnicity and exclusion of Shi’aa ethnicity. Instead, the way Sunni ethnicity influenced Iraqi nationalism was by complementation and maximizing its interests. Eriksen writes that according to Cohen ethnicities will try to maximize their interests which are not always rational but also symbolic.\textsuperscript{218} The Sunni hegemony or the Sunni ethnic influence of Iraqi nationalism is one way of maximizing ethnic interests. Haddad states that Sunni ethnicity constructed national truths.\textsuperscript{219} The privilege of Sunnis was maybe not shown by Sunnis getting new cars but by latent and unconsciousness Sunni construction of national truths and agendas.

It could be argued that a dominated and dominating ethnicity existed in Iraq pre 2003, which is a usual relation between ethnic groups according to Eriksen. The dominator usually sees their ethnicity as objective and universal and interpret the dominates ethnicity as subjective.\textsuperscript{220} The relation between the dominating and dominated group can look differently. The relation can take the form of dichotomization or complementation. Eriksen explains dichotomization as when a dominating group overcommunicates its self-distinctives and tries to dominate the dominated by removing the dominated ethnicity. However, the relation of Sunni and Shi’aa ethnicity was based on complementation. According to Eriksen complementation means that no visible conflict exists and that the ethnicity in power tries to integrate the dominated ethnicity. Iraqi nationalism which was influenced by Sunni ethnicity did not visibly show Sunni ethnic symbols or Sunni domination. Instead, Sunni ethnicity under communicated its

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{216} Tripp (2007), p. 318
\item \textsuperscript{217} Hippler (2005), p. 85
\item \textsuperscript{218} Anderson (1993), pp. 171ff
\item \textsuperscript{219} Haddad (2014-Aug-05)
\item \textsuperscript{220} Eriksen (1998), p. 149
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
distinctives and tried to integrate Shi’a ethnicity by claiming equality. Eriksen states that dominated groups might find complementation as exclusion because no certain rights that preserve a dominated ethnicity are granted. A reason why previous research argues that Shi’a exclusion happened while the informants state the opposite. Is that complementation for Sunnis was equality but for Shi’as weakening of the Shi’a ethnicity. Ruba gives an example of the under communication of Sunni ethnicity.

*Before I was raised not to ask who is Sunni, Shi’a, Christian or Muslim […] We were told that there were no differences.*

- Ruba

Ruba’s quote above shows how talking or thinking about ethnicity such as Sunni was not relevant because it was not important in their imagined community. Sunni was under communicated. Sunni ethnicity existed latently. A reason why Sunni ethnicity was under communicated is because it can legitimate the Sunni rule. Eriksen states that a undermined ethnicity under communicates its distinctiveness. Sunni ethnicity was to be undermined but the Sunni population is lesser than the Shi’a population. If Sunni ethnicity was visibly subjective it could have questioned the legitimacy of the rule. Lukitz states that Arab nationalism was a way for Saddam/Sunni minority to legitimate its rule.

**Before 2003: Iran and America as the anomaly**

In the quote below Mahmoud explains that during the war against Iran Saddam succeeded to unite Shi’as in Iraq against Iran. Even though Iran according to Mahmoud framed the war as Sunni versus Shi’a the Shi’as in Iraq held their identification and belonging to the Shi’a community lesser than the belonging to the Iraqi nationalism and its imagined community.

*At that time [War against Iran] Saddam tried to unite Iraqis against Iran. But as you know the majority of Iraqi people, not vast but simple, maybe 60% are Shi’a and it is very hard to make them fight against Islamic country who claim that they are the leaders of Shi’as. But Saddam succeeded.*

- Mahmoud

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221 Eriksen (1998), p. 39f
223 Lukitz (1995), pp. 144f
In next two quotes Kadir discusses two Iraqi wars during the period of Saddam, Iraq – Iran war and Iraq – Kuwait war.

_Iran says if you do this to Iraq you will get the keys that open door to heaven and there awaits women._

- Kadir

The quote above shows how Kadir explains Iran’s motivation or propaganda for the war against Iraq. While in the quote below Kadir states that US wanted and planed for Iraq to enter Kuwait. Tripp states that the Iraq – Kuwait war started by Iraq entering Kuwait and ended by US forcing Iraq out of Kuwait. Consequently, an embargo was imposed against Iraq.224

_I think US planned this. They planned 10 or 20 years to what to do. They play. They wanted Saddam to go to Kuwait._

- Kadir

Eriksen states that more than one social identification exists amongst individuals and groups. What social identification that is mostly visibly depends on the relation to the anomaly.225 So far in this theme the boundaries between Sunni and Shi’a ethnicities are unclear and under communicated. Eriksen states that under communication is when an ethnicity does not promote and show its distinctiveness.226 Thus Shi’a are pre 2003 not a clear anomaly of Sunni. Instead as can be seen in the last three quotes, by Mahmoud and Kadir. Iran, Kuwait and US seem to be the enemy of 2003. Iran, Kuwait and US are nations not ethnicities thus relation in which identification and communities are created is not Shi’a versus Sunni but Iraq versus other nation. This means that Iraqi nationalism is constructed as an important identification. It is Iraqi nationalism that then creates an Iraqi nationalistic community According to Anderson the soul norm in the world is nations, the world is divided in nations.227 Thus nationalism becomes an important identification. The Iraqi nation is imagined, sovereign and limited in relation to other nations. The Sunni ethnicity is under communicated while Iraqi nationalism is overcommunicated and constructed through its relation to its anomaly such as Iran, Kuwait and America. This does not contradict to the previous analytical findings that Sunni ethnicity invisibly influences Iraqi nationalism. Instead it provides further explanation. Sunni ethnicity

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224 Tripp (2007), pp. 239ff
225 Eriksen (1998), pp. 42f
226 Eriksen (1998), p. 31
227 Anderson (1993), p. 113
is partly invisible because Iraqi nationalism is the main social identification. Therefore, it is through Iraqi nationalism that the informants express their perspectives of the social world such as the inclusion and exclusion of ethnicities or who the enemy/anomaly is. A social identification such as Iraqi nationalism becomes according to Eriksen more visible and important when being threatened, which could be argued that it is during wartime with other nations.

Before 2003: Discussing Sunni ethnicity

The quote below shows (if it has not been clear yet) that Sunni ethnicity was not fully invisible before 2003 it did exist but not as an important identification and community.

_We discussed [Sunni Shi’a relations], I did since the early 80s since. I was in college. […] We discussed it as civilized people, we never fought we only had opposite opinions. […] But very few people did that. It was banned, I don’t know but maybe they were afraid or do not have the knowledge to discuss. I think mostly knowledge._

- Mahmoud

Mahmoud states that some Iraqis discussed ethnic aspects but only few because of lack of knowledge and because of the state force/ the ban. It is a bit unclear what the ban meant but Saddam’s regime was strongly against talking in terms of Sunni and Shi’a according to Haddad. Forbidding people with force to speak about ethnicity is a political way to undermine unwanted identification. While lack of knowledge reflects the invisibility of Sunni ethnicity and lack of Sunni identification. Mahmoud implies that ethnicity did not mind Iraqis because they either did not talk about it or could talk about it without becoming angry. More of how the state influenced institutions can be found in subchapter and theme _National Institutions and How They are Perceived_. Next part of this subchapter will focus on the theme after 2003.

After 2003: Sunni exclusion

In the quote below Ruba discusses the sudden change of 2003.

_No one knows why it has become as it has become. You sleep, everyone is the same, everyone likes each other, then you wake and everything has changed. They came suddenly, they just started killing killing killing Sunni Muslims, they kidnap_

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228 Eriksen (1998), p. 127  
229 Haddad (2014), pp. 157ff
them, they burn their houses, they take money. They kidnap a person because he is Sunni then they call the family and say you have to pay 100 000 or we kill him. The family sells everything only for a hope.

- Ruba

Ruba states that Iraq changed after 2003 and the shift came fast. Before 2003 Sunnis ethnicity was barely visible and decently not excluded. Suddenly Sunnis started being persecuted because of their Sunni ethnicity. Ruba gives another statement below of the Sunni exclusion post 2003.

_We heard all talk about what they did to Sunnis. Everyone was careful. We did not dare to send out children to schools. Anything could happen during the worst years 2005 – 2007 or 2008. It was catastrophic, everyone was stressed and worried, it was very hard._

- Ruba

The persecution of Sunnis post 2003 affected Ruba in a hard and negative way. The years around 2007 are also mentioned as extra chaotic by the other informants. Tripp and Dawisha state that the years around 2007 were a hotspot of polarization and civil war but Dawisha also writes that it decreased somewhat in 2010. Haddad mentions that another upspring occurred again in 2014. In this thesis there is no specific focus on specific years post 2003 yet it can be mentioned that the informants also construct post 2017 as starting to understand that the killing and discrimination is contra productive. At the same time, they do not see the problems being solved soon. One informant stated that the reasons why the war and conflicts has decreased post 2017 is because the others succeeded in their conquest over Iraq. Below both Kadir and Mahmoud talk about the Sunni exclusion.

_All Sunnis must go to imam Ali mosque and take a picture and put it on Facebook to show all work colleagues that “today I have been in the Ali mosque, I like Hussein, I like Ali, I like Khomeini”._

- Kadir

Kadir states that Sunnis must publicly show that they support the new order by relating to Shi’a symbols such as the Shi’a mosque or Shi’a historic persons or to Iran’s political and religious leader. While pre 2003 was characterized by complementation post 2003 is portrayed as the

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231 Dawisha (2009), p. 254
232 Haddad (2014), pp. 157ff
opposite. In post 2003 clearer dominating and dominated group emerges. Shi’a as dominator and Sunni as dominated (this will be developed later in this subchapter). The Shi’a who according to the informants in the quotes above rules the Iraq are approaching the other ethnicity Sunni with dichotomization. This concept is described by Eriksen as when the dominating group conflicts with the dominated. Furthermore, when the ethnic distinctiveness is visible and when the dominating group tries to eliminate the dominated ethnicity.233 As Kadir mentions, Sunnis can be pardoned if they accept Shi’a as their identification and enter the Shi’a community. Thus, if they remove their identification with Sunni ethnicity.

*They don’t have any power. They surrender everything, they have nothing, they can’t make anything. We want to live quietly and peacefully… that’s it haha [Sad laugh] […] Everything is controlled by the Shi’a.*

- Mahmoud

Above Mahmoud discusses Sunni exclusion. Mahmoud states that Sunnis are powerless and only want to live in peace, but it is hard because of the exclusion. Sunni exclusion post 2003 is also shown in previous research by Haddad and al-Qarawe.234 It should mean that Sunni ethnicity become a more important identification than Iraqi nationalism for the informants’ and that Sunni ethnicity influences the informants’ imagined community. Eriksen states that social identification is constructed in relation to the anomaly.235 An identification that is threatened creates becomes more communicated and important for the individual and group.236 The Sunni exclusion by Shi’as should thus make Shi’a ethnicity the threatening anomaly and Sunni ethnicity the threatened and important anomaly for the informants. Haddad, Tripp and Ryan argue that Sunnis have started to identify with sectarian Sunnism.237 Sectarian Sunnism can in this case be translated to that Sunni ethnicity or extreme Sunni ethnicity. However, the analysis in this thesis shows that the informants do not identify with Sunni ethnicity and there is barely a Sunni community. These findings are the thesis’ biggest contribution to research. That the pre 2003 Iraqi nationalism still important after 2003. The identification and community of the Sunni informants is not taken over by Sunni ethnicity but is still held by Iraqi nationalism. These findings are shown in the remaining parts of this subchapter.

233 Eriksen (1998), p. 39f
234 Haddad (2016-Jan-07), al-Qarawe (2010), pp. 39ff
After 2003: Nationalism, kinship and pride

Below Ikram, Ziyad and Samir express their proudness of being Iraqi.

*Iraq is like my mother and father.*

- Ikram

*Yeah for me I like my nationality. I am very proud of my nationality.*

- Ziyad

*I am proud to be Iraqi.*

- Samir

Ikram does not only express proudness but also compares his belonging to Iraq to the relations to his parents. Samir gives a clear example of Anderson’s theory that nationalism can be understood as kinship. Anderson states that nationalism is not a political ideology like fascism. Nationalism is as kinship.\(^{238}\) Speaking about the nation and nationality by relating to kinship is a way of acknowledging that national identity is important for the informants. Below Ikram and Ziyad state that not all can be Iraqis.

*No, you have to be born in Iraq to be Iraqi.*

- Samir

*Of course, you need to be born in Iraq. Like Serbia, if you are Serbian you are born in Serbia.*

- Ziyad

Samir and Ziyad mean that being Iraqi is limited. If you are born in Serbia you are Serbian, if you are born in Iraqi you are Iraqi, which relates to Andersons argument that nations are limited by other nations.\(^{239}\) A Iraqi is not all inclusive but exclusive for people being born in the nation. Eriksen states that social identification can by the member be connected to race and blood,\(^{240}\) which is the case when comparing the love for the nation to the relation to one’s parents. Comparing identification to race and blood constructs an idea that the individuals belonging to the community is essential and natural. An essential and natural belonging to the community

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\(^{238}\) Anderson (1993), p. 21  
^{239}\) Anderson (1993), p. 113  
^{240}\) Eriksen (1998), pp. 79
strengthens the relation because it is not something everyone can be a part of or become a part of instead a person must be born into the community. Identification and community are perceived as an essence of the human being.

After 2003: Rejecting Sunni identification

At the same time as Ikram, Ziyad and Samir express their belonging to the Iraqi nationalism they also distance themselves from the Sunni ethnicity, see below.

**I am Iraqi first not Sunni.**

- Ikram

*No, I am Iraqi. I don’t like to say this is Sunni or this is Shi’a. There is good and bad Iraqi not good and bad Sunni and Shi’a.*

- Ziyad

*First of all I am not Sunni, I am Muslim and Iraqi. I don’t like to say Sunni.*

- Samir

Ikram, Ziyad and Samir do not want to be identified with Sunni ethnicity or belong to a Sunni community. Their community is instead imagined through Iraqi nationalism. The imagination of the community through Iraqi nationalism rather than Sunni ethnicity is the opposite of the arguments in previous research that Sunnis have redefined themselves through Sunni ethnicity. What could be the reason for the different conclusions? I do not believe that Haddad, Tripp and Ryan have made a false analysis, but it rather could be that our approaches differ which results in different analyses and conclusions. The belonging to the Iraqi nationalism (which is also shown below through the relations to the anomaly) and the distancing to a Sunni ethnicity gives Sunni victimhood a special role. Haddad states that Sunnis define themselves through victimhood.\(^{241}\) I agree that Sunnis define themselves through victimhood. It is mostly (not only) through the exclusion and persecution of Sunnis in Iraq (shown above in this subchapter) that Sunni becomes a specific social identification that impacts the lives of the informants. It may be that research connecting mostly Sunnis with Sunni ethnicity focuses on the exclusion of Sunnis where Sunni ethnicity does play an important role. Iraqi nationalism is less connected to the exclusion of Sunnis and therefore Sunni ethnicity seems as a major identification for Sunnis by research focusing on exclusion of Sunnis. However, it misses that (according to the

\(^{241}\) Haddad (2014), p. 151
informants) that Sunnis feel as nationalists and reject Sunni ethnicity. It also misses that Sunnis sees other nations as the reason for Sunni persecution, not Shi’as (which is shown below in this subchapter).

Haddad writes that Sunnis are not unified post 2003.\textsuperscript{242} Sunni ethnicity was under communicated and Sunni community was not imagined before 2003 as shown in this theme. The lack of Sunni symbols or language etcetera being shown pre 2003 makes it harder for Sunnis to unite post 2003 according to Haddad.\textsuperscript{243} The conclusion of ununified Sunnis is also made in this thesis by the informants’ distancing too Sunni ethnicity. There exist no certain Iraqi Sunni community but identification to Sunni ethnicity exist in a small extent and is mostly related to victimhood. Anderson states that he finds it interesting that even if members of a nation suffer exploration in the nation they still feel nationalistic belonging to the nation.\textsuperscript{244} The persecution of Sunnis in Iraq at the same time as Sunnis imagine themselves as a part of a Iraqi nationalistic community is an example of being nationalistic despite exploitation.

After 2003: An opposite perspective

However, in the two quotes below Ruba does not fully agree with Ikram, Samir and Ziyad.

\begin{quote}
We are proud that we come from Iraq […] Everything before 2003 was wonderful […] Everyone had respect for Iraqis, if you go to Jordan, Egypt or Saudi Arabia all say “ouf from Iraq!” […] But now uh, you can’t compare it is so different in Iraq. It is catastrophic to be Iraqi. I feel ashamed. […] No no I don’t feel solidarity with Sunnis.
\end{quote}

- Ruba

Ruba states that before 2003 she felt proud to be Iraqi but not after. She does neither feel solidarity with Sunnis after 2003. How come that Ruba states the opposite of the Ikram, Samir and Ziyad? One argument could be that exploitation can result into that a member of a nation does not want to be a part of the community. A second explanation could be that nations and nationalism are socially constructed and not essential or natural thus making it able for people to leave. A third explanation could be that Ruba does not feel that the nation-state is not any longer ruled by Iraqis but by other nations (see next theme). But Anderson states that it is

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{242} Haddad (2014), pp. 147ff
\textsuperscript{243} Haddad (2014), pp. 147ff
\textsuperscript{244} Anderson (1993), p. 22
\end{flushright}
nationalism that creates the nation state and nation not the reverse.\textsuperscript{245} Thus, a failing nation state does not mean failing nationalism. None of these explanations are waterproof. This analysis cannot find a certain explanation for Ruba’s perspective.

**After 2003: Iran and America as the anomaly**

In the quote below Ruba states that Iran is controlling Iraq after 2003.

\textit{But after 2003 it just became “Hey are you Sunni or Shi’a? What party do you belong to?” Iran masters Iraq, has occupied Iraq}

- Ruba

Ziyad makes alike statement below as Ruba does above.

\textit{The biggest problem in Iraq is Shi’a and Sunni and it is coming as a result from occupation of US not as something we had pre 2003. Then Iran invest in this issue and take power.}

- Ziyad

According to Ziyad the polarization and conflict between Sunni and Shi’a are neither coming from grassroot reasons nor from pre 2003 situations but from foreign influence such as the US occupation and Iranian investment in the polarization and conflict.

\textit{Iran and US plan. They create Daesh I think to gather all Sunnis and burn them and so they can give information to US or Iran […] For example Ahmed has big energy and says “fuck Iran” “fuck America” and Daesh writes down. You understand? Then Iran comes and grabs Ahmed.}

- Samir

My purpose is not to reflect upon if Iran or US created Daesh but to see what this thinking means for the informants’ construction of nationalism and ethnicity. In the quote above Samir tells the same story as Ruba and Ziyad but Samir also implies that Daesh is not a creation of sectarianized Sunnis but of Iran and America. As in pre 2003 other nations such as Iran and US are constructed as the anomaly. The threat does not come from Shi’as but from Iran and America. It is from the imagined threat that Iran and US are exploiting Iraq that the informants’

\textsuperscript{245} Anderson (1993) p. 10
imagined community is formed from. In the quote below Ikram states that Daesh also fight Sunnis.

[Shows scars on the body] I am Sunni do you know who did this? Daesh.

- Samir

The argument that Sunnis are becoming sectarianized and imagining mainly themselves from the threat of Shi’a does not comply with the analytical findings in this thesis. Mahmoud’s quote below strengthen this thought.

The corruption is not just Shi’a, most Sunnis are also horribly corrupted in the government.

- Mahmoud

Sunni ethnicity is barley constructed as an identification which the informants imagine themselves through. Sunnis are not becoming sectarianized and Sunnis do not see Shi’a as their anomaly. The rejection of the state which Haddad writes about is also focused on rejection of Sunni politicians who are also corrupt according to Mahmoud. The lack of unification of Sunnis lifted by Haddad is made clearer by the informants. The informants do not imagine a Sunni community where only Sunnis are included but an Iraqi nationalistic community where both Sunnis and Shi’as can be included but also excluded. Iraqi nationalism is the identification of the informants and other nations are the anomaly of the identification and community.

After 2003: Shi’a leader Muqtada al-Sadr an example of Sunni and Shi’a unity

I find it interesting when the informants who do not know each other give same examples, see the three quotes below.

Shi’a leader Muqtada Sadr does not like Saudi Arabia and Iran. And Iran does not like Muqtada. This is good.

- Kadir

Sadir is the biggest and strongest Shi’a group. We respect him because he does not follow Iran, he is Iraqi.

- Ziyad

246 Haddad (2014), pp. 147ff
247 Haddad (2014), pp. 152f
A Shi’a leader Muqtada fought against US and is still against America. Therefore, 
Muqtada is liked.

- Samir

From Kadir’s, Ziyad’s and Samir’s quotes the hypothesis that Shi’a is not the main anomaly is strengthened. Muqtada’s leads a strong Shi’a group yet is still liked by the informants because Muqtada is said to be against Iran and America. Other nations are the anomaly, not other ethnicities such as Shi’a. If Shi’a was the anomaly and Sunni the US, Muqtada would probably not be praised.

After 2003: Explosion of imam Ali’s mosque

In the three quotes below the bombing of a famous Shi’a mosque of Imam Ali a historic Shi’a figure is discussed. The bombing boosted polarization because it is understood as a Sunni attack against Shi’as. But the informants tell a different story.

*They exploded Imam Ali, he is like a prophet. It is in a Sunni area. No one know who did it. They say Sunnis so Shi’a start attacking Sunnis and Sunnis back. But maybe it was the Americans who bomb it.*

- Kadir

*I told you that in 2006 the exploitation of Ali. They say “Oh this is Sunni” but the investigation says it is someone from Iran who want to make sectarian problems.*

- Ziyad

The explosion of the mosque which started a cycle of violence described by Haddad as a never-ending revenge, is said by Kadir and Ziyad be done by other nations such as Iran and US not by someone with a Sunni ethnicity. The bombing is a good example of how the informants imagine the Sunni and Shi’a polarization and conflict as an Iraq and Iran or US conflict.

After 2003: Sunni as foreign fighters not Iraqis

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248 Haddad (2014), p. 150
The informants also state that the most people fighting and killing are not Iraqis but foreign fighters. See quotes below.

Yes yes, they have come from other countries. At the same some are Iraqis and some Iraqis agree with foreign people.

- Ruba

The ones who came from other countries brought the problems, that Sunnis and Shi’as do not like each other and want to fight.

- Ikram

I asked them [relatives in Iraq] is someone from us in Daesh? They say no. We think they come from out Sunni neighbours Syria.

- Kadir

Ruba, Ikram and Kadir state that most people fighting in Iraq based on ethnic polarization are not Iraqis and don’t belong to the Iraqi imagined community. The fighters are instead from foreign countries. This perception strengthens that the informants construct foreign nationalist as the anomaly rather than Iraqis identifying with for example Shi’a ethnicity. Before preceding to next subchapter. One informant, Ruba, stated that most Shi’as are bad. Not all she has some Shi’a friends. Ruba constructs Shi’a as the anomaly. Which shows that ethnicity has become more important for Sunnis since pre 2003 yet not to the extent that previous research argues.

5.2 National Institutions and How They are Perceived

Second subchapter treats the second theme National Institutions and How They are Perceived. The theme explored how institutions are perceived by the informants and how they construct and are reconstructed by Iraqi nationalism and Sunni ethnicity. The overall connection between the theme and theory is that both Eriksen and Anderson write about institutions which construct and are constructed by the community and identification. The intuitions construct and are constructed by Iraqi nationalism and Sunni ethnicity and its communities. These intuitions are media, cities, education, the state and the map.

What are the main arguments in this theme? National institutions pre 2003 constructed and reconstructed Iraqi nationalism. Media was controlled by the regime. Saddam a central figure

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249 Anderson (1993), p. 55
250 Anderson (1993), p. 71f
in Iraqi nationalism had an authoritarian rule. Cities and education did not communicate ethnicity. The lack of ethnic communication from the institutions points the lack of Sunni identification and a Sunni community. Instead the institutions show a nationalistic Iraqi community (Sunni hegemony). The institutions changed after 2003. According to Tripp and Hippler the public sector got ransacked and national institutions fell after 2003. The post 2003 national institutions are controlled by Shi’as according to Haddad. Media channels rose and started communicating ethnicity. Polarization grew. Parties and politicians are in control of media and the state. Politicians are seen as corrupt and as bought by foreign countries such as Iran. The whole state is seen as occupied by Iran. Education has become unprofessional and cities are implemented by ethnic communication such as ethnic symbols. Even tough Sunni ethnicity is over communicated after 2003 Sunni identification and a Sunni community are not perceived as wanted by the informants. This is because the ethnic communication is not seen as a construction by Iraq but by Iran thus by the anomaly. Therefore, the informants reject the state etcetera. The map is constructed as setting physical borders to Iraq. Showing its cities, universities, rivers and areas. The map is a nationalistic construction but also includes ethnic communication by showing what areas are mostly populated by Sunni etcetera.

**Before 2003: Media’s relation to nationalism and ethnicity**

Anderson states that print-capitalism’s ability to produce text in for example books or newspapers lead to the birth of nations by giving the readers a platform from which they could imagine their national community. How was media in Iraq before 2003?

*There are just two channels, governmental channels. The satellite is not allowed. The media is very important in affecting people.*

[…]

*There is nothing [illegal media] just two governmental channels. The satellite is not allowed. If you have satellite in your house you will be in prison for six months*

- Ziyad

*Media as you know, the satellite channels wasn’t developed in the middle east until late 90s. But in Iraq it was banned because we don’t have communication with*

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252 Tripp (2007), pp. 274f, Hippler (2005), p. 84
253 Haddad (2016-Jan-07)
254 Anderson (1993), p. 55
Both Ziyad and Mahmoud imply that few channels existed. Mahmoud states that the media channels decreased as a result of sanctions imposed on Iraq after wars with Iran and Kuwait. The Baath control over media and what media does according to Anderson results in the Baath having a tool to influence the imagining of a community. Is it thus possible that the perspective of Iraqi nationalism (Sunni hegemony) explored in previous theme is found in media?

During Saddam’s rule everyone are with each other, everyone is together. Even if we don’t agree I show respect for you. We must sit at the same table and discuss. We have differences but don’t hate each other. Everyone was together in social media, tv and everything.

- Ruba

Rubu states that media had respect different point of views. However, Saddam’s authoritarian leadership points the opposite. Ruba also explains media as a place where people respected each other and did not fight. Exclusion occurred during the Baath rule, yet the official agenda never included certain ethnic laws or policies. Instead the agenda was national according to Dawisha. Therefore, the content of the regime-controlled media is not based (visibly) on ethnicity. The small number of channels, the regime control of media and the consensus in media can be a result of the will to create a nationalistic imagined community. Anderson states that during the later shift from monarchical kingdoms to nations the monarch tried to remain in power by legitimizing his/hers rule with nationalism. A planned and enforced political nationalism inspired by how other nations had forged their nationalism. Saddam’s project to increase and forge Iraqi nationalism can be interpreted as political nationalism.

Before 2003: The State and Saddam Hussein

In the quote below Samir talks about Saddam’s authoritarian rule.

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255 Dawisha (2009), p. 208
256 Anderson (1993), p. 110
Look Saddam said we cannot have any satellite. We heard on radio that satellite did that many channels and internet was there. People got tired. Like Kim [Leader of North Korea], when it is his birthday we must make cake and dance. It becomes a habit. In TV Saddam comes and talks. In The university you must read about the Baath party. We feel that it is not fully okay.

- Samir

The media was controlled by the regime and influenced by Saddam’s will to forge Iraqi nationalism. Saddam himself was put in the centre as a symbol of the nation by enforcing traditions such as celebrating his birthday or reading about his party in the university. The forging of the Iraqi nationalism with Saddam at the centre can be an example of political nationalism. Saddam trying to legitimate his rule by putting him as a father of the nation. Lukitz states that Pan-Arabism (transnational Arabic nationalism started by Abdel Gamal Nasser in Egypt) was a tool for Saddam to legitimate his rule and the Sunni hegemony.\textsuperscript{257} In the conversation below between Samir and me, Samir points out Saddam’s role as a central authoritarian figure of the nation.

\textit{Like Yugoslavia, like Tito. Tito kept the cohesion by force, he was the centre. But when Tito goes away the centre of the chosen, it becomes divided. Iraq is the same, the same player.}

- Samir

\textit{Is Saddam as Tito?}

- Ahmed (me)

\textit{Yes. Even he is a dictator, even though he does not give people rights, people cannot talk freely, he made people come together but when he goes away…}

- Samir

Because of Saddam’s authoritarian control over the state it makes him a good actor to analyse for understanding how the state influenced Iraqi nationalism, Sunni ethnicity and the community.

\textit{Saddam, if you go back to him, he did not think about religion. If he had thought about Sunni he had made a group like al-Qaeda and that “we are Sunni, we will}

\textsuperscript{257} Lukitz (1995), pp. 144f
In the quote above Kadir states that Saddam was not religious and did not talk or act based on Sunni ethnicity. Alike conclusions are made in previous theme *Perception and Imagination About the National Identity in Relation to the Anomaly* where the informants imagine Saddam as an authoritarian leader who practiced Iraqi nationalism (Sunni hegemony) and did not exclude certain ethnicities. Dawisha states that Saddam never publicly talked about Sunni (or Shi’a) ethnicity. 258 Nevertheless, Haddad, Dawisha, al-Qarawee and Tripp state that Sunni ethnicity was still privileged because of the Sunni hegemony. 259 Yet according to Hippler and Tripp it was mostly/only Saddam’s network, who was mainly Sunni, that was privileged. 260 Saddam’s authoritarian role can explain how it comes that Saddam’s network was privileged. Because the power Saddam had according to the informants and previous research, he could privilege certain individuals or groups that he liked.

Findings so far in this subchapter are that media, the state and Saddam all construct and reconstruct Iraqi nationalism (Sunni hegemony). The influence of Iraqi nationalism found in how the informants discuss that ethnicity was not communicated, the authoritarian style and that everyone respected each other. Saddam is constructed as a central figure of Iraqi nationalism.

As is shown in the third theme and last subchapter of chapter Analysis. An idealization of the past is occurring when the informants speak about Saddam and the pre 2003 (Saddam) period. More about this is found in the last theme.

**Before 2003: Lack of ethnic communication in cities and education**

Kadir has previously in this theme mentioned that education pre 2003 was controlled by Saddam, including a course about the Baath party. Below Ruba gives her views on education.

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258 Dawisha (2009), p. 208  
Many came from other countries only to study in Iraq on the university. We had very high standards of education. If you studied in Baghdad or other universities in Iraq it meant a lot.

- Ruba

According to Ruba the education had high standards. Anderson writes that education has an important role for imagining the nation. It is towards the education that people in the nation travel, where they come in contact with other members of the same imagined community.261 The good standard of education according to Ruba should thus mean that Iraq had pre 2003 a working education that had a role in imagining the community. Ruba also states that degrees from Baghdad are highly regarded. Anderson writes that nations were born partly because people travelled to same cities mostly for educational reasons. Cities and education became a centre which members of the nation met each other and noticed they share same community. 262

What about the cities? Was nationalism and ethnicity communicated in the cities? Ikram and Samir state below that it was not possibly to see if a city was mainly Sunni or Shi’a populated before 2003.

[Starts talking more loudly and claps his hands] Before? No! Then you could not see who [Sunni or Shi’a] lived in a city. Before no one knew and no one cared.

- Ikram

Could you see before 2003 if a town was mainly Sunni populated?

- Me (Ahmed)

Before, no.

- Samir

Sunni ethnicity was not visibly seen in the streets, ethnicity was under communicated. When members of the nation to the same cities pre 2003 they could not imagine a Sunni ethnic imagined community from communication in city. From for example communicated symbols. The informants’ perception of national institutions shows no signs of Sunni ethnicity constructing or being construct by the institutions. The institutions are produced are produce

261 Anderson (1993), pp. 71f
262 Anderson (1993), pp. 71f
Iraqi nationalism and an imagined nationalistic community. Remaining parts of this subchapter treat national institutions after 2003.

**After 2003: Media’s relation to nationalism and ethnicity**

Below Ruba answers why she thinks that religion became more important after 2003.

> I see on the news. It is social medias, it is shown in tv, news, radio, that either you become Muslim or you die.

- Ruba

Ruba implies in her quote that religion started to be communicated in media post 2003. However, Ruba does not state that it is Sunni Islam or Shi’a Islam that is communicated just Islam. Below Ziyad is asked if it is by force or by propaganda that the state post 2003 gathers support.

> By propaganda not force. By propaganda, making tv channels, one for Sunni and one for Shi’a. Making media and movies and interviews, very bad. […] There are more than one hundred tv channels in Iraq. Every party has their own tv channel and they supported with money by Iran, by America, by England.

- Ziyad

Ziyad makes alike statement as Ruba. However, Ziyad implies that the number of media platforms have expanded and that it is not a common Muslim identification that is communicated but a Sunni Muslims identification and Shi’a Muslim identification. Haddad writes that Facebook groups with names of historic Sunni persons flourish post 2003.263 Parties are divided upon different ethnic identification such as Sunni and have their own media. Because Sunni ethnicity has become over communicated post 2003 while it was under communicated pre 2003, it could be presumed that a Sunni community would be imagined by the informants. Yet as seen in previous theme *Perception and Imagination About the National Identity in Relation to the Anomaly* a Sunni community barely exists. The reasons are because, as also stated in previous theme, the threat and the anomaly are other nations which is also mentioned in the quote above. It is Iran, US and England who supports different parties and media channels. In the quote below Kadir discusses media and parties.

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263 Haddad (2014), pp. 157ff
When they want to get vote they look at tv and see politicians talking good about Saddam and shit about Iran. All alphabetic Sunnis think “YES they are good, we will write their names” and when they have written their names they notice that the politicians have been friends to Iran. People are stupid and don’t look up the background “no they are not friends with Iran, they are Sunni, they like Saddam!

People are listening to TV and are stupid, “we will vote for them” and when they voted they notice the politicians follow Iran.

- Kadir

According to Kadir, Sunni politicians falsely state that they want to rebuild the nation in lines with Saddam’s politics. But the Sunni politicians are also corrupted by Iran. “Stupid Sunnis” fall for the lies that politicians spread on media. Kadir implies as Ruba and Ziyad that Sunni ethnicity has started to be communicated in media post 2003. Yet Kadir also states that Sunni politicians communicate Saddam’s politics such as Iraqi nationalism. But Kadir states the Iraqi nationalism is communicated under false intentions. The Sunni politician’s communication can be understood as political nationalism. Thus, that the Sunni politicians try to legitimate their rule by claiming nationalism. Anderson states that political nationalism was used by monarchs to legitimate their rule when people started questioning the monarch’s divine connection to god which legitimate the monarchs rule. The Sunni media does not seem to succeed in imagining a Sunni community even though Sunni ethnicity is being over communicated post 2003. The explanation is as before, that the conflict is not understood as Sunni versus Shi’a by the informants but as Iraq versus other nations such as Iran. Furthermore, Sunnis are once again also imagined as corrupt, stupid and as “the other” rather than “us”.

After 2003: The New State and New Politicians

The scepticism towards politicians is further developed by the informants. Analysing the scepticism towards politicians is one way to understand how the informants perceive the state. The problem of corruption makes it not possible for the Sunnis to vote for what they believe in. To forge the national institutions in accordance to their ethnic and nationalistic interests. They cannot maximize their interests. Eriksen writes that maximizing interest is one of the goals of an ethnicity according to Cohen.

What about elections after 2003? Are they free?

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264 Anderson (1993), p. 110
They seem free but… under the table. By money you can put a lot of votes. Pay and take votes. 1000 votes for 1000 dollars for example. All the dealing happens in Syria, In Jordan and in Dubai. They make dealing and business.

- Ahmed (me)

Ziyad states that the elections are corrupt and that the corruptions comes from foreign countries. The anomaly other nations and the idea of Iraq under occupation has influenced how the informants perceive politics and the state. The politicians are said to come from outside Iraq. Ryan states that exiled politicians during Saddam’s regime returned to Iraq after the US occupation and were given political influence and control. Ziyad perceives Iraqi politicians as coming outside Iraq in the quote below.

All come from outside. Maybe I can say for you 10% are from inside but they were not politicians but became it after 2003.

- Ziyad

Politicians are also according to Ikram the ones who communicate ethnicity while Iraqi citizens do not care about ethnicity.

Do you think that the problem regarding Sunni and Shi’a are big in Iraq? I think that it is not among ordinary people but mainly amongst parties.

- Ikram

The Sunni rejection of the state mentioned by Haddad is shown in the quotes above. An example of the rejection is the boycott of the election 2005 by Sunnis. Mahmoud expresses his view on the state below.

Shi’as were in majority, like 60%, they wanted all the power and got it. Then they started to change the situation in Iraq. Especially the military and police because now we have very powerful police who is militarized […] But the Shi’as parties don’t trust the Shi’a army […] This is why since Daesh attacked 2014 they started making militant groups. There is now around 300 000 in a parallel army. They pushed the national army aside. The situation in Iraq is very worse.

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266 Ryan (2010), p. 66
267 Haddad (2014), pp. 152f
Mahmoud implies that Shi’as have taken the control after 2003. Shi’a politicians have also made a parallel army consisting of militant groups. A rise of militant groups occurred since the rise and fall of Daesh. The militant groups fought Daesh. Mahmoud constructs Shi’a politicians as corrupt, as pushing aside Iraqi nationalism and as working for own interests rather than Iraqi interests by replacing the national army with militant Shi’a groups. The rise of communicating Sunni ethnicity after 2003 is seen in previous theme. Since ethnicities work in relation to the anomaly the rise of communication of Shi’a ethnicity is also seen. The informants do not explain the post 2003 order as Shi’a Iraqis taking over national institutions but the informants have started mentioning Shi’a ethnicity in relation to the post 2003 order. Eriksen argues that when two groups are in conflict, stereotypes tend to rise.²⁶⁹ Haddad writes that Sunnis have stereotypically portray Shi’as as supporters of the post 2003 order.²⁷⁰ While it is true that Shi’as are connected to the post 2003 order. The general Shi’a is not perceived as liking Iraq post 2003. Instead it is perceived as other nations control Iraq. The Sunni exclusion is perceived a consequence of foreign occupation not of Iraqi Shi’as disliking Iraqi Sunnis.

Dawisha states that in 2010 the ethnic polarization decreased. A proof is that politicians started talking about national agendas rather than ethnic.²⁷¹ However, Ruba states that all politicians have nationalistic agendas but they are lying.

> Everyone talks about that we are Iraqis and we fight for Iraq and we want to change Iraq. But no one does it they just talk but no one does.

- Ruba

The scepticism towards politicians and the rejection of the state means that the political agenda does not necessarily reflect Sunni interests. Ethnicities try to construct nationalism to maximize their interests. Before 2003 Sunni hegemony tied to maximize Sunni interest and after 2003 it is a Shi’a perspective that construct the nationalism according to Haddad.²⁷² One interpretation of why the informants perceive the politicians as not wishing the best for Iraq is because the politicians base their nationalism on Shi’a ethnicity which is not seen as an objective and common Iraqi nationalism by the informants.

²⁶⁹ Eriksen (1998), pp. 34
²⁷¹ Dawisha (2009), p. 254
²⁷² Haddad (2016-Jan-07)
In the quotes below Mahmoud and Kadir state that both Sunni and Shi’a politicians are corrupted by Iran.

_The parliament is pro Iran. We import mostly from Iran. Iran is under sanction and we want to get the benefit to Iran and you know the Iranian president was in Iraq. […] They said we need to increase the economical and commercial change._

- Mahmoud

Mahmoud argues that the parliament in whole follow the wishes of Iran. Which to some extent makes the Iraqi nation un-sovereign? Anderson states that imagined community as sovereign is a ground foundation for how nations are imagined. Therefore an unsovereign nation-state is a problem for Iraqi nationalists.

_It is hard to be sure but Abdul Mahdi supports Iran […] Iran decided that the Sunni president should be Mohammed al-Habousi. He has a Sunni name but that’s all._

- Kadir

The national institution is not perceived as positive by the informants even tough a Sunni name is figuring in the parliament. Because the informants perceive that foreign countries occupy it and force the ethnic communication. Ryan however argues that the politicians represent the imagined fear of the voters. The politicians talk about protecting Sunni from Shi’a or Shi’a from Sunni or Sunni from Iraq or Shi’a from Saddam etcetera. The voters identify with the fear and vote for the parties that can defend them. It is possible that some Sunnis vote for Sunni politicians in hope to be defended from Sunni fears at the same time as some Sunnis reject the state because they see it as occupied by foreign powers. Haddad states that Sunnis have not decided whether to develop Iraq inside the state or by rejecting it.

**After 2003: Communicating ethnicity in cities and education**

In the quote below Kadir states his views on education after 2003.

_When I was at the university. There was an Imam he was analphabetic, he was criminal in his blood and he wanted decide over us. There are many doctorands that read in Russia or England, educated, but then an analphabetic comes and_

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273 Anderson (1993), p. 21
274 Ryan (2010), 65ff
275 Haddad (2014), pp. 152f
says fatwa [religious response/opinion/advice] and that he will die and he will not die. He will work and he will not work.

- Kadir

Kadir describes in the quote above how religion permeates higher education. How religious leader such as an Imam influences education. While the pre 2003 education was seen as professional and objective. The post 2003 education is perceived as religious and subjective. Kadir does not relate to the education as institutions post 2003. What about the cities? Are they be perceived as communicating ethnicity? In the quote below Ikram answers if it is possible to see if a city is mainly Sunni populated without knowing it.

Yes you can. You can see in the city if mainly Sunnis live there.

- Ikram

Ikram implies that the city started communicating ethnicity after 2003. According to Anderson cities are a main component of the nation. It is to cities (bigger cities with for example higher education) that citizens travel to and experience that people from the nation share same imagined community.\(^\text{276}\) Then it should mean that if cities are perceived as excluding certain ethnicity the ethnicity will find it harder to imagine community. In the quote below Ruba talks about Shi’a cities.

Now? No I never, never that I dare. […] If you ask me I would never date to go to such a place [Shi’a city]. There are two sides of Baghdad […] they have separated it, people don’t go to each other’s places much [Sunni to Shi’a part and vice versa]. If I talk about myself I don’t dare. My man is named [Sunni name], I would never leave him to go there [Shi’a city].

- Ruba

According to Ikram and Ruba cities are communicating ethnicity after 2003. Haddad states that it is common to find symbols such as banners or paintings who communicate ethnicity.\(^\text{277}\) The cities have also become divided. Sunnis do not dare to go to Shi’a cities in fear. Through fear their identification with Sunni becomes alive and the informants must act in accordance to the Sunni identification. When a national institution as the city, especially bigger cites become divided both inside the city and cites amongst other cities, the forging of an imagining

\(^{276}\) Anderson (1993), p. 110
\(^{277}\) Haddad (2014), pp. 157ff
community consisting of all members in the nation becomes harder. Instead subcommunities such as ethnic ones can strive. In the interview with Ikram he states that that he has a feeling of insecurity in some Shi’a cities but not all. However, Ikram also gives another interesting input, see the quote below.

*Can you feel the same insecurity on a Sunni city?*

- Ahmed (me)

*Not all. But there are some areas that you can feel unsafe.*

- Ikram

Ikram can feel same insecurity in Sunni cities as in Shi’a cities. As has already been stated in previous theme, Sunnis (extreme, foreign fighters) are sometimes, not often, constructed as the anomaly. Feeling the same insecurity in Sunni cities as Shi’a cities is another example of how Iraqi Sunnis do not imagine a Sunni community. Haddad also argues that Sunnis are not unified behind a Sunni identification post 2003 because Sunni ethnicity was under communicated before 2003 and no Sunni community was imagined. From the before 2003 part of this subchapter Haddad’s conclusion that Sunni was under communicated pre 2003 is proved to be right when it comes to institutions. It is interesting that even though national institutions communicate Sunni ethnicity, a Sunni community is barely imagined and the informants barely identify with Sunni ethnicity. Anderson states it is not the nation and the state which creates nationalism it is the nationalism that creates the nation and the nation state. This means that the informants can imagine a nationalist community and identify with Iraqi nationalism without identifying with the nation state. However, nationalism is connected to the nation state and does always claim one according to Eriksen. Therefore, the informants’ statements can be interpreted as they reject the current nation state but strive to implement their version of their nation state, to maximize their interests. As Eriksen’s states ethnicities strive to maximize their interests, symbolic and national. Samir states in the interview that walking inside a Shi’a city that you do not know was very dangerous in 2007. However, Samir states in the quote below that he was able to walk in Shi’a areas where he knows people.

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278 Haddad (2014), pp. 147ff
279 Anderson (1993), p. 10
There are two ways in our town, one is Shi’a and one Sunni. Sometimes I go through Shi’a street and sometimes Sunni street. And sometimes the Shi’as said “hurry hurry from here they are going to make problems with some Sunnis” and then it is better that I am not there so I don’t get hurt.

- Samir

Samir means that if he knows the Shi’as then it is safe for him to be there. Even though Shi’a ethnicity is communicated in the city. Friendship with Shi’as in the town can result in the Sunni person not feeling threatened.

After 2003: Imagining Iraqi trough the Iraqi map

The last national institution to be analysed is the map. Both Anderson and Eriksen write that the map is an important aspect of the construction of the nation. It concretizes the nation physically. Right before the interview with Ikram he draw the Iraqi map to give me an introduction to the Iraqi nation. Kadir also draw the map but under the interview. Kadir grabbed a pen and paper and talked while drawing the map.

[Drawing the Iraqi map] This is Naiova. This is Mosul and this is Baghdad. Euphrates comes here and they met each other here […] Baghdad lays between these two rivers. This is Duhok, this is Sulaymaniyah, this is Diyala and this, this Zakho and this Erbil and they say that this is Kurdistan, most people live here are Kurd. And this is Iran and look here this is Basra. This is Najaf and Karbala. Here is Syria, here is Turkey and here is Jordan. Here Saddam made his own lake he did it with a lake coming from Tigris. Baghdad is close to the Iranian border, here they can easy bomb from Iran. Here we have much oil in Basra. Here is Diyala they are Sunni… all these cities are Sunnis. This is Fallujah. Fallujah is the city and Anbar is the province. This is Karbala, in Karbala you can find Hussein and his brother Abbas. First university was in Baghdad and Basra they are very old universities and they started with Arabic letters. Next university is here in al-Kufa. Ali liked this city, there is water and good weather here, when Ali died he got buried here. Khomeini when he comes he will want to make this city the Islamic capital.

- Kadir

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When Kadir talks about the map to show me Iraq. He divides areas/cities based on ethnicity such as Sunni (Arabic), Kurd and Shi’a. Kadir also states the anomaly Iran and the risk of Iran occupying Iraq with Iranian forces. He talks about big cities such as Baghdad, Basra and Mosul. He talks about the rivers such as Euphrates. Kadir also talks about the lake which Saddam built and lastly about the universities and where they were first built. Kadir perceives the map as showing the Iraqi nation, its cities, its ethnic areas. Anderson that the reason for people traveling to the bigger cities is higher education, as stated this traveling is a process in constructing the imagined community.283 At the same time Kadir shows in what cities the universities can be found. Kadir connects the map to Saddam’s lake which can be a connection between the Iraqi nation with Iraqi nationalism constructed before 2003. The map constructs the imagined community as a nation which includes ethnicity as an important aspect. The map constructs Iraq’s physical borders to other nations.

5.3 Idealizing the Past and Imagining the Present

This subchapter treats the third theme Idealizing the Past and Imagining the Present. The theme explores how the informants interpret history and how the interpretations constructs present identification and community. The overall connection between the theme and theory is that both Eriksen and Anderson state that ethnicities and communities use history to construct ethnicities and communities. Wanted aspects in the history are over communicated and connected to the present while unwanted aspects are under communicated or forgotten. The interpretation of history constructs and is constructed by the present ethnicity and community.284

The main arguments in this theme is that the informants’ historical interpretations are connected to the Iraqi nationalistic community and Iraqi nationalism which is discussed in theme one. Saddam who is a central figure in Iraqi nationalism (see second theme) is idealized as treating ethnicities equally and as having strong support by Iraqis. Previous opponents of Saddam are said to want Saddam back after witnessing the fall of the Baath in 2003 and the consequences. The historical interpretation is also connected to the anomalies discussed in theme other nations such as Iran and America. The informants’ state that Iran/Persia has long fought Iraq/Arabic communities. That Sunni and Shi’a polarization did not occur in the past but is a political elite construction. The interpretation of history is done through the perspective or Iraqi nationalism and the interpretation partly constructs Iraqi nationalism. The analysis could not find

283 Anderson (1993), p. 71f
connections between Sunni ethnicity and the interpretation of history. Which means that the Sunni ethnicity and the Sunni community is barley communicated by the informants in the present. However, a connection between Sunni and old Islamic books is made.

**Reinventing Saddam Hussein and the Baath Regime**

A difficulty with the theme Idealizing the Past and Imagining the Present is to decide whether the statements of the informants is an observation that the informants have witnessed. Or if it is an interpretation of historical events which the informants have not witnessed or have witnessed. The informants share the same story that life during Saddam was better than after 2003, is this an idealization or not? Can it be both at the same time? In this thesis, idealization of the past tries to understand how the informants perceive historical events which happened during a time when the informants did not live. However, there is one exception and it is Saddam and the Baath regime. Perceiving Saddam’s era as positive is probably partly a non-idealization of the past but at the same time also an idealization. Haddad writes that Sunnis were more sceptic against Saddam before 2003, because after 2003 their situation worsened. The idealization of the Saddam’s era is shown below.

*Between ten or twenty percent of people they don’t like the Baath regime. But I know a lot of people that did not like the Baath regime at that time and now when I meet them they say “Oh we are sorry we have thought in a bad direction” “Baath is better than this party”.*

- Ziyad

Ziyad states that few people disliked the Baath regime before 2003. Some of the people who disliked the Baath regime wish for its return after seeing the new post 2003 state. Both Anderson and Eriksen state that nationalistic and ethnic groups tend to redefine the past in according how the present is perceived. The redefinition strengthens the construction of the identification and community in the present. Aspects in the history that are seen a positive are over communicated while aspects in the history that are unwanted are under communicated and/or forgotten. Some aspects of the history that the identification and community claims as their own have barely connection at all with the claimer. Ziyad’s quote can be understood as an idealization of the past. Ziyad states that only ten or twenty percent disliked the Baath regime. The exclusion of Shi’as should have resulted in a bigger opposition. In the second theme it is shown that some

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285 Haddad (2014), p. 147
informants were critical of Saddam’s authoritarian style. The Baath’s authoritarian control over media can have made the support of the Baath seem as bigger than it was. It should not be forgotten that Saddam and the Baath massacred Shi’as 1982 and Kurds in 1988. Ziyad also state that some of the opponents of Saddam have turned to supporters after 2003. This is a good example of idealizing the past, forgetting the exploitation and wanting the old times back. Kadir also states that Iraqis want Saddam back.

*Did Iraqis like Saddam or was...*

- Ahmed (me)

*Now they like him and want him back.*

- Kadir

The idealization of the Baath and Saddam constructs the informant's identification and community. The idealization strengthens the informants’ relation to Iraqi nationalism. As shown in previous theme, Saddam is a centre of Iraqi nationalism pre 2003. As shown in first theme, Iraqi nationalism did not vanish after 2003 but is still alive and a major identification. Idealizing Saddam glorifies the present identification with Iraqi nationalism and the nationalistic community. In the quote below Mahmoud states that the Baath has since start not focused on religion (or ethnicity).

*This is about history. The Baath started in I think 1947. The first congress of the Baath party. The founder the first one was Christian. It is based on the Arabic nation and how they fight imperialism.*

- Mahmoud

Mahmoud perceives the history of the Baath has fighting imperialism and not caring about religion (or ethnicity). This historical interpretation is seen today, as shown in theme one, when the informants construct the anomaly as other nations and neither as Shi’as nor Christians etcetera. Lukitz states that the anti-colonial struggle in early 90s influenced Iraqi nationalism. The quote above can be understood as the present Iraqi nationalism lifts the anti-colonial struggle because it is proud of it.

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287 Tripp (2007), pp. 313f
288 Lukitz (1995) pp. 144f
Perceiving Iraq versus Iran and Sunni versus Shi’a in a Historical Context

Kadir states below that Sunnis and Shi’as have not fought each other for 1000 years. Kadir also says that Ali and Omar did not fight each other. Thus, connecting the religious aspect of Sunni and Shi’a to their religious historical actors and stating that they were in peace with each other. The sudden change of 2003 does therefore not have an internal/ grassroot/ historic reason but an external. Kadir implies that it is after that Ruhollah Khomeini becomes the leader or Iran that Sunni and Shi’a polarization started.

We have not killed each other in 1000 years. […] Then suddenly we find that we are fight and them wrong and that we should kill each other. Why did not Ali [historic Shi’a person] kill Omar [Historic Sunni person]? Ali never says I am Shi’a, we was Arab haha. […] But then Khomeini [religious and political leader of Iran from the Islamic revolution 1979 to his death 1989] come.

- Kadir

Kadir relates todays conflict between Sunni and Shi’a as not having a historical connection but as coming from foreign manipulation. Kadir connects the construction of Iran as the anomaly to history. Kadir gives another historical connection between the Iraq and Iran conflict, see the quote below.

Before Mohammed. Persian king wanted to marry an Arab but Arabs said no and a war started. Arabs and Persia fight but Persia don’t succeed in concurring Arabs. Arabs and Persians fight more times. Peace was made but the conflict was not forgotten. Iran remembers. Iran and Iraq war continuing of the Persian and Arabic wars.

- Kadir

According to Kadir Persia and Arab communities have fought many times in history. Peace was set in the end but the communities did not forget the wars. Persia is related to Iran and Arabic communities to Iraq. Already here a historical interpretation is done by connecting pre-Islam Arabic communities to Iraq and Persia to Iran. Connecting the present nation to an old community is a way of constructing the nation as old and natural. Eriksen states that old nations tend to be connected to old communities which are claimed to be the ancestor to the nation even if the old community has no connection to the nation expect the modern nations claim.289 Kadir

289 Eriksen (1998), p. 130
states that Persia/Iran did not forget the old wars and that the modern relation between Iraq and Iran is a result of the old wars. The Iraqi community is constructed as it “always” has been in war with Iran. Thus, the present Iraqi nationalistic community is strengthened.

They rely on these old books that Islam is divided into Shi’a and Sunni. But actually Sunni and Shi’a is not about religion but a political divided because it started after the fourth caliphate. When a ruler could not accept another as a ruler they started to fight so it is political. It is not based on Islamic philosophy or Sharia.

- Mahmoud

Mahmoud constructs the Sunni and Shi’a polarization as coming from politics not religion. It is not people who fight because they believe in different religious stories but the polarization is a result of rulers fighting each other for power. The informants also perceive the present polarization as being a result of politics at higher level and not because of Sunni and Shi’a dislike each other, this is shown in first theme. There is also a connection made between Sunni and old Islamic books in Kadir’s quote.
6. Conclusions

The aim of this thesis is to analyse how the Iraqi nation has been and is imagined among the Sunni-Arab ethnicity before and after the US invasion of 2003. To do so, four research questions have been formulated.

The first research question is: What are the central features of the Iraqi national identity before the US invasion of 2003? A central feature of the Iraqi national identity was the Sunni hegemony. Since Sunni ethnicity was under communicated, the central feature of Iraqi national identity Sunni hegemony became invisible. The Sunni hegemony was invisible because the anomaly of the Sunni-Arabs was other nations not other ethnicities. Thus, a central feature is other nations as the anomaly. Therefore, a nationalistic national identity instead of a Sunni national identity was constructed. More features of the Iraqi national identity are that it is constructed with pride and as kinship. Another central feature is the authoritarian state which enforced certain interpretation of nationalism. The national institutions were authoritarian but also perceived as professional and equal/non-excluding.

The second research question is: What are the central features of the Iraqi national identity after the US invasion of 2003? Unlike what previous research states, the Iraqi national identity is still nationalistic rather than redefined through ethnic identification. The Sunni-Arabs have not redefined themselves through Sunni ethnicity. A feature of the national identity is thus a feeling of exclusion from the nation-state. The anomaly is still other nations such as Iran and America. The national identity is constructed as kinship and with pride. There is a feeling of exclusion and victimhood in the national identity. An idealization of the past is another feature of the national identity. The idealization is shown through Iraq versus Iran/Persia, Sunni and Shi’a being equal, and by idealizing Saddam and his regime-period. The nation map is a feature which concretizes the nation Iraq, its physical boundaries and where cities and education rivers etcetera lay.

The third research question is: How can we discuss the juxtaposition between the Iraqi national identity the Sunni-Arab ethnicity? The main interaction is the Sunni hegemonical construction of Iraqi national identity before 2003. However, it could be interpreted as it is the Iraqi national identity that consumes Sunni ethnicity instead of Sunni ethnicity influencing the national identity. The interaction of nationalism and ethnicity is also about inclusion and exclusion. The Sunni hegemony excluded other ethnicities such as Shi’a. However, the Iraqi national identity was not constructed as Sunni subjective but as objective and common for all Iraqis. Sunni
ethnicity was under communicated. Thus, the hegemony and its exclusion became diffuse and invisible. It is unclear if the Sunni hegemony is still a central feature of the Iraqi national identity. However, the Sunni ethnicity has started to be over communicated. Sunni is constructed through victimhood because Sunnis are excluded from the nation-state post 2003. Consequently, Sunnis reject the nation-state. The informants also reject identification with Sunni ethnicity both pre and post 2003. Sunni ethnicity is not constructed as kinship and something to be proud of as the Iraqi national identity (or maybe Sunni hegemonical-Iraqi national identity).

The fourth and last research question is: How can we relate the shift of the imaginations on national Iraqi identity to the shift of power relations and ethnic dominance taking the modern history of Iraq into consideration and specially the historical part after the US invasion of 2003? The imagination of national Iraqi identity of the Sunni informants has not shifted with the power change, not fully in the way that previous research suggests. Sunnis have since the creation of modern state Iraq been in power and privileged, especially the Sunni elite. The national identity was constructed by the Sunni hegemony. This constructed a more steadfast Shi’a ethnicity while a Sunni community was barely imagined. Sunnis felt no reason to imagine a Sunni community because they were included in the national identity. In 2003 a power change occurred where Shi’a ethnicity took power. The event of 2003 and the Shi’a control resulted in national institutions communicating ethnicity and excluding Sunnis. However, Sunnis do still not perceive national institutions as being in controlled by Iraqi Shi’as. Instead the informants interpret the national institutions as being occupied by other nations such as Iran and US. The exclusion of the nation-state is Iran and US fault not Iraqi Shi’as fault. Therefore, the informants have not shifted their imagination of Iraqi identity, from a common nationalistic identity to a Sunni (visible) national identity, with the shift of the state. But some changes have occurred. Sunnis redefined themselves through victimhood because of the exclusion. The shift of state dominance has made Sunni ethnicity more communicated and visible. Before 2003 the Sunni-Shi’a relation was based on complementation while after 2003 dichotomization is occurring. Pre 2003 ethnicity was under communicated and the Sunni state tried to integrate Shi’a ethnicity while post 2003 ethnicity is visible and a conflict is occurring and the Shi’a state tries to remove Sunni ethnicity.

One explanation for why the national institutions have not created a more visible Sunni-national identity amongst the informants is because the informants are still influenced by pre 2003 national identity and national institutions. Another explanation is because it is nationalism that
creates the nation state not vice versa. Thus, the nation state’s/national institution’s communication does not triumph (at start) the national identity existing amongst the informants.

The Iraqi case needs to be further explored. I recommend further research to deeper explore Iraqis legitimacy towards the post 2003 state. How do Shi’as interpret the post 2003 state? Secondly, to deeper explore if the national identity imagined by Sunnis is still after 2003 constructed by Sunni ethnicity and excluding Shi’a ethnicity.

What does the findings in this research mean for Iraq? I believe that deeper knowledge regarding Iraq will produces a better platform from which Iraq can be developed. It shows that there are deep internal splits but also that there is a will and a ground for unification. It shows that Iraq can be further built on equality and democracy but then people must work together against instrumental and latent exclusion. I also believe that the Iranian influence in Iraq is harmful towards Iraq. The road to a stable and flourishing Iraq is bumpy but not impossible to walk.
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