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Migration from Iraq
between the Gulf and
the Iraq wars (1990-2003):
Historical and socio-
spatial dimensions

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Abstract

This paper analyses trends and patterns of migration from Iraq with a focus on the movement of those Iraqis who left their country between the Gulf war in 1990-1991 and the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq in April 2003. The conceptual frame of migration orders is used combined with approaches suggested by social geography and social anthropology. The first part sketches the dynamics, flows, directions, geographical poles and sociological features of Iraqi emigration before the 1990-1991 Gulf war. The second part looks in more details at the reshaping of the Iraqi migration order that took place between the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and the end of 2002. The last part considers a series of social variables (familial, communal/corporate and class) relevant for migration dynamics in the regional context and in Iraq. The paper discusses the relevance of distinguishing between the political and economic causes of emigration; argues that a combination between forced migration and collective dynamics characterises the post-Gulf war Iraqi migration order; and evaluates the role of migrants' social networks at the regional and global levels. It is finally argued that the new migration order that emerged from embargoed Iraq launched long-lasting and far-ranging collective migration dynamics that need to be accounted for to understand the migration mouvements taking place from post-Ba'thist Iraq.

Keywords: Iraq, migration, refugees, migration order, social networks.

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Forced-migration from Iraq since the fall of the Ba'thist regime in May 2003 is the focus of a growing literature, mostly produced by organisations that specialise in advocacy or assistance to refugees, with yet limited instances of scholarly interest (Chatelard 2009; Chatelard and Dorai 2009; Marfleet 2007; Sassoon 2008). The dominant tendency is to view the post-Ba'thist trend as a major "refugee crisis" implying a rupture in the continuity of a previous Iraqi migration order. The profound political and economic changes that Iraq has undergone since the Anglo-American invasion and the fall of the Ba'thist regime in April-May 2003, with heightened and new levels of human insecurity, have undeniably affected dynamics of emigration from Iraq. However, the scarcity of scholarly material on migration movements from Iraq in the period before 2003, and the construction of subsequent migratory trends as an "unprecedented refugee crisis", have largely obscured the question of the embeddedness of the recent migration in previous sociological and spatial dynamics in a country where large-scale forced migration movements can be traced back to the early years of the inception of the modern state in the 1920s and where such movements have been recurrent all through the 20th Century.

The objective of this paper is to identify and analyse these trends and patterns from a socio-historical and socio-spatial perspective with a focus on the movement of those Iraqis who migrated from their country between the Gulf War in 1990-1991 and the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq in April 2003. Over that period, large numbers of Iraqis started launching asylum claims in liberal countries of the North to the point that human rights and refugee organisations listed Iraq as one of the major refugee producing countries in the world (AI 1997; UNHCR 1996). The main question that guides this paper is how the Iraqi migration order responded to the profound political and economic transformations that affected Iraq in the last phase of the Ba'thist regime: after eight years of war with Iran (1980-1988), the country's position within the regional and global political and economic orders further shifted towards isolation; the regime became more authoritarian and political coercion more systematic and violent towards specific social groups; the sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council as of 1990 in response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait impoverished the mass of the population while reinforcing the grip of the regime on the society. While incentives to leave Iraq were increasing for larger numbers of Iraqis, their movements were constrained by the policy choices of the Iraqi state vis-à-vis emigration of its nationals and by those of state actors in the countries neighbouring Iraq and further afield vis-à-vis immigrants in general, and Iraqis in particular. However, it is posited here that

trends during these twelve years were also embedded in previous histories of migration, which are sketched in the first section of this paper, drawing from sparse secondary literature, and pending systematic historical research. Concluding remarks attempt to draw together the various elements to reach an understanding of the specificities of the new Iraqi migration order that was reshaped during the years 1990 to early 2003.

Primary data for this paper were gathered through field-based research undertaken between 1998 and 2008 among Iraqi migrant communities in several countries (initially in Jordan and subsequently in Iran, Syria, France, Italy, the UK, Denmark, Pakistan and Yemen) using a combination of ethnographic and sociological approaches. Over 300 Iraqi individuals or families under different legal statuses were interviewed in a semi-structured way in the different sites, but many more informal discussions and field-notes taken while doing participant observation also provide the background for this paper. Fifteen individuals or families, encountered at different times and in different locations, became privileged informants with whom internet and telephone communication was maintained over several months to several years with a view to documenting their migration trajectories and current and past histories. Interviews were also conducted with officials and staff of international organisations, NGOs, or foreign embassies, at times through internet communication with countries where field-work could not be undertaken (in particular with UNHCR officials in Saudi Arabia and Indonesia).[1] Most of the social networks of migrants which are discussed in this paper were initially encountered through field-work in Jordan. Due to this methodological bias, the case of Iraqi Kurds, who did not migrate to Jordan in numbers, is only addresses marginally and mainly through secondary literature.

What started as empirical research in Jordan and later Iran and Europe on the migration dynamics of Iraqis informed by the novel approach suggested by studies on migrant networks and transnationalism (Crisp 1999a; Ebaugh and Saltzman Chafetz, 2002; Faist, 2000; Gurak and Caces, 1992) encountered the need for a broader conceptual frame that could bring into the analysis several other levels of determinants and variables that appeared as data were collected and complex trajectories of migrants were deployed over time and space, to shape migration patterns of a global scope. Such determinants and variables included bilateral and multilateral relations between states and their impact on

migration regimes (Hollifield, 2000), the political and policy context of refugee movements and reception (Zolberg *et al.* 1989; Keely, 1996), but also the development of migrant smuggling organisations (Ghosh, 1998), and all the changing relations between these factors that kept reshaping contexts of opportunities for Iraqis engaged in migration projects, and hence the patterns of their movements.

The integrative approach proposed by Kritz *et al.* (1992) in terms of migration systems that encompass the various macro (political and economic), meso (sociological) and micro (decision-making) levels, the spatial and temporal dimensions, and various levels of linkages seemed appropriate. However, Nicolas Van Hear, in his work on the new diasporas, has pointed at the shortcomings of the systems perspective on migration as being too functionalist and intended primarily to be a model of economic migration (Van Hear 1998: 17-18). He proposed instead an approach in terms of "migration orders" that encompasses models of forced migratory movements. The concept of "migration order" seems more suited to the case of migration trends from Iraq where succession of conflicts, ruptures in the territorial continuity and the political order, and the prevalence of migratory movement under constraint have regularly affected patterns of outmigration.

Nevertheless, several constants have remained in the sociological profile of the migrants and in the regional and global patterns of their migration. To be able to account for them, but also for the emergence of new trends, we have combined the migration order framework with two other sets of approaches and conceptual tools. On the one hand, following on the work of French social geographer and migration scholar Gildas Simon (1995; 2006), this paper places emphasis on the spatial and territorial dimensions of international migration by considering the relationship of migrants to physical, social political and ideal spaces, the social practices developed throughout transnational spaces, and the global architecture of identities within different geographical scales. Such notions as circulations, poles where migrants regroup, and staging points on the migratory routes are used to map this global architecture and its dynamics and are widely used in this paper. A final level of analysis concerns the role in the migration dynamics of Iraqis of so-called "primordial" ties relevant in the Middle Eastern context – i.e. those based on kinship, ethno-linguistic and religious identities- that operate within common social spaces of identification as historical and political constructs (Eickelman, 1981) and have to be accounted for not only at the level of the social groups bounded by these identities but also as "forces of regionalism" in the shaping of transnational migratory movement (Shami 1996). To balance the risk of an excessive "communalist" view of Iraqi migration dynamics, due consideration will be given to the "class" (in Pierre Bourdieu's terms) dimensions of Iraqi international migration, here again following Van Hear (2004).

This paper does not purport however to validate or invalidate existing theories but merely to test the appropriateness of a number of conceptual tools and theoretical models to the case of migration movements from Iraq. The main aim is to understand an Iraqi migration order in the period under consideration, with an evaluation of longer-term invariants and the appearance of new trends.

1. Before the Gulf war

It is relatively easy to map the migration patterns of Iraqis prior to the Gulf war, to locate the main geographical poles, and identify temporalities and directions of movements. It is, by contrast far more challenging to make a distinction between long and short term migration, or to clearly distinguish between the respective roles of economic factors or the political, ideological or religious causalities of these movements. It is equally difficult to separate cross-border family strategies from those which have an international scope[2] or to clearly distinguish migratory dynamics which are family-based from those which concern larger social units but which operate at the family level. On this last point, there is a risk of giving too much weight to the role of religious or ethnic affiliations in the migratory process. The points made above are of equal relevance to the different regional[3] flows as they are to intercontinental flows, which must be seen as both distinct and interrelated.

1.1 The regional level

At the end of the 1980s, the majority of Iraqis who had left their country in the previous couple of decades were in Iran. The Ba'thist regime had, in a number of episodes since the late 1960s, expelled half a million Iraqi nationals to Iran on the basis of their being of Iranian stock. This movement primarily concerned urban Shi'ite religious and economic elites and members of the middle-class whom the regime considered a threat to the consolidation of its power and who, in many cases, had no family links to Iran, including Shi'ite Kurds, some of them of rural background (Babakhan, 1994 and 2002; Vanly, 2002). Iran granted Iranian citizenship to some 100,000 expellees who could prove their Iranian origins. The others were received as refugees (*panahandegan*) with state protection and social benefits – including the right to work – that facilitated their long term socio-economic integration at a time when there was no likelihood of their being able to return to Iraq. Despite this, these refugees remained stateless and without the possibility of claiming Iranian naturalisation

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[2] The expression "international migration" is used here in its strict definition as defining migration between states and not only south-north migratory movements.

[3] The regional dimension of Iraqi migration is not framed arbitrarily but is based on the identification of time-frames and scales of migratory movements specific to a geographical area that extends from Pakistan to Libya and includes Arab countries of the Levant and the Arabian Peninsula, together with Turkey and Iran.

(Luizard, 2002 : 268-269; Rajaee, 2000: 44-63). During the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) expellees were joined by supporters of the Iranian revolution, deserters from the army and refugees from the fighting zones as well as several waves of rural Kurds driven out by Iraqi military and quasi-genocidal campaigns (al-Anfal in particular) (Picard, 1991), very few of whom returned to Iraq where they had no guarantee for their safety. These refugee movements were articulated around, or superimposed upon, ancient cross-border movements based on commercial, religious, political and family dynamics, as well as connected to Iranian emigrants to Iraq who had settled over generations. However, the Iraq-Iran war interrupted most of these exchanges and the border between the two countries remaining closed after the end of the conflict. This reduced human mobility but did however allow conditional crossings to Iran mostly for religious purposes in addition to occasional military infiltrations in both directions, as well as exchanges of prisoners (Interviews, Khouzestan and Teheran, 2002).

Iraq's oil based economy had turned the country into a major importer of Arab labour since the 1970s, a trend that accelerated during the Iran-Iraq war. Most of these emigrants were Egyptian, but there were also Palestinians, Sudanese and Yemenis. By contrast, only a few thousands highly educated Iraqis migrated to Arab states in search of employment. They were concentrated in oil-producing countries – such as Libya, Algeria or the Gulf monarchies (Al-Nouri, 1996; Luizard, 2002: 231), but also in Yemen where there was a demand for qualified professionals (interviews, San'a, 2006). However employment was rarely the main motive for the movement of Iraqis to other Arab states; reasons for leaving were political or ideological, and at times ethno-religious. In some cases, the existence of cross-border social groups (such as Shi'ites in Kuwait) was a determinant of migration.

In Damascus, a community of residents of Iraqi origin - mostly Shi'ite expellees of the 1970s and 1980s who had lived initially in Iran - had settled around the tombs of members of Prophet Mohammed's family and companions which were the foci of pilgrimage for the Shi'ites; the settlers continued to maintain links with Iraq through the movements of pilgrims (Adelkhah, 1996). Syria was an axis for trade, religious and political connections with Iran which was particularly important at times when direct communication between Iraq and Iran was not officially allowed. Early 20th century history had also led to the establishment in Syria of centres for the Assyrian and Chaldean Christian communities[4]: thanks to inter-marriage, these centres (Damascus, Aleppo and Hassakeh) continued to develop through the arrival of co-religionists from Iraq (Yacoub, 1986). Finally Damascus was the base for several

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[4] Assyrian Christians are separated between the autonomous Assyrian Church of the East and the Catholic Chaldean Church, the latter united with Rome and generally referred to as the Chaldeans.

opposition movements, Kurdish nationalist and others, to the Iraqi regime (Luizard, 2002: 209, 232; interviews, Syria, 2003).

Jordan had welcomed members of the Hashemite dynasty and those of their associates who survived the overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy in 1958. From the 1960s to the 1980s Amman received opponents to the Iraqi republican and subsequently Ba'thist regimes. Iraqi private sector entrepreneurs, themselves often closely associated with political *émigrés* and their descendants (to whom Jordan had granted residence rights and sometimes citizenship), used Amman as a base for their regional activities and for wider international strategies. This was the case particularly when the Jordanian capital took over some of the Lebanese banking activities after the start of the Lebanese civil war in 1975. The border between Iraq and Jordan was open and allowed the passage of men, goods and of significant capital in both directions (Fattah 2007; interviews, Jordan 2001-2009).

With respect to both Syria and Jordan, estimates of the number of Iraqi residents just before the 1990 invasion of Kuwait is complicated by the fact that some of the migrants belonged to the second or third generation since departure from Iraq and that many had obtained the citizenship of their country of settlement. If one restricts the count to permanent residents who retained an Iraqi passport, whether or not they returned regularly to Iraq, it is unlikely that their number exceeded a few thousand in each country.

Finally, about 20,000 Iraqis had settled in Saudi Arabia or had dual citizenship: among them were traders and businessmen, often involved in cross-border economic activities, partly thanks to tribal social networks operating on both sides of the border and sometimes beyond. Among immigrants in the narrow definition of the word, one can include the exiled leadership of the Iraqi Muslim Brotherhood who benefited from the patronage of the Saudi authorities. In addition there were movements and exchanges between Shi'ite communities from Iraq and the east of the Arabian peninsula (Delouvain 2002; Luizard, 2002: 212; interviews, Jordan, 2003 and London, 2004).

1.2 Intercontinental migration

Some European capitals, particularly London and, to a lesser extent Paris, had received Iraqis who had left their country at different times, depending on developments in their country's political history. Among those who left Iraq for strictly political reasons, very few made asylum applications, preferring other ways of gaining residence in Europe at a time when it was still relatively easy for upper-class and upper-middle class Iraqis to get student or employment visas. In London, capital of the former mandatory power in Iraq, were found the following groups who maintained limited, if any, interactions: Assyrian Christians who had arrived in the 1940-1950s after serving in a special force created by the British in Iraq

and their descendants who barely asserted their identity as Iraqis (Al-Rasheed, 1998); monarchists who had fled the 1958 revolution; opponents of all outlooks – Communists, Sunni Islamists, various Shi'ite political and religious movements etc. – who had experienced repression in Iraq and continued to be politically active in exile (Rahe, 2002; interviews, London, 2004). There was also an emigration which can be best described as ideologically induced: exiles had not been directly repressed in Iraq but were members of the professions and intellectuals for whom the political context of Iraq under its successive regimes was uncongenial (interviews).

Whether forced or induced, migrants retained links with Iraq through different types of movements, in particular those of relatives and friends who continued to live in Iraq and travelled to Europe on business, for visits or to further their studies. Amman and Damascus also were meeting points were those who had established themselves in Europe could meet those settled in countries neighbouring Iraq or, in the case of Amman, relatives and friends still living in Iraq and visiting for that purpose. Relationships were also mediated through the institutional structures of political parties and religious communities in Iraq which operated underground when these organisations were outlawed. This was the case, for example, of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) (Batatu, 1978). It was also the case of the religious, educational and charitable organisation established at the end of the 1980s around the Shi'ite spiritual leader Abulqasem al-Khoei, which will be discussed in further detail below.

Descendants of the Assyrians who had left during the first decades of the 20th century were also to be found further afield in North America and Australia. Since then, these communities had built upon a continuous yet relatively low number of new arrivals who were leaving Iraq through a dynamic of chain family migration. In some cases, they were supporters of an Assyrian national movement or members of the ICP, although most of them were not politically active. This outmigration was managed through mechanisms of family and communal solidarity and reproduced in the diaspora the socioeconomic, confessional and kinship patterns which had existed in Iraq within these Christian communities (Danis 2008; DIMIA, 2004; correspondences Australia 2001-2003; interviews Amman and Damascus 1998-2001).

Finally, a small group of migrants from the Muslim economic elite chose to settle in the USA as of the 1960s, in a country which was both more liberal and more stable than Iraq. By contrast with the migratory movements of Assyrians, this flow was neither communally-based nor were migrants identifying strongly with sectarian divisions (here Sunni and Shi'ite). The dynamics of this migration was primarily class- and family-based (Grieco, 2003; internet correspondences USA 2001-2003; interviews Amman 1998-2001).

1.3 Multipolarity, networks and circulations

There existed different types of links between the intercontinental poles, between the regional and intercontinental levels of Iraqi outmigration, and between regional poles and with Iraq.

At the intercontinental level, it was common for extended families to have members in Europe, North America and Australia, though one cannot systematically refer to a diasporic Iraqi order of migration, which would imply a certain level of organisation and a specific outlook shared by all members. It is more appropriate to talk of the multipolarity of Iraqi emigration made possible by the type of economic activities conducted by circulatory migrants: businessmen, investors, entrepreneurs and merchants whose families were settled in Europe or the USA (sometimes with members in Iraq, the Arabian Peninsula and/or Jordan), while they themselves travelled between a number of economic locations within all these regions. Multipolarity was in part the outcome of the authoritarian character of the Ba'thist regime which controlled certain flows, particularly those of finance and information, but also the movement of Iraqi nationals across borders by making the granting of travel documents conditional on political allegiance. A third factor explained the functioning of the poles and networks: the closure of Iraq's borders with some of its neighbours. These two types of constraint on movement forced Iraqis settled abroad to adopt various strategies to by-pass the obstacles set in their path by states, strategies which were facilitated by the fact that nearly all the political, religious, ethnic and socio-economic groups from which Iraqi migrant communities were composed had access to a European capital as a centre of gravity.

London was the first location where members of most of the groups dispersed in the Middle East and in the west met. Financial and information flows converged to this city before being partially re-directed elsewhere. In the case of the exiled ICP, Paris played this central role, with Italian cities acting as secondary poles, a configuration which can be attributed to the historical development of national communist parties in France and Italy. Several urban centres in the European Communist bloc also played an important part, having attracted members of the Iraqi Communist intelligentsia as students and residents.

In addition to a European pole, the majority of groups had a Middle Eastern pole, usually one of the foci for regional outmigration. A main regional pole could also be the link for secondary regional poles. Thus, Amman was a centre for monarchists and businessmen. Some of the latter were also in connection with Saudi Arabia for activities involving the local Iraqi business sector. The city of Qom in Iran, central to several Iraqi Shi'ite schools of thought, was part of a network that included religious groups in Damascus and Lebanon. The significant Assyrian and Chaldean communities in Aleppo also had connections in Amman, Istanbul or Urmieh in northeastern Iran. There are no indications to suggest that the Iraqi

Muslim Brothers who took refuge in Saudi Arabia lacked relations with the Jordanian members of the Brotherhood, making Amman their secondary regional pole. All these poles were likely to have separate links with Iraq through various types of movement. It is the density and type of these flows, as well as the means used for communications, which helped define a hierarchy in the importance of the poles, as well as the fact that some poles played the role of staging posts between Iraqis settled out of the region and Iraq. This is particularly the case with respect to those who had been compelled to leave Iraq under repression and were unable to communicate directly with people who remained in Iraq without endangering them. While information was most likely to travel by telephone or post between the intercontinental and regional levels, oral transmission through a human intermediary was the means by which it was most likely to continue its route to reach its recipients in Iraq. Organisations which were illegal in Iraq could not manage without a regional link and human intermediaries either for transfers of funds or for the transmission of information.[5]

Consider the example of the Imam Al-Khoei Foundation. In the 1980s the Imam, a major spiritual authority (*marja'*) among Shi'ites worldwide, was living in the Iraqi holy city of Najaf. Although he refrained from expressing political views, his and his followers' involvement in religious, educational or charitable activities were monitored and hampered by agents of the Iraqi regime. On the other hand, as Abulqasem al-Khoei did not support the Islamic revolution in Iran, it was also impossible for his followers in that country to establish an institution which would assist them in carrying out their activities. At the end of the 1980s, the Imam established a foundation with its head office in London. He continued to reside in Najaf and appointed one of his sons as head of the foundation. As was the case with certain exiled political parties which had no legal existence in Iraq, London became the administrative and financial centre for the foundation's activities in Iraq. Thus donations collected throughout the Shi'ite communities in the world (Iran, Lebanon, Gulf states, Pakistan, India, diaspora communities in West Africa, in North America etc.) converged on London. Such collections were made possible through a semi-informal network based on the spiritual link between the *marja'* and his disciples, who were religious men (*mujtahid*) themselves surrounded by religious and lay supporters, and on the ritual obligation of the *khoms,* a religious tax specific to the Shi'ites. Amounts which the Imam wanted to use for his activities in Iraq were transferred from the London banking system, where funds were concentrated, to an account in Kuwait. There a *mujtahid* withdrew them from the banking system so that they could be carried into Iraq by followers who travelled between the two countries. This was a way to by-pass the controls of the Iraqi authorities and the border

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[5] This section in based on interviews conducted in Amman, Teheran, Damascus, Aleppo, London, Rome and Paris between 2001 and 2008.

between Iran and Iraq which was a fighting zone during the Iran-Iraq war and later remained closed to travellers. The liberal banking system of Kuwait played the role of a financial conduit because of its proximity to the Shi'ite regions of southern Iraq but also to the Shi'ite centres in the Persian Gulf. The latter, which were secondary poles of Iraqi Shi'ite outmigration, were also staging posts for a considerable share of donations collected in Iran which could not be taken out of the country through the banking system as the Islamic Republic's authorities controlled international financial transfers (interviews, Al Khoei Foundation, London, June 2004).

The groups of Iraqi emigrants who were compelled to use avoidance strategies were those who opposed the Iraqi regime, in particular members of outlawed political parties. Without achieving the transnational dimensions of the Al Khoei foundation, an institutionalised religious movement structured at the global level, all the exiled opposition groups that maintained links with supporters in Iraq (regardless of their level of activity) were compelled to set up more or less complex set-ups. Regional links were essential for these structures to repackage funds and information in a way that made them transferable to or from Iraq.

Migration from Iraq before the Gulf war can be qualified as being dominated by flows of people who left Iraq under political duress within a continuum of forced-migration, from compelled to induced. The majority of migrants had been expelled or forced to flee repression. Part of the socio-professional and intellectual elite and holders of financial capital chose expatriation or exile under no direct physical constraint. However, this latter trend did not develop in response to the needs of economies more dynamic than that of Iraq but because individuals were not satisfied with the limited opportunities the Iraqi political system imposed upon their activities or their free expression. Regardless of the causes of their emigration, Iraqi exiles and expatriates were living in countries of immigration under a variety of legal statuses (as citizens, refugees, asylum seekers, long-term residents, on student visas, etc). Members of the same social groups (students, businesspeople, professionals, political activists, religious communities) and of the same family were likely to have left Iraq under different types of pressures. Some were still able to travel back to Iraq while others were not. The characteristics of Iraqi migration reflected the political and economic circumstances of the country that was producing it: its economic prosperity based on oil-extraction and trade; the developmental choices made by the regime that had allowed the emergence of a class of cadres and professionals who were granted employment; an unstable and contested state challenged by a variety of political movements; a problematic national construction in which some ethnic and confessional groups were targeted

collectively by the regime; and a territorial sovereignty which was disputed internally and externally.

To assess, however roughly, the number of Iraqis living abroad on the eve of the 1990-1991 Gulf war, it is necessary to first exclude people who circulated regularly across the border from Iraq rather than being involved in longer-term migration, members of the Assyrian community who did not, or no longer, defined themselves as Iraqis, and those who were expelled and had obtained Iranian nationality. Making use of the different sources used in this first part, it might be reasonable to estimate that somewhere between 500,000 and 700,000 Iraqis lived out of their country before Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. If the more recent waves of Assyrian outmigration and people who had been "re-integrated" as Iranian nationals were to be included, this figure would increase by 200,000. Altogether, the figure of 1 million people of Iraqi origin living out of Iraq before 1990 appears to be a generous estimate.[6]

2. Between the Gulf War and the fall of the Ba'thist regime

Out of a total population which increased from 18 to 24 million, maybe up to one and a half million Iraqis left their country permanently between 1990 and end of 2002.[7] The most important initial migratory movements took place between August 1990 - on the eve of the Gulf War and the regime's order prohibiting its nationals from leaving the country - and mid 1991 when a wave of migrants followed the lifting of the prohibition to exit, whereas

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[6] This figure does not include those Iraqis Jews who still maintained a feeling of national belonging to Iraq and who are difficult to quantify. Almost all Iraqi Jews lost their nationality during the mass emigration of the period 1950s-1970s, most of them going to Israel, the USA and the UK.

[7] Figures for refugees and migrants publicized by specialised organizations and host governments are always debatable and cannot be taken at face-values since the interests and capacities of the various actors play a major role in the methods of data collecting and dissemination (see Bakewell 1999 and Crisp 1999b). Hence we cautiously reproduce figures for Iraqi refugees and migrants used by institutions: in 2002, according to the UNHCR, there were three to four million Iraqis "dispersed in the world" (UNHCR, 2003a:1 and 2003b: 5). It is within this bracket that various estimates were made during 2003 at a time when the number of Iraqis abroad became a matter of concern for international organisations as well as a political and financial issue for the new Iraqi government. Provided one does not claim to carry out a precise demographic evaluation and that one uses the available data critically, it is possible to make reasonable estimates of the size of Iraqi outmigration since the Gulf war. On the one hand, a number of publicly released figures can be viewed as relatively reliable: UNHCR's figures concerning its own operations (i.e. Iraqis registered with the organisation, but not its estimates of non-registered Iraqis), those produced by national organisations responsible for managing asylum applications in western countries and in Iran (available in the statistical section of the website of the UNHCR), those coming from western state agencies responsible for immigration and concerning movements and presence of "people born in Iraq" or "Iraqi nationals" (www.migrationinformation.org). On the other hand, it is more difficult to assess flows and stocks of Iraqi migrants in countries neighbouring Iraq where systems of data collection on entry and exit are not always reliable, which did not account for irregular entries, and which claim on numbers of Iraqis were compounded by political considerations with the possibility that numbers were either overstated or played down. It is a best possible to suggest estimates based on the existing public data (e.g. entries and exits at borders for Jordan).

refugees were prompted to exit by the repression of the Shi'ite and Kurdish uprisings in February and March. During these few months, national and international organisations involved in refugee management estimated that a total of nearly 3 million Iraqis and other nationals took refuge temporarily or permanently in neighbouring countries. Once the number of Iraqi refugees who returned in the months following the conflict (in particular the Kurds who had fled temporarily to Iran) has been deducted, there remained between 450,000 and 500,000 more Iraqis outside their country than there were before the Gulf War. Some 200,000 Shi'ite Arabs had gone to swell the ranks of refuges in Iran; 35,000 others remained in Saudi Arabia in camps where they were registered; Syria retained on its territory about 40,000 Iraqis more than were there prior to the war; an estimated 200,000 Iraqis took refuge in Jordan, un addition to a at least three times as many foreign workers who were fleeing Iraq, many only transiting Jordan (LCHR, 1992; USCR, 1991; Jordanian statistical abstracts).

Until 2003, there was no more sudden outflow, instead there were four steady currents of emigration: two of them continued throughout the period involving maybe 500,000 Iraqis who left their country through Turkey from the Kurdish *de facto* autonomous area (see Sirkeci 2005) and a similar number through Jordan; the third concerned the 50,000 or so Iraqis who took refuge in Iran between the end of 1991 and 1995; the last current was composed of ten to twenty thousand people who benefited from the partial reopening of the border with Syria in 1997. Except in Iran, stocks were not stable, as a large number of migrants used the countries neighbouring Iraq as transit stages either towards other regional countries, such as Libya or Yemen, or towards western countries. There were also movements back to Iraq and circulatory migrants, especially between Iraq and Jordan.

In 2002, 550,000 Iraqis throughout the world benefited from refugee status: 350,000 of these registered refugees were in Iran (combining 100,000 refugees from before the Gulf war and 250,000 who had arrived in later years), 20,000 were awaiting resettlement[8] mostly in Arab countries near Iraq and in Turkey. In these countries, particularly in Jordan and Turkey, at least 600,000 other Iraqis were living in irregular situations, either because they had entered irregularly, or because they had overstayed their visit or residence permits. The UNHCR estimated that 450,000 of those were in a "refugee-like situation", i.e. unprotected and unassisted by their hosts states or international organisations. Finally, as will be detailed below, one third of the migrants who left Iraq between 1990 and 2002 had settled in a western country mainly under an asylum regime.

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[8] Those awaiting resettlement were in countries which did not grant them asylum but had an agreement with the UNHCR whereby the organisations received and processed asylum claims, accepting or rejecting them, and acted as intermediary with countries – in their majority western ones but also Iran– that took quotas for refugee resettlement.

How patterns and trends articulated, and how they were in rupture or in continuity with patterns pre-dating the Gulf war will be the object of the following section. Variables for an analysis are situated at several levels: at the political, policy, economic and legal levels in the countries affected by this migration, starting in Iraq; at the level of the social organisation of Iraqi migration, looking particularly at group solidarities; at the level of organisations and social dynamics that operate beyond the level of states, such as the UNHCR but also social networks which allow communications and movement of people between different countries. These different aspects will be addressed by following the regional and global trajectories of Iraqi migrants before looking at a number of relevant social variables.

2.1 Leaving Iraq

2.1.1 Communication and exchange

The state of the networks and other means of communication and exchange between Iraq and the rest of the world was a prime determinant of the directions taken by Iraqi migrants. These networks and means did not undergo significant changes between 1990 and the fall of the regime in early 2003 as they were directly constrained by the international sanction regime imposed upon Iraq by the UN Security Council in response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Starting in August 1990 it was impossible to leave Iraq by sea or air because of the embargo. From Baghdad, it was also impossible to get visas for western countries as they had closed their embassies or downgraded their consular operations. However the international isolation of Iraq was not only the result of the embargo but also of the regime's determination to control entry and exit flows to and from the country. Policies of control over the movements of nationals already existed before the Gulf war. However they were strengthened after 1991 reflecting the hardening of the attitude of the security services towards groups suspected of subversive activities, on the one hand, and attempts at containing inside Iraq the middle class and holders of capital tempted to flee increasingly deteriorating economic conditions, on the other hand. Thus, not only was the telephone network in poor condition following the war, but calls were also monitored. Iraqis therefore refrained from discussing over the phone their migration projects with those who had already left the country. Similarly, international mail, routed via Jordan overland, was liable to be opened by the regime's agents. As for internet and satellite access, whereas they became commonplace in the second half of the 1990s in some of Iraq's neighbours - particularly Turkey and Jordan –, in Iraq they remained a privilege reserved to a few high-level officials and some state institutions. It was therefore difficult for the average Iraqi to obtain precise

information on any aspect of the procedures necessary for migrating out of the Middle East, and even on the situation of Iraqi migrants based in countries as close as Jordan or Iran. Actual departure was therefore constrained by the difficulties involved in taking an informed decision. In fact, different factors combined to make communication between Iraq and the rest of the world difficult, reducing exchange flows to narrow social circles within which different members were confident that mutual trust was ensured. These modes of communication, which did not rely upon technology or institutional networks, moved informally from one person to another either orally or through written messages.

On the other hand, while international bank transfers remained as controlled as they had been in the earlier period, it also became extremely difficult to find ways of by-passing these controls as the borders with most of the neighbouring countries were closed. At the same time, as will be developed below, the cost of emigration continually increased and required means which many would-be migrants could only find outside Iraq itself. The marginalisation of the country with respect to international communications and transport networks, and, more generally, its isolation resulted in the reorganisation of intercontinental migration from neighbouring countries.

2.1.2   Control over population movements

The regime deeply influenced mobility across borders by preventing certain categories of people from leaving the country or, conversely, by violently forcing others across the borders. This was primarily done through a series of political decisions which were manifested in administrative procedures and legal requirements, but also through a process of arbitrariness, coercion and various levels of physical pressure.

At a time when the states of the former Soviet bloc had just lifted restrictions on the travel of their citizens, Saddam Hussein's regime started to exercise an increasingly tight control over the movements of Iraqis willing to head for other countries. Restrictive measures were introduced to halt the departure of the middle class and the intelligentsia towards Jordan – the only country whose border with Iraq remained open – and beyond. Starting in 1993, an exit tax was imposed, and its amount increased systematically thereafter. In 1994, the regime added a new requirement for holders of university degrees: a bank deposit or a mortgage on properties to the value of 1 million Iraqi dinars (ID) – or US$ 665 – was requested as a guarantee of return. Would-be migrants needed an exit permit delivered by the security services as well as, for adult men, a certificate from the Ministry of Defence stating that they had completed their military service. It was particularly problematic for civil servants to obtain the necessary permits and extremely difficult for them to leave the country with their spouses and/or children, except if they could justify of

specific reasons (for example medical treatment) and provide a higher level of financial guarantees for their return. Adult women, for their part, remained also submitted to previous legislation whereby they could not travel without a male relative or a written permission from their husbands or fathers, considered their legal tutors under Iraq law.

The regime also decreed that those of its nationals who sought asylum abroad, including with the UNHCR, were liable to be sentenced to death if they returned, a sentence sometimes commuted to amputation of part of the ear. These measures were primarily aimed at preventing the return of those who had taken refuge in Iran in 1991 when escaping the repression of the Shi'ite uprising and whom the regime suspected of collusion with the Islamic Republic. The series of amnesties announced all through the 1990s and early 2000s were aimed at attracting back those with professional qualifications as well as capital holders who had left for other Arab countries or the west. The regime applied seemingly arbitrary practices: those refugees who took the risk of returning were sometimes pardoned, but also sometimes imprisoned or assassinated, particularly in 1999-2000 (AIJ/FIDH, 2003: 36).

By contrast with earlier decades, the regime did not use mass expulsions towards Iran as it did not want to strengthen the Shi'ite exiled political-religious opposition and armed resistance. Instead, it adopted a policy of imprisonment or physical elimination of Shi'ite opponents, or forced displacement of populations within Iraq. However, despite the regime's efforts to prevent it, the migratory flow towards Iran continued as a reaction to state coercion. The case of the Ma'dan, the social group living in the Marshes in the south of the country, is typical of this process. Between 1991 and 1995 the regime systematically drained the Marshes. Drainage was accompanied with the destruction of villages and group assassinations. At the same time, the Iraqi Special Forces intensified the mining of the border area with Iran. This campaign had a number of objectives, overtly economic and developmental, but also political. By sealing the border, the Iraqi regimes attempted to prevent the infiltration of guerrillas supported by Iran in one direction and the departure of opponents who used the Marshes as a refuge in the other. A large proportion of the Ma'dan people were forcibly displaced and spontaneously resettled in the urban centres of southern Iraq and Baghdad, but between 60,000 and 40,000 of them managed to flee to Iran together with other rural people living in areas bordering the Marshes (Le Roy 2001; Fawcett and Tanner 2002; Tripp 2002: 256).

2.1.3   *Border controls and their restructuring effects*

The state of Iraq's borders with its neighbours remained a crucial issue of concern for the movement of people. Arguably, borders are never, or extremely rarely, completely sealed.

States can close border posts and try to make the borderline unbreachable at all points by installing practical obstacles such as walls, trenches, barbed wire, minefields etc.. This was done, to varying degrees by Syria, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait before or after the Gulf war and by Iraq on its southern border with Iran. But some individuals were sufficiently determined to attempt crossing by finding weak points in these obstacles. Generally the pressing need to cross gives rise to a body of specialists –human smugglers – in most cases inhabitants of the border zone who are used to circulating, regularly or not, across the border, and are familiar both with the physical and social conditions on both sides. In the present case, the border peoples were members of some of the Ma'dan tribal groups, with members on both sides of the Iraq-Iran border, or bedouin tribes in the Badiat esh-Sham - the desert steppe that spans the borders between Iraq, Syria and Jordan- and also, in the North, Kurds whose kin groups straddled the borders with Turkey (Içduygu and Toktas, 2002: 25-54), Iran or Syria[9]. However, the flow of migrants is likely to be reduced to a drip when borders are both officially closed and highly militarised.

Whereas, after 1995, it became extremely perilous to cross the southern border with Iran, the Iraqi regime continued to target specific people or groups who tried to escape coercion. That was the case, between 1996 and 2000, of members of Shi'ite political groups, in particular the Da'wa partly, who were victims of assassination attempts or faced the threat of imprisonment. Had they had the possibility of choosing a destination, many would have taken refuge in the Islamic Republic.[10] However, it was Jordan that gave refuge to several dozen thousands of them, as UNHCR statistics for that period and interviews show.[11] Until then the two larger migratory "systems" (the term being used here to imply a large degree of stability) between Iraq and its neighbours had been independent of one another: on the one hand, the ancient Iraqi-Iranian system was linked to the Iraqi-Syrian system through the religious and commercial circulations of Shi'ites; on the other hand, the Iraqi-Jordanian system (in both its pre- and post-Gulf war configurations) did not articulate with the movements of the members of Iraqi Shi'ite community to either Iran or Syria. The

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[9] Some bedouin tribes have members who live on both sides of the borders between Iraq and Kuwait or Saudi Arabia. It can be hypothesized that the reason why these countries did not receive significant numbers of Iraqi fugitives was not so much the high level of militarization of their borders, but rather their systematic policy of expulsion of illegal migrants, documented by a number of international human rights organisations, and, more importantly, well known to Iraqis interviewed in Amman.

[10] Iranian statistics bear witness to a very significant decline in the number of Iraqi refugees arriving in Iranian border camps after 1995 (Le Roy 2001: 202).

[11] The economic interdependence of the two countries was the main reason why it was impossible for both Jordan and Iraq to close their border. In one direction, Iraq supplied Jordan with oil at a very low cost. From 1996 onwards, goods traded within the UN-sponsored "oil-for-food" programme transited through the Jordanian seaport of Aqaba. During that period the only way Iraqis could access a number of services and activities was through Amman which had good international communications (western embassies, airport etc.). There were no restrictions on the entry of Iraqis into Jordanian territory. The issue of their residence will be discussed below.

Iraqi-initiated sealing of the Iranian border disturbed the *modus operandi* of these two systems and created a link between them.

This linkage had two major outcomes. First, the financial and administrative obstacles set in place by the regime made travel to Jordan more expensive than it had been to Iran while access to the latter had been possible through clandestine routes. Shi'ite religious groups had connections within the Marsh populations which facilitated their passage. Such connections were non-existent with the Sunni bedouin smugglers/guides who offered their services across the desert and the Jordanian border. Connections and trust were difficult to create anew for lack of common tribal or sectarian ties to call upon. Only one of the several dozen Iraqis close to the Da'wa party interviewed in Jordan between 1998 and 2001 had opted for clandestine crossing to Jordan. All the others had bribed Iraqi civil servants to obtain documents allowing their departure. Bribes were paid in addition to the compulsory exit tax at the border. It meant that departure had to be prepared in advance and entailed high financial costs. The first impact of the closure of the border with Iran was therefore to reduce the number of people from the concerned group who had the means to leave, which was indeed the regime's aim. Secondly, once in Jordan, members of this group attempted to establish contact with relatives or religious leaders in Iran thus creating a connection between the two migratory systems through human, financial and information movements that transited through Syria or the UK, the process of which I have described in a previous article (Chatelard 2004).

To conclude discussion of the border issue it is worth noting that a clear distinction must be made between the different types of obstacles faced by those who want to cross borders. A border being an interface, there can be constraints on both sides or only on one side, just as there can be none. This latter condition was never realised for Iraqis who wanted to leave their country.

2.1.4 *Cumulative constraints and socioeconomic assets*

The various constraints which restricted departure from Iraq had a cumulative effect. With the drastic collapse in the value of the dinar, very few Iraqis had access to the amounts of money necessary to leave Iraq, let alone to travel beyond the Middle East. In 1996 the monthly salary of a middle level cadre in the public sector was equivalent to US$ 3-5 whereas the exit tax amounted to US$ 300 and an airline ticket between Amman and London cost another US$ 300. For many, these sums had to be added up to the compulsory bank deposit or mortgage. Releasing the necessary funds entailed access to savings, real estate or other marketable assets, or reliance on financial support from people inside Iraq with a high level of trust for both parties, i.e. within the family, close friends or religious

associates. For many would-be migrants who had no intention of returning or who needed to bribe their way out, trust was the only assurance that secrecy would be kept on the use they intended to make of the funds. Failing access to funds within Iraq, it was essential not only to be able to obtain them through a network of acquaintances (relatives or members of the religious community) abroad, but also to transfer them via informal networks from Jordan. Here again, trust was a rare commodity.

Economic cost and the difficulties of transferring funds were not the only constraints on migration projects. Social costs were extremely high too due to the measures taken by the regime that compelled most migrants to travel without family members and that impeded free communication between those remaining in Iraq and those having left. Additional costs were the always possible collective punishment exerted by the repressive organs of the regime on members of a family group for a son, a brother, a husband or even a cousin who was known to have exited Iraq without the requested permissions. *De facto*, the regime had created the category of "illegal emigrant", a crime for which kin of the perpetrator were punishable in his/her absentia. For many, leaving meant breaking away from one's family and kin group for a long time and exposing them to danger, even to the risk of death.

As interviews conducted with Iraqis who left after April 2003 show, disincentives were particularly effective in the case of two partially overlapping categories of would-be migrants from the urban educated middle-class who were immobilised. First those who were under no direct physical threat but were affected by the deterioration in living standards resulting from the economic blockade. Second those whose access to financial means was limited or who, having insufficient capital, were unable to mobilise such capital within their own social groups. From 1991 to early 2003, there were of course cases of re-active migration when people who were under direct physical threat had to flee as a matter of urgency. But those were more likely to look for safer places inside Iraq, and sometimes undertake out-migration at a later stage. In practice, it was nearly impossible to cross the border without a minimum of capital or contacts among the smugglers or, in any case, without planning.

Thus the people who left Iraq permanently were, in their majority, neither reactive fugitives who fled immediate instances of violence, nor those most affected by the deterioration of the social and economic conditions prevailing in the country. International migrants belonged to an intermediate category whose economic aspirations were often impossible to distinguish from their political motivations. This double characteristic merely reflected the very nature of the processes which were the most direct causes of emigration: on the one hand, the blockade was the economic tool of an international policy whose

ultimate objective was to change the internal political order in Iraq (Graham-Brown, 1999); on the other, the Iraqi regime used scarce economic and social resources to achieve internal political objectives: it rationed these resources to its population, for example through the food-distribution system put in place under the oil-for-food deal, but also through access to employment in the public sector, to basic necessities, to land and water (Fawcett and Tanner, 2002; HRW, 2003; Shehabaldin, 1999: 1-18). Some categories of the population were completely deprived while others were favoured. In both cases the economy was used to achieve political ends. This is clearly illustrated in the sociological profiles and motivations of Iraqis who left the country, regardless of the legal status which they obtained in countries of emigration. Another determining factor arose from the principle of collective responsibility which the regime used most frequently to threaten family and wider social groups with physical or economic insecurity. Thus it maintained certain groups in a state of structural insecurity by collectively excluding them from access to economic resources or coercing them physically though house arrest, police interrogation, imprisonment, torture and assassination.

Within such a context, individual migratory decisions and trajectories can only be understood as collective processes, including the timing of migration. A social group which is threatened by the regime or other external forces is also one within which trust and solidarity are strongest to achieve migration objectives. Individual migration strategies were therefore based first and foremost on family links, and also possibly (by not systematically) on class, professional, religious, ethnic or tribal solidarities; in most cases they were family-driven and family-based, i.e. they aimed at removing a complete family unit from the situation of insecurity which prevailed in Iraq even though it was usually impossible for this migration to be achieved in a single journey. It is therefore unsurprising that Iraqi migration displayed features of labour migration due to the profile of the initial migrants – adult males with high professional qualifications – but that the process of family reunion happened far quicker than is the case in classical cases of labour migration.[12]

A final consideration helps to understand the motivation which prompted a number of Iraqis to leave their country and also the destinations of some of these migrants. Regardless of the issue of state coercion, the degradation of the socio-economic conditions that had started with the Iran-Iraq war created a perception of insecurity by comparison with the period of prosperity and welfare that had predated the 1980s. The closure of Iraq to exchanges with the rest of the world caused considerable frustration for the educated and intellectual classes. Indeed, since the 1970s, and by comparison with other nations in the

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[12] Even when the principle of collective responsibility was not upheld, the benefits of a purely economic migration on the family which remained behind in Iraq were limited by impediments on communications and transfers of funds, hence the tendency towards rapid family reunion.

Middle East, Iraqis, and in particular the vast middle class, had developed a high level of expectations with respect to working conditions, social and economic welfare, and access to consumer goods. The result is that the conditions that were likely to satisfy an Egyptian labour migrant in Jordan were not likely to satisfy an Iraqi exile.

2.2 Emigration to Iraq's neighbours

During the period under consideration, two thirds of Iraqi migrants remained in the countries of first migration neighbouring Iraq or in more distant Arab countries, whereas one third continued towards a country of asylum or emigration in the west. The following section will therefore address the following questions: who stayed permanently in the country of first arrival? Who only transited and how long did this transit last? What were the structural contexts in which migrants decided to stay or continue their journeys? Was a choice between these two options possible in all contexts? What were the factors that influenced the direction of those who migrated further afield? Is it possible to identify factors common to the four countries of first destination: Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iran and Jordan?

2.2.1 Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia, which had taken no measures to regroup Iraqis or systematically control the movements and activities of Iraqis residing on its territory prior to 1991, continued to allow the activities of exiled Iraqi officers in coordination with the USA (Luizard, 2002: 209). By contrast, the monarchy established an extremely rigid framework for Shi'te refugees from the Gulf war, who were mostly army deserters and therefore single men who had left their families behind. Controlled by the police, these "guests of the King" were compelled to reside in the Rafha camp, located near the Iraqi border and far removed from Saudi urban centres. Refugees were not allowed to engage in political activities or to have any relations with the Saudi Shi'ite community, including relatives. During the Gulf war, the Saudi authorities had negotiated with US civil and military authorities an arrangement with the UNHCR which some other countries later supported. The UNHCR exerted a mandate of temporary protection over the refugees. The Saudis took responsibility for the financial costs: housing, education, health, a monthly stipend or supervised employment in the town neighbouring Rafha camp. As a counterpart, a number of western countries and Iran agreed to permanently resettle these refugees in their own countries and did so in batches throughout the 1990s (Shoeb *et al* 2007; correspondence Saudi Arabia 2001).

Their status and the surveillance exerted by the Saudis over movements outside of the camp did not give the Iraqis room for the slightest choice. They had to prepare themselves for a new migration which they hoped for as confinement in Rafha was

psychologically stressful. Their migratory dynamics in the following phase were not determined by factors of attraction specific to the countries of final destination but by the policies of the host countries with respect to quotas and selection criteria for the refugees they had agreed to accept.[13] At best, refugees were allowed to express preferences, but states were sovereign. Over about 10 years, the selection process implemented by the relevant authorities of a handful of countries redistributed 30,000 Iraqi refugees from Rafha mostly to the USA, but also to Canada, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, Australia and Iran. By April 2003, there were effectively no resettlement possibilities for the 5 200 people remaining in the camp as they did not fit into the selection criteria of the resettlement countries. After the American invasion of Iraq, they returned to Iraq.

2.2.2. Syria

Ba'thist Syria, alongside other states in the region (in particular Iraq and Yemen) subscribes in principle to a pan-Arab ideology: in the 1990s, it still accepted on its territory nationals of other Arab states as non-Syrian Arabs rather than as foreigners whose stay was subject to restrictions. In theory, members of this category had the right to entry and unlimited residence and benefited from the same social and economic advantages as Syrians: access to the labour market, property, social services, health, education etc. Although the border with Iraq was officially closed since 1982, refugees, mainly Assyrians, crossed into Syrian territory at the time of the Gulf war. They were initially compelled to remain in camps (in particular al-Hol) in the north-eastern province of the Jazira until regulations on movements were eased for those whom the Syrian authorities considered to present no security threat. In the cities – Damascus, Aleppo, Deir Ezzor or Hasakeh – community networks and institutions then played a major role in ensuring their access to housing, social and financial assistance and employment (interviews Syria 2001 and 2007). Moreover, Syria has granted a form of discretionary asylum to certain Iraqi opposition groups, in particular welcoming defecting officers (Luizard, 2002: 210). Overall, it can be said that the flexibility of the legal framework and of the social and economic opportunities provided by Syria to those Iraqis whom it allowed to settle gave them the possibility to re-establish social relations and economic livelihoods. Moreover, Syria allowed the UNHCR to receive asylum requests, to grant refugee status and to seek resettlement for refugees in third countries.

If this policy is in stark contrast with the one adopted by Saudi Arabia, there is a common point between the two countries: neither provided asylum on the basis of

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[13] Some countries only accepted entire nuclear families. Others made a selection on the basis of qualifications. Rare were those who received refugees suffering from serious health problems, physical handicap, psychological trauma or elderly people. The basic humanitarian principle which all respected was not to separate nuclear families (interviews with the UNHCR and specialised staff in several western embassies, Amman 2001).

international refugee standards, i.e. neither was bound by international commitments concerning the non-*refoulement* or deportation of people at risk of persecution in their country of origin.[14] However, during the war and in the following years, Assyrians were not the only ones to enter Syria illegally, crossing a border which was not heavily militarised, and using the services of smugglers when necessary; members of the Shi'ite opposition and Kurds also entered Syria. According to international organisations (interviews with the UNHCR and Amnesty International) the Syrian security services intercepted most of these refugees after they had entered the country. The majority, who were considered undesirable, were imprisoned or sent back to Iraq where they were in danger by the mere fact of their entry into Syria. This might have acted as a disincentive for other would-be migrants.

As for those Iraqis allowed to remain in Syria, their legal status and the administrative conditions of their residence remained stable and rather satisfactory; they were not in themselves conducive to further migration. Other elements then came into play in the choice that some people made to move on, the destination they chose and also their ability to implement these projects. For some, professional frustration was a reason to move on, either because they did not find work, or because the jobs available were not up to their hopes and/or their qualifications. For others, it was rather a wish to become involved in opposition to the Iraqi regime by joining the Shi'ite resistance movement in Iran. Others joined Hezbollah in Lebanon. Finally, with respect to members of the two groups mentioned above as well as those who might have been satisfied with their situation in Syria, family members settled in Iran or in the west acted as pull factors.

There were two periods of intercontinental migration from Syria based on communal connections. Assyrians left from 1991 onwards to rejoin family members in America, Australia or the UK through legal means by requesting emigration or family reunion visas[15] from the embassies of these countries as their co-religionists had been doing for a long time from Iraq. This trend ended towards 1994, when those who were still in Syria had no family links close enough with those in the west to claim family reunion. In addition, western embassies started being more restrictive with respect to granting visas to Iraqis as appears from interviews conducted in 2001 with consular officials in several of

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[14] International norms with respect to definition and protection of refugees are stated in the 1951 Geneva Conventions and the 1967 Protocol. Syria, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and most other Arab countries (with the exception of Yemen and Egypt) are not signatories to this text (see Zaiotti, 2006).
[15] Family reunion can be achieved through an immigration or an asylum regime. These requests are usually dealt with by different administrative units and the level of relationship requested between family members can vary according to country and regime. In Denmark, for example, the father and mother of an adult refugee could benefit from reunion in the late 1990s, whereas a non refugee resident was only be allowed to bring in his/her spouse and children (interview, Danish embassy, Amman, 2001).

these embassies. Asylum requests made to the UNHCR or to the embassies of states which operated such schemes (eg Canada) then became an alternative mechanism to attempt to by-pass restrictions on emigration through the previous channel. The secondary migration of Shi'ite, which had previously been directed towards Iran or Lebanon, then began to take over from that of the Assyrians as they aimed at the same destinations. People who had been through the Rafha camp in Saudi Arabia and had been resettled in North America, Europe or Australia from 1992 onwards became the initial migrants for a Shi'a community-based migration whose chain dynamic relied on kinship as did that of the Assyrians. Yet, again for the same reasons, the movement slowed down two or three years later. In the case of both the Assyrians and the Shi'ites, this period of legal migration was followed by a period when migration was mainly clandestine, with a new thrust brought about by the very controlled reopening of the Syrian-Iraqi border in 1997 (El Yazami, 2002 ; Interviews, Syria, 2001, 2003, 2007).

2.2.3 Jordan

The very significant regular inflow of Iraqis over twelve years (maybe up to one million with the majority transiting and a large number of circulatory migrants) and the permanent stock of maybe between 200 000 and 300 000 caused embarrassment to the Jordanian authorities, whose population was only five million in 2000. A policy of mass expulsion of undesirables was not on the agenda however, nor was a closure of the border. The political economy of Jordan's relations with Iraq and with international funders prevented both. Being unable to contain the inflow, Jordan made it difficult for Iraqis to stay; the consequence being that a large proportion of them were persuaded to seek means of leaving the country. In Jordan there was only one possible legal status for Iraqis, that of foreigners subject to restrictions on the conditions and length of their stay. Throughout the period under consideration, the vast majority of Iraqis in Jordan were either visitors on a temporary residency, or irregular aliens who had overstayed their six-month residency. The latter were liable to expulsion to Iraq, a threat which was sometimes implemented but was spared to women, children or the elderly. Before the Gulf war and in the early 1990s approximately 30 000 Iraqis obtained a longer-term residency and work permit, filling qualified employment niches. Jordan did not provide asylum based on the Geneva Convention or a domestic legislation.[16]

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[16] The Jordanian monarch personally gave asylum to a handful of Iraqi officials during the 1990s. For ordinary people, Jordan had allowed the UNHCR to receive asylum applications, to determine refugee status, and to put in place a procedure for refugee resettlement. Through formal written agreement, which could however be revoked, the Jordanian government had committed itself to recognising the protection mandate of the UNHCR with respect to asylum seekers and refugees, to consider them as temporary residents (pending resettlement) with a legal status thus without giving them the right to work or to social benefits. For a number of reasons (see Chatelard, 2002), very few

These factors, in association with the permanent opening of the border with Iraq, meant that Jordan was more a transit zone than a place where Iraqis settled. As the country played the role of a sieve and filter, or frontier zone, between Iraq and the rest of the world, it is arguably from its territory that the main flows of Iraqi outmigration developed their intercontinental scope.[17] Between 1990 and 2002 several migration currents from Iraq to Jordan can be identified, each with specific social characteristics, though there is no absolute temporal break between them.

The first current involved refugees seeking safety in anticipation or as a result of the 1990-1991 international armed conflict. International organisations put numbers of Iraqi refugees at that time at up to 500 000, but there exist no independent verification of this figure[18]. According to the written media and to interviews, this group was demographically heterogeneous: it was composed of a large number of families including men and women and all age groups. There are however indications to suggest that it was rather homogeneous in socio-economic terms: urban people belonging to the upper-middle class using their previous knowledge of and connections in Jordan, but also less well-off members of the middle class who could still afford what they viewed as temporary migration pending a solution to the conflict and who capitalised on the strength of the Iraqi dinar vis-à-vis the Jordanian currency.

Among this initial current, class, gender and some confessional variables played a role in orienting subsequent migration patterns and in timing secondary migration. People who were already used to intercontinental mobility, and had capital and assets outside Iraq did not wait for the outcome of the conflict before undertaking the procedures necessary to a distant outmigration. Among the group of people who did not have access to significant financial capital and who were not in the habit of travelling internationally, two separate migratory trends emerged, each following directions taken by previous migrants. One of them was mainly composed of single men who undertook what was often an individual labour migration towards another Arab state. The other was mainly composed of families who left for destinations – the UK, North America or Australia – where they already had relatives, which is a reason why Christians were over-represented in this group. Starting from Jordan as a waiting zone, these projects took varying amount of time to be realised, in

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Iraqis approach the UNHCR in Jordan by comparison with the size of the flow and the number of those who, having transited Jordan, launched asylum applications in a western country.

[17] The argument runs against Sirkeci (2005) who identifies Turkey as the main transit country for Iraqis engaged in international migration. However the author does not give consideration to other transit countries neighbouring Iraq.

[18] International organisations focussed their efforts on the reception and repatriation of foreign workers who had left Iraq, whereas the Jordanian government had to deal with the arrival or return of 350,000 of its citizens who had left the Gulf states. While there are demographic and socio-economic data for these two groups of displaced people, Iraqi refugees from this period can only be discussed qualitatively.

some cases over a year for each individual. Both motivations and the intended duration of migration shifted: it was no longer a matter of seeking protection from conflict but rather the aim was to protect oneself from the excesses of a dictatorial regime that had showed its brutality in the repression of the Shi'ite and Kurdish uprisings in 1991, or to safeguard a lifestyle which was threatened now that international embargo was imposed upon Iraq. Those who saw no prospect for short term success in their secondary migration plans, and considered that they had nothing to fear from the regime, returned to Iraq as of 1992, sometimes leaving again in the following years.

The migratory currents of the years 1992-2002 were grafted on this initial large scale population movement. Those who had succeeded in leaving Iraq for western countries were followed by a large number of members of the intelligentsia and highly qualified people in advanced industrial or technological fields, and members of professions who were not closely associated with the regime. This drain on brains and capital took place along the patterns of classical chain migration, using family solidarities to by-pass the difficulties related to departure from Iraq and entry and residence in a western country. Male labour migration to Arab countries also accelerated in the first years of the embargo. Migrants included doctors and surgeons, engineers, lawyers, higher education teachers, journalists, translators etc, many of them working in the public sector in Iraq. They left in search of better salaries at a time when their purchasing power in Iraq was collapsing. Jordan granted residency permits linked to work contracts to 15 000 – 20 000 of them. Many thousands more left across Jordan for Yemen and Libya.[19] Some found the necessary funds to bring their wives and children out of Iraq, but most simply transferred part of their salaries to Iraq to support their families. This flow never completely dried up but its volume diminished. On the one hand, as early as 1993 as it became increasingly difficult for this group to leave Iraq: the financial capacity of its members was reduced just at a time when the cost of migration increased. On the other hand, Libya effectively stopped recruiting Iraqis after 1997 and, by contrast with Yemen, it was impossible to go there without having first obtained a work contract. In Yemen, there were also fewer opportunities in the labour market. Jordan, which had stopped issuing work permits to Iraqis as early as 1995, became the buffer which these migrants kept hitting as they continued to leave Iraq in the following years. Many remained in Jordan in an irregular situation after having overstayed their 6-month temporary permit and worked in the informal labour market, well below their qualifications. Their professional profile became increasingly diversified: in 1999-2002 people who in Iraq had been petty traders or clerks, or even skilled craftsmen, such as bakers and garage mechanics were

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[19] Yemen had an open entry and residence policy for Arab nationals. Its economy was not thriving but it lacked highly skilled people, which was also the case in Libya in the more favourable context of an oil-based economy.

found working informally in Jordan. They were also increasingly dispersed throughout Jordan, no longer just concentrated in the main urban zones, but also working in small towns and villages in the rural areas where their skills (such as car mechanics) were in short supply.

Circular migration from Iraq to Jordan and back to maintain a legal status as temporary visitor was only possible for those whose work was sufficiently well paid in Jordan to enable them to repeatedly pay the exit tax from Iraq. In the meantime, large numbers of circular migrants crossed the border regularly, in particular bus and taxi drivers and traders (both categories often overlapping) who benefited from special permits. Evaluation of the size of stocks and flows are complicated by these constant circulations and make Jordanian statistics on entry and exit of Iraqis difficult to handle. The multiple trajectories of migrants who sought income and legality and tried their luck in Jordan, then Libya, then Yemen and back to Jordan, sometimes with visits to Iraq, added to migration project to the west which some implemented also complicate the picture. Few of those, however, approached the Amman office of the UNHCR: the asylum route to international migration was deemed too dangerous for families left in Iraq and for individuals who might want to return there at a later stage.

In the migration currents describes above, sectarian variables only played at the margin: there were no specific Shi'ite or Sunni migration patterns, while not all Christians could or wanted to rely upon communal institutions or previous patterns of intercontinental migration. Strategies were generally based on class and professional assets.

By contrast, a last current of politicised and religiously-oriented Shi'ite migrants displayed specific sectarian characteristics. It was initially provoked by the Shi'ite uprising in 1991, its repression and its repercussions in the late 1990s. It started modestly as early as 1991 but became significant from 1996 onwards.[20] Adult Shi'ite men came first, but this migration, like the labour trend of the earlier years, was transformed into a chain family migration. Unlike male migrants from the previous current, these politicised Shi'ites arrived in numbers in Jordan at a time when labour migration towards other Arab states was closed because of the saturation of the labour markets in Yemen or Libya. Those interviewed in Amman in the late 1990s and early 2000s stated however that they were not disposed toward migrating to majority Sunni Arab countries where they could not assert openly their religious identities. In the same time, communal links of members of this group with the west were weak for lack of previous migratory history. The UK, where Iraqi Shi'ite institution existed, stood as an exception. As a general rule these ties only benefited those

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[20] The number of politicised Shi'ite migrants (mostly affiliated with the Da'wa party) peaked in 1996 during the repressions that followed an assassination attempt against Udai, Saddam Hussein's son. It peaked again in 1998 during the American bombing campaign on Iraq, and in 1999 during the confrontations between the Iraqi authorities and Shi'ite political groups (Luizard 2002: 160, 187, 189).

strongly involved in religious institutions, in particular clerics or theological students, whose regular or clandestine migration to the UK was financially supported by these institutions (see Chatelard, 2004). The 30 000 or so refugees resettled from Rafha in Saudi Arabia were the primary force that attracted Shi'ites waiting in Jordan to the countries where the former had been resettled in a western country. This was done through the legal channel of family reunion, or, when this channel was not available or too long to activate, those resettled supplied others with the means for clandestine migration. Others were able to join the Shi'ites communities in Syria and, beyond that, in Lebanon or sometimes in Iran. Those who failed to mobilise sufficient social and/or financial capital remained immobilised in Jordan or were expelled to Iraq. Politicised Iraqi Shi'ites represented the vast majority of those who registered with the UNHCR in Amman.[21] Based on their own accounts, they approached the UNHCR in the absence of other prospects for secondary migration, because they could claim family reunion through that channel with those resettled from Rafha, because they had no intention to return to Iraq under the existing regime, and in an attempt to secure a degree of protection from the Jordanian authorities who looked unfavourably on their presence in Jordan. But many who registered with the UNHCR also activated other channels to facilitate their secondary migration.

Towards the end of the 1990s, the distinction between the different currents was increasingly difficult to make. Jordan was a waiting zone for people involved in chain family migration, for Christians whose migration dynamics also relied upon communal solidarities, and for individuals awaiting family reunions within a refugee regime. In a saturated informal labour market, Iraqis of various socioeconomic and political/sectarian profiles were in competition for jobs with each other, with Egyptian labour migrants and with the poorest Jordanians. Most crucially, political risk added up to economic risk: adult men whose situation was irregular were liable to be expelled to Iraq at any time, whereas political opponents and asylum seekers registered with the UNHCR were living in fear of the Iraqi secret services who, according to persistent rumours, operated in Jordan. For all these reasons, the very large numbers of Iraqis who did not benefit from a long-term residency and work permit did not consider Jordan a safe country. Migrants used all the possible means to continue their journeys towards the safety which they hoped for. Means were available due to the integration of the country in international communication and transport networks, and the presence of several foreign embassies.

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[21] In July 2003, the UNHCR estimated that, out of an estimated 300,000 Iraqis in Jordan, "80% were Shi'ites originating from the Centre and Southern regions" (UNHCR 2003a; figures pre-dating the April 2003 American invasion).

2.2.4 Iran

Iran, a signatory to international refugee conventions that pursued a policy of systematic asylum-granting for individuals arriving from Iraq, was the only asylum country among Iraq's neighbours. However, Iraqis were granted asylum along various categories. Those who arrived between 1991 and 2003 were granted the status of involuntary migrants (*mohajerin*) which entitled them to stay indefinitely on the territory but confined them to certain types of employment, limited their access to social services and did not entitle them to a travel document. Iraqis who had arrived in earlier periods had usually been granted the status of fully fledged refugee (*panahandegran*) justified by the fact that they had been denied Iraqi citizenship and were thus stateless.[22] In all cases the refugees were not compelled to remain in a camp if they could find an Iranian national or another refugee legally settled outside a camp to act as guarantor. Thus the number of Iraqis in camps remained very low (about 10% of all refugees, concentrated in the border regions of Khouzestan and Iranian Kurdistan) (Rajaee, 2000).

By comparison with the period preceding the Gulf War, many new trends emerged in Iraqi emigration towards Iran, in particular the mass arrival of Marsh Arabs and other rural population from the vicinity of the Marshes between 1991 and 1994 (Babakhan, 1994; AIJ-FIDH, 2002; Le Roy 2001; HRW, 2003). By contrast with earlier waves of refugees, the new arrivals were of rural background and originally strongly socialised within a kinship system. These ties were dismantled with the destruction of their villages, imprisonments or assassination and forced migration in different directions (within Iraq and towards Iran). Lacking previous social connections in Iran, most of them were unable to leave the camps which provided them with very limited economic opportunities. On the other hand these farmers and herders had no professional skills suited to the demands of the labour market of southern Iran where the main economic activities focused on the requirements of the petroleum industry or trade; earlier arrivals from Iraq had taken up the available positions, and Afghan refugees (who numbered 2 million in Iran at the time) were occupying the unskilled jobs in agriculture or construction. Finally the very low educational levels of these refugees prevented them from turning their Arab identity, often perceived negatively by non-Arabs in Iran, into a religious or cultural asset, as several members of the groups who had arrived earlier had done by joining the institutions of the great religious centres in Qom, Mashhed or Ispahan (interviews, Teheran and Qom, 2002).

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[22] The Iranian authorities variously included the *panahandegan* in the figures of Iraqi refugees they publicized. Hence there could be very important discrepancies in numbers of Iraqi refugees depending on the sources (UNHCR, Iranian government, or NGOs).

All these factors combined to explain why many refugees in camps who had a rural background were recruited as fighters into the Badr Brigade.[23] The Brigade played an integrative role by helping them out the camps and social and economic marginalisation (interviews, Khouzestan, 2002). Among these refugees, there was also a very high proportion of elderly people and women without male relatives, with or without their children. Demographics reflected the outcome of the repression exerted by the Iraqi security apparatus that targeted adult men, but also the fact that many men had died on the battlefield during the Iran-Iraq war (Le Roy, 2001). Without a working-age male head-of-household to rely upon, the camp context allowed them to cope thanks to the assistance provided by the Iranian authorities and NGOs, including those connected with the Iraqi Shi'ite exiled opposition, which also recruited medical personnel and teachers among trained refugees. As a general rule, Iraqis arriving after 1990 were more dependent than earlier arrivals on the networks and structures belonging to the Iraqi Shi'ite Islamist parties for their economic and social support.

Another new trend specific to the Ma'dan and other rural refugees was that several thousands of them evaded registration, preferring to keep away from official institutions and camps. Villagers or members of kinship groups who had fled collectively or had managed to regroup once in Iran called on common tribal ties with Iranian Arabs, the majority ethnic group in Khouzestan. They established informal settlement near villages where residents belonged to the same tribal confederation. They were not at risk of expulsion back to Iraq, but several were re-categorised by the authorities as *mohajerin* and sent to a camp (interviews, Khouzesta, 2002).

The cumulative effect of a number of social handicaps maintained rural Iraqi refugees very much on the margins of Iranian society while immobilising them in Iran. The vast majority of them had neither the financial means nor the social networks to consider long distance emigration to the west. But maybe the factor that played the major role in keeping them inside Iran is that western countries were foreign to their mental universe. Out of the two dozen interviews conducted in 2002 in Khouzestan with people originating from the Iraqi Marshes, none expressed a desire to leave Iran, except to return to Iraq should there be a change of regime or to contribute to bringing about that change. These refugees were indeed the first to massively return to Iraq after Saddam Hussein's fall in April 2003.

The Ma'dan and other farmers were not the only Iraqis to seek refuge in Iran during that period. The victims of the April 1991 repression of the Shi'ite uprising and of the hunt for Shi'ite Islamist opponents, which continued well beyond that period, had a profile more

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[23] This militia, the armed wing of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), the main Shi'it opposition movement to the Ba'athist regime and favourable to the Iranian revolution, was based in Khouzestan from where it ran operations into Iraq (Luizard, 2002: 191-192).

typical of middle class refugees; they were either urbanites from Basra, Nasiriyah or Amarah who had migrated from the countryside to the cities in the 1970s, or rural people from areas in the south of Iraq other than the Marshes. This group did not find in the Iran of the 1990s the same socio-economic opportunities that had been available to refugees from earlier decades. The recession which started during the Iran-Iraq war limited employment opportunities in the petroleum industry as well as in manual work and petty trade which had, until then, been the main sectors of economic activity for the least educated Iraqi refugees particularly concentrated in Khouzestan and southern neighbourhoods of Teheran. Moreover the new Iranian government under President Khatami elected in 1997 shifted from a pan-islamist outlook to domestic priorities. This materialised, among others, through the introduction of restrictive measures aimed at the *mohajerin*: the list of prohibited professional activities was broadened, material support and social assistance were reduced etc (Al-Meehy, 2004; Frelick, 1999). However, unlike Afghan refugees, who were the main targets of these measures, Iraqi *mohajerin* were not subjected to incentives to return to their home country.

With the exception of the religious elites and the political leadership (two partially overlapping groups) whose modes of re-socialisation, economic insertion and relations to the Iranian state and society followed different dynamics (Luizard, 2002: 235-236), the Iraqi Shi'ite refugees who arrived after 1990 were more economically and socially vulnerable than those of the previous period. They lacked a social base acting as a shield against the measures which limited their access to the labour market and to social benefits except when they were able (and willing) to fit into the political, military and social structures of the exiled opposition. Educated and urban middle-class refugees were those most likely to be tempted by a departure to Europe or Australia now that Iraqi Shi'ite diasporas were in formation there. In certain cases, Iraqis in Iran activated the legal channels of family reunion, available with the mediation of the UNHCR. In other cases, they followed the well-trodden route of clandestine migration to Europe via Turkey which had been developed by Afghans and Iranians themselves. Finally, some pioneered the clandestine route to Australia via Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia, particularly after 1999. Here again, the people most likely to be involved in intercontinental migration were those who could make beneficial use of their relationship with relatives or friends already exiled in liberal asylum countries, sometimes in order to accumulate the financial capital needed for a very expensive migration process. At other times, capital was accumulated while working in Iran (Interviews, Iran, 2002 and internet correspondence in following years).

Some Assyrian Christians from Iraq, mostly originating from the north of the country, also preferred to seek security in Iran over that period and joined the Assyrian

Iranian community in the region of Urmieh (Western Azerbaijan Province). On the other hand, not all the Kurds who had fled during the mass exodus of 1991 and subsequent strife in Iraqi Kurdistan returned back in the following years. Many remained in the refugee camps of Western Azerbaijan managed by the Iranian authorities and the UNHCR alongside co-ethnics who had taken refuge there during the 1988 Al-Anfal campaign. Others were sponsored out the camps by fellow Kurds (Interviews, Western Azerbaijan, 2002 and internet correspondence, 2008).

The specific institutional context of Iran made irregular secondary migration of Iraqis, whichever their profile, more difficult, and therefore less frequent, than from Jordan: compared to the latter, Iran, a country embargoed by the USA, was relatively more isolated from international communication and transport networks whereas up-to-date technologies for the forging of identity documents was less available than in Jordan.

2.2.5   Turkey

In Iraq after 1991, the areas of Kurdistan north of the 36th Parallel were beyond the control of the Baghdad government. They had a majority Kurdish population and were less affected by the economic impact of the embargo or the coercion of the Ba'thist regime. However, these regions were also less economically developed than the rest of Iraq and offered limited labour opportunities. Moreover the north also suffered from strife during conflicts with the Iraqi army or internecine struggles between Kurdish factions (Graham-Brown, 1999: 206). The northern zone was a base for some of the factions opposing the Baghdad regime and attracted Iraqis from the centre or the south of the country – army deserters and other refugees – who sought to cross the control line separating the north from the rest of the country. In addition, the Ba'athist regime's policy of Arabisation of the Kirkuk region resulted in new expulsions towards Iraqi Kurdistan (AIJ-FIDH, 2002) whereas populations in both the Kirkuk and Mosul areas were hit by the economic effects of the sanctions and experienced impoverishment that prompted their emigration.

With the northern region as starting point, the outmigration current towards Iran was occasional and temporary but when refugees flew it was *en masse*. Reactive movements were undertaken mostly by rural Kurds fleeing conflicts with fair numbers of them returning to into Iraqi Kurdistan within months. The flow towards Turkey was smaller, more regular and more complex: it involved little reactive migration, but mainly long term intercontinental migratory projects that turned Turkey into a transit country. Alongside Kurds, it concerned a number of Turkmen, Assyrians and a limited number of Arabs who often transited through northern Iraq, in particular originating from the Kirkuk or Mosul regions. Turkey did not accept asylum claims from non European countries. However, Turkmen, who Turkey saw as

co-ethnics, were at times granted access to nationality or at least to residence rights (Frelick, 1997). For others, clandestine movement and a more or less long transit period were the norm (Içduygu, 2000 and 2003). A large number of both Christians and Kurds remained in urban centres in Turkey, mostly in Istanbul, where they did not abandon their projects of further migration but were immobilized long-term without a legal status and forced to look for livelihoods opportunities in the informal sector, often relying on potentially exploitative group solidarities (Danis, 2004b).

Ethnic or ethno-religious identities were a determining factor for the next step of the journey. A very small proportion of migrants joined the international refugee circuit (i.e. application with the UNHCR followed by resettlement). Assyrians and Chaldeans, who used the same underground human smuggling networks as the Kurds to reach Istanbul, then relied on religious solidarity for their next move (Mannaert, 2003; Içduygu and Toktas 2002). Chaldeans used churches, priests and Catholic charity organisations and activated family reunion or sponsorship schemes to reach Australia, the UK, or Canada (Danis, 2004a and 2008). Very few Kurds joined the Australian or North American circuits: by contrast with Christians, this group had no history of emigration to these destinations and, by contrast with Shi'ite Arabs, no new foci were established in the 1990s. The Kurds fled to Iran in 1991 at the time of the repression of their uprising while resettlement schemes for Iraqi refugees operated from Arab states which did not grant Iraqis asylum. By relying on the structures of the exiled political associations and parties and on kinship ties Iraqi Kurds had, since the Halabja episode in 1988, used the European migratory circuit and followed Turkish Kurds who had been using this route since the 1970s (Cigerli, 1998; Faist, 2000; King 2005). In the 1990s there was a process of redistribution of Kurdish migration to Europe due to changes in migration and asylum regimes: alongside such previous asylum countries as Germany and Sweden, the UK, Greece, and Italy became new destinations, the latter being also used for transit (Griffiths, 2002; Papadopoulou, 2004; Wahlbeck, 1998). However, a very large number of Kurds remained stranded in Turkey, particularly in Istanbul.

2.3 From the regional to the global

In 2002, in addition to an estimated 870,000 Iraqi migrants in the Middle East (see introduction to section 2), the UNHCR reported that 180,000 Iraqis were living as registered refugees in a western countries (including nearly 150,000 in Europe) while over 80,000 were still asylum seekers, waiting for their status to be determined. Another 70,000 who had arrived in the early 1990s had been granted citizenship and had thus disappeared from refugee statistics in the following years. Combined figures of refugees and asylum seekers having launched their claims in asylum countries, refugees resettled from host

countries around Iraq, former refugees having accesses citizenship, and Iraqis staying within a migration regime as residents or students showed that one third of all Iraqis who had left Iraq between 1990 and 2001-2002 were living in a western country. However, Iraqi refugees and asylum seekers as they appeared in the statistical abstracts published by the UNHCR were dispersed in more than 90 countries: two main poles – Iran and Western Europe – clearly stood out, followed by two secondary poles – North America and the Pacific (Australia and New Zealand) (UNHCR 2003a, 200b and 2003c).

At the global level, and compared with the previous period, the patterns of Iraqi migratory movements and loci of transit, regrouping and settlement had become far more complex. A large number of Iraqi migrants had travelled along routes used by previous exiled co-nationals, and the main urban poles had become more important as bases for exiled political opposition (e.g. Teheran and London) or as interface between Iraqis from the "inside" and the "outside" (e.g. Amman or, possibly, Kuwait). However, in the early 2000s Iraqi migrants were found on every continent. The dispersal of the Shi'ite community was particularly remarkable, overlapping in part with the scattered migration patterns of Assyrians which had retained the same features throughout the 20th century. For both communities, besides Australia, the UK or the USA, new migratory poles appeared in Northern Europe (Sweden in particular). New poles emerged largely as a factor of the policy choices of state actors within the international refugee regime, eventually prompting chain migration in family and at times communal patterns. Migration out of the Middle East developed based on two types of trans-national networks: the social networks of migrants and those of migrant smugglers. The trend was continuous when national asylum systems were favourable to Iraqis but it slowed down dramatically and either came to a halt or changed direction when target states shifted to less favourable asylum policies, as was the case with Germany in 1994 (Gibney, 2001) and Australia in 2001 (Tazreiter, 2003).

If attention is focused on the movements of Iraqi migrants and their direction rather than on their focal points for transit or settlement, striking features are the high level of multipolarity, the multiplicity of transit stages and, at almost every stage, the multiple redirecting of the flows. Measures adopted by the wealthiest blocks of states (Western Europe, North America, Australia/New Zealand) to control the entry of undesirable immigrants on their territory affected the mechanisms of irregular migration in different ways: they made migrants' journeys increasingly more tortuous and longer, they multiplied the number of transit stages on the way to final destinations, and they created buffer zones at the immediate periphery of wealthier regions where a very large number of undocumented migrants of different nationalities, including Iraqis, were waiting, unable to access countries of their choice and unwilling or unable to return to a previous transit stage

or to their home countries (Andreas and Snyder, 2000; Oxfam, 2002).[24] In these "buffer countries" (Turkey, Eastern and central European states, Mexico, Indonesia, various small Pacific states), Iraqi migrants had regrouped in urban centres, sometimes in camps under forcible pressure from local authorities, alongside migrants from other nationalities. A specific migration set-up had developed in these locations that included mostly informal communal networks, more or less structured illegal activities of identity document forgers and migrant smugglers, but also international organisations (the UNHCR, the IOM, etc.). In many cases in the late 1990s and early 2000s, national legislation was modified either to prevent further entry of migrants from countries that produced asylum-seekers on their way to wealthier states (case of Indonesia under Australian pressure), or to adopt a domestic refugee legislation (in Mexico for example). The granting of asylum in these buffer countries did fix some Iraqis there for a shorter or longer period. However it is questionable that those still immobilised in buffer countries at the time of writing (2009) have come to the end of their emigration cycle in these new asylum states where social and economic opportunities are not favourable to the long-term settlement of refugees. Thus it is very likely that the attraction of their social networks will persuade Iraqis who benefit from this status – in Mexico or Ukraine, for example - to return to the Middle East or to try their luck once more towards a western country. In the medium-term, the formation of new stable Iraqi exile communities in buffer countries remains unlikely.

3 The social variables of Iraqi migration

A number of scholars who have focused on the role of social networks in migratory dynamics have noted that the social structures in the migrants' place of origin serve as bases underlying and supporting networks which take a transnational dimension. These same authors suggest that a migratory movement acquires its international dimension when the members of the social networks engaged in migration projects are collectively able to transform their local assets into trans-national one; particular examples of this argument are found in Faist (2000), who discusses the case of Turkish Kurds, and A. Monsutti (2005) who has examined the case of the Hazara of Afghanistan.

In Iraq, migratory experiences were thought of not in universalistic, national or statutory terms (as Iraqis, as refugees, as labour migrants), but along pre-existing terms of class stratification and discrimination/coercion along political, ethno-religious or kin-based lines. Those had been reinforced or created by the action of the Iraqi regime on society, especially as of 1991 (Abdul-Jabar, 2002; Abdul-Jabar and Dawod 2002), and by the effects of

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[24] Additional security measures at borders and pre-borders that states introduced after September 11, 2001 have reinforced the phenomenon but have not brought irregular migration to a halt.

the economic blockade. These affiliations could also be the cause for marginalisation in a number of national contexts along the migratory journey, especially in countries neighbouring Iraq. Conversely, they could provide migrants with greater access to safety than did their national identities (as Iraqi or Arab) in situations where states were trying to limit their commitments to refugee protection and/or adopted a protectionist labour migration regime. Such social units could be subject to impoverishment, marginalisation, discrimination or persecution from the part of states or other social groups, but could also be factors of cohesion and action, and loci where to mobilise resources to ensure individual safety; in other words they could be altogether the cause of and the instrument for migration. Migratory patterns at the global level, as well as their modalities (irregularity, legality, a combination of both, migration within an asylum or an immigration regime etc.), their stages and temporalities and the destinations sought, whether reached or not, depended on the configuration of, and types of assets offered to individuals by these social units at any given moment.

3.1 Entitlements and representation

Legal statuses available to Iraqi migrants in each regional context were determined by the political and policy choices made by reception countries and did not match the causes of the migration. From the point of view of the Iraqis interviewed in regional destination countries and beyond, the optimal configuration to ensure their satisfactory long-term residence should have included all the following parameters:

- Physical security guaranteed by the authorities of the host country (no forced return to Iraq, protection from the activities of the Iraqi security services in the host country, fair access to justice and, more generally, rule of law);
- Access to legal employment as well as sufficient demand in the sectors of interest to Iraqis, namely skilled labour and the professions;
- Access to social benefits (health, education, housing etc.) and support structures (government, NGOs, communal/religious and international organisations);
- Freedom of expression: cultural (as members of an ethnic or linguistic group, but also as Iraqis), political (for the different groups opposing the Ba'athist regime), religious (for the Shi'ites, Sunnis, Christians of different sects and other small communities);
- The possibility of maintaining relations with significant social groups (family, party comrades, other Iraqi nationals, co-religionists etc.) in and out of the host country.

A very small proportion of the Iraqis interviewed expressed the view that all these conditions were met in any of their regional country of emigration. Beyond identifiable

divides between countries that guaranteed Iraqis stable, safe and lasting residence on their territory (Iran) and those who did not (Saudi Arabia), an additional divide was between available regimes inside a single country: in some cases (Jordan), labour migration regimes were available for a selected group of Iraqis while the rest of the migrants could not access any form of legal residence. However, in any given regional context, legal conditions and the practices of governments and societies discriminated Iraqis along class, political and "primordialised" (ethnic, religious, kinship-based) identities, even when migrants did not claim them.

The crucial question concerned less the rights of migrants and refugees in Middle Eastern countries than the nature of the region's political systems and their impact on migrants. Advocacy for improved rights and entitlements was everywhere affected by the political outlooks of receptions states vis-à-vis the Iraqi regime, and vis-à-vis certain political, ethnic or religious groups. Whatever the level of legality of their stay, Iraqi migrants or refugees in the countries of the region were never in a position to negotiate improved collective entitlements with the national agencies that managed them. There was also little or no room in the public sphere for national advocacy organisations of the reception countries to speak in the name of Iraqis. Iran was the only country where a degree of advocacy for improved assistance in camps was possible, such advocacy being undertaken by the exiled Shi'ite political leadership. Neither the Kurds nor the Assyrians from Iraq were included in these initiatives. An additional element was that Iraqis in the various reception countries around Iraq were themselves fragmented along strong class lines, various experiences that had prompted the migratory decision, political outlook, and, at times, religious or ethnic affiliations. Under these conditions, and irrespective of the reception policies adopted by regional states, there existed no unified Iraqi exile community in any given reception country to speak in the name of an Iraqi migrant constituency. The UNHCR, on the other hand, was not in a position to play its universal role of advocacy and protection for all refugees across social categories in countries that made its operations conditional at best on restrictive memoranda of understanding. An additional impediment to the organisation's capacity was that relatively few Iraqis sought asylum for fear of possible retribution over family members at home.

3.2 Family-based dynamics

The family unit (defined loosely and not necessarily as a household in economic terms) was the smallest unit liable of suffering threats at the hands of the Iraqi regime along logics of collective responsibility and punishment embedded in a patriarchal and kin-based view of the socio-political order. Even those families whose political loyalty was not questioned, and

whose members did not face direct physical threats, incurred risks to their social and economic integrity: the impeded international mobility of individuals and circulation of information and capital flows between Iraq and the rest of the world fragmented families and prevented labour migrants to effectively support households back home and maintain ties. This is why, in many cases, Iraqis based their migration decision on two main considerations: concern for their own and their family's safety, and a desire to regroup with dispersed family members (generally members of the nuclear family). For the majority of the migrants interviewed, these two objectives played a cumulative role. As a result, even for those who benefited from the best possible legal and socio-economic conditions in a given location, global patterns of family relations played a role in their decision to continue migrating and in the choice of the next destination. Chain family migration was operational: with respect to reaching western countries, the process was initiated by earlier migrants, either those who had arrived before the Gulf war or primary migrants who benefited from refugee resettlement programmes after 1991. In most cases, family-based migration strategies spanned several countries and extended over several years. However, many families remained geographically scattered with members living in different contexts of opportunities and under different legal statuses.

Liberal social and economic contexts enabled migrants who had achieved security and stability in their countries of settlement to assist those who were in countries near Iraq with the financial or institutional/legal means to join them or to continue their migration to another destination. These means included the sending of funds (in particular to finance the costs of clandestine or semi-regular migration), intervention on their behalf with humanitarian organisations or churches that operated refugee sponsorship schemes, the activation of family reunion programmes, and marriages allowing the acquisition of a visa.

In the impeded context of communications and exchanges that linked Iraq with the rest of the world, it also happened that the pull exerted by family members remaining in Iraq on relatives staying in regional countries counterbalanced the pull for secondary migration exerted by family members settled in the west. This was especially true for Jordan where cross-border taxi and bus drivers (as well as traders) played a primary role in the circulation of information between family members. An informal mechanism for the transfer of funds (*hawala)* also existed, going through the same channels and with rules and guarantees based on trust, honour and reputation. Thus, many migrants who found the conditions of their stay there acceptable (if not optimal), opted for remaining despite the fact that they could have migrated to a country offering better legal and economic opportunities. Maintenance of links (for example by sending remittances) with relatives remaining in Iraq was given priority over other concerns. When circumstances allowed, families consciously planned strategic

dispersal: one or several members of the family remained in Jordan, to act as interface for communications and links for transfers of funds from other Arab countries or the west.

Within family units of various sizes, roles were distributed by taking into consideration levels of potential risk depending on age, sex and family status: among a group of brothers, for example, a single adult would stay in Jordan to maintain contact with elderly parents in Iraq, whereas his married brothers and his single sisters would be given priority to migrate further afield. Depending on the migratory channels chosen by families (who often combined several available ones), primary migrants were not necessarily heads of households or adult sons. In a number of extreme cases we documented, a single daughter or an underage son was sent to Jordan to apply for refugee status with the UNHCR. Alternatively, relatives mobilised funds to pay for their clandestine migration to a western country where they launched asylum claims. Such decision were made by taking into consideration the better chances such individuals had of being granted refugee status, the priority usually given by refugee organisations in the processing of so-called vulnerable cases, and therefore the possibility of speeding up the process of family reunion.

3.3 Communal/corporate-based dynamics

Communal or corporate-based migration strategies could also be adopted by those able and willing to rely on social networks which had already acquired, or were in the process of acquiring, a transnational scope and that had a degree of organisational structure. Consider the three following cases. The first case concerns Iraqi Kurds who arrived irregularly in Germany to seek asylum and managed their journey across borders and national territories through the networks and staging posts established during earlier decades by Turkish Kurds and through cross-border family networks (Içduyglu and Toktas, 2002 : 25-54).The second case is the Shi'ites from southern Iraq who took refuge in Saudi Arabia, were confined in a camp because of their communal affiliations, and were then resettled in the USA with the mediation of the UNHCR. A large number regrouped spontaneously in the suburbs of Detroit (Dearborne in particular) where Shi'ite community organisations had been created by Lebanese co-religionists after their arrival during the civil war in their country (1975-1991). Iraqi Shi'ites used these communal structures and solidarities before establishing their own institutions and gained rapid knowledge of the legal and irregular means through which to secure the chain migration of family members who had taken refuge in Jordan or Syria and even in Iran (Al-Hakim, 2001: 3-19; Grieco, 2003 ; Patrick, 2002; Shoeb *et al* 2007; correspondences USA, 2003-2006). Finally there is the case of Iraqis of all sectarian and ethnic affiliations who approached Christian churches liable to sponsor the next stage of their migration towards a western country, to the extent that some of them formally

converted in Amman, Istanbul or Kuala Lumpur (Danis 2008; interviews and correspondences 2001-2003).

Religious-communal ties in countries of first migration in the region could be mobilised to ensure livelihoods, mutual social support, financial assistance or moral and spiritual help within congregations, and sometimes mediation with the country's authorities and the UNHCR (Danis 2004a and 2008 for Christians in Istanbul; Chatelard 2004 for Shi'ites in Jordan). Communal connections were also used to travel between countries of the Middle East by using religious centres: between Jordan and Syria for both Christians and Shi'ites and, for the latter, between Syria and Lebanon and between all these countries and Iran. Concerning the Kurds, existing studies demonstrate that this role was played by such corporate groups as political organisations (Papadopoulou 2004) and kinship groups (King 2005), acting as relays for migration and for moral support and re-socialisation, particularly in European countries whereas they were transit stages or countries of durable settlement.

In all cases, these connections facilitated or assisted long-distance migration to places where communal regrouping was possible. In the vast majority of the cases we documented, individuals stated that their aim in seeking support from communal or corporate institutions and groups was to achieve family reunion or to ensure that each member of a family unit could reach and stay in a secure location. Individuals asserted communal or partisan identities either through genuine commitment or as instrumental at a given time and in a given place. However, even if communal/corporate-based processes were used to achieve family-based objectives, accessing resources and security through these institutions and networks had an impact on group identities and on the relationships of individuals with communal/corporate groups by creating or strengthening dependency and moral indebtedness. The result is that collective identities asserted instrumentally at one stage of the migratory trajectory could solidify, and be transformed and maintained after the instrumental stage.

3.4 The class variable

Nicholas Van Hear's consideration of "class" in migration demonstrates that the patterns and direction of movements of migrants fleeing situations of conflict at home can be partly or largely determined by their socioeconomic background (Van Hear 2004). This argument proves true in the case of migration from Iraq between 1991 and 2002/2003. Financial, professional and education assets as forms of capital were important additional variables at play in the capacity of Iraqis to migrate and in the direction and spatial scope of their migration, albeit not the only variables and not independent ones.

Professional and educational backgrounds were at one and the same time reasons for, impediments to and assets for migration. The economic impact of the embargo drastically affected the livelihoods of members of the educated middle-class who were also the objects of regulatory measures aimed at preventing their outmigration. Yet those who were educated were also more likely to belong to extended families who could free financial capital to pay for the cost of their exit from Iraq. Finally, they were also the ones who could expect to find labour contracts as skilled professionals in selected Arab countries and send remittances back home. This situation held true as long as employment policies in Jordan, Yemen or Libya were favourable to educated Iraqis. Hence the time variable combined with the class variable explains why the migration trend to Libya came to a halt in the second half of the 1990s while the trend to Yemen was reduced, and why, after that date, educated middle-class Iraqis were found in ever greater numbers in Jordan in situation of irregularity trying to eke out a living in the informal sector. Class played a further role in the spatial distribution of the educated middle-class, this time in correlation with the previous migratory histories of families themselves embedded in the Iraqi class structure of previous decades. Those migrants who had close relatives established in western countries before the 1990s as professionals or businesspeople could find support for further migration, especially starting from Jordan, whereas the other ones had to remain closer to Iraq and at times opted, more or less willingly, to return there.

However the class determinant remained secondary for many other migrants, especially the ones who could or would rely on communal-based solidarities. The Assyro-Chaldeans examined by Didem Danis in Istanbul (Danis 2008) belonged to the lower or lower middle-class. They had left Iraq to flee situations of dramatic impoverishment and, at times, religious-based persecution. They fled through northern Iraq and the Turkish border which they crossed irregularly, hence the cost of migration did not include the exit tax and the guarantee deposit. They nevertheless incurred the cost of clandestine migration mobilised from selling properties in Iraq, or from among family members and the religious community. The same situation faced those Christians who fled to Iran. Further migration to wealthier countries relied upon both family-based and communal-based solidarities. On the other hand, Danis contends that Iraqi Kurds staying long-term in Istanbul were stranded and marginalised by a combination of ethnopolitical (Turkey preventing the operation of Kurdish parties and associations) and class factors.

The class dimension in the migration of politicized or persecuted Shi'ites also played a role as a dependant variable. In their case, class was a factor of their position in the religious institution they were affiliated to, not of their socioeconomic situation in Iraq. The access of the religious elite to further migration opportunities via Jordan was prioritized,

whereas those less endowed with cultural and symbolic capital (even when highly educated) experienced longer transit stages, or eventually left Jordan for Syria that had a more favourable policy vis-à-vis religiously-oriented Shi'ites. In Iran, the class factor was also embedded in the structure of the religious/political community but an addition factor was the urban/rural divide between Shi'ite migrants, thus shaping different contexts of opportunities in the Islamic Republic and prospects of further migration. As a general rule, poorer rural Shi'ites remained in great numbers in Iran within refugee camps, whereas the most educated ones were in Iranian cities, or experienced a transitory stay in Saudi Arabia or Jordan before settling more durably in a western country.

Finally, the class dimension was essential for those who could not mobilise other types of resources (symbolic, religious, ethnic or kin-based) to exit Iraq and who remained within Iraq as involuntary "stayees" having to endure economic hardship, or as internally displaced fleeing the coercion and persecution exerted by the regime and experiencing further impoverishment entailed by displacement. These were a large number: internally displaced people were estimated to be 1 million before the 2003 conflict (Fawcett and Tanner, 2002). Interviews conducted with those who migrated to Jordan and Syria after 2003 also testify that the initial wave of migrants who left at the time of the Anglo-American invasion (and before sectarian dynamics and criminal violence became main reasons for fleeing) were likely to be either close associates of the Ba'th or involuntary stayees of the previous period who belonged to the educated middle-class and could realise their wish to migrate only after restrictions on exiting Iraq were lifted under the new Iraqi political regime. However, this window of opportunity was short-lived and control on exit from Iraq was reinstated in a new form as of 2005, while new controls on entry to Syria and Jordan were imposed.

Conclusion

An approach in terms of migration order requires attention to migratory flows and circulations in several directions, and also to the remittances of migrants back to the home country, the circulation of information between members of diasporas in close and distant locations and at home, and return migration. This aspect of an Iraqi migration order has been touched upon only marginally in this paper: the isolation of Iraq, caused both by international policies of blockade and authoritarian policy of the regime on the movement of its nationals (either by forcing them to stay or pushing them to leave), created a configuration specific to Iraq. Outflows of people where more important than circulatory or return migration, and flows of information and capital were restricted.

Taken collectively it is very difficult to qualify the motivations of those Iraqi who left their country between 1990 and 2003 as either economic or political; these motives were rarely mutually exclusive and the categorises used by states or international organisations whose mandates are to manage international migration flows or to protect refugees do not appear to be the only relevant ones to make sense of the patterns and the social organisation of Iraqi migration regionally or globally. Regionally, Iraqi migration patterns were embedded in historical, geopolitical, sociological, economic and legal contexts specific to each country and also common to a sub-set of countries within the region (Arab countries). As for the global distribution of the flows, their size and nature were partly determined by institutional, legal and policy factors such as access to, residence in and exit from regional countries, other countries in-between the region and countries of asylum in the west, and factors governing entry and stay in the west (including through refugee resettlement schemes). More characteristic of an Iraqi order of emigration in the period between 1990 and early 2003 was the combination of forced migration and collective/communal dynamics. This combination was a factor of social dynamics in Iraq and in the Middle East more generally. Social units such as the family, the socio-religious or ethnic group, and the social or professional class were often more relevant that the individual to understand migratory trends.

By comparison with the situation prevailing prior to the Gulf war, movements out of Iraq had accelerated and the total number of outmigrants had significantly increased. On the other hand, the geographical patterns of this migration displayed simultaneously a higher concentration of migrants at the regional level and a greater dispersal at the global level, a process which can be described as atomisation. Similarly, the proportion of Iraqi migrants accepted under various refugee regimes (international or domestic) significantly increased, but asylum seekers and registered refugees were found mainly in Iran and in western countries, specifically western Europe. By contrast, in the Arab states of the Middle East and in Turkey, most Iraqis were either regular or irregular migrants within migration regimes. Iran absorbed the largest part of the migratory flow, whereas countries which offered neither asylum nor secure residence under a migration regime did not contain the flow. However, migrants to Iran and other countries were pre-selected along both class, religious and political lines. Arguably it is more this pre-selection than the receptions policies available that determined secondary migration. Due to Iraq's international isolation, migrants' social networks that facilitated intercontinental moves were more firmly established in countries of first migration neighbouring Iraq. These networks were mostly operational in Jordan and Turkey, both countries with a high level of integration in world exchange and communications systems, and that achieved the status of major transit stages for Iraqis.

Institutional actors of the international refugee regime - the UNHCR and western asylum countries- played a major role in the creation of bridgeheads and new migratory poles in western countries through resettlement programmes. It remains the case that the social networks of migrants were liable to play a role at all stages of migration, to the point where the pull of earlier migrants persuaded individuals to leave Iraq or encouraged them to undertake secondary migration even when neither their economic situation nor their personal safety in Iraq or in a specific country of migration were particularly problematic. For many migrants or would-be migrants, social networks however represented no more than a potential which was, at best, partially actualised.

Current scholarship that focuses on the post-2003 outmigration from Iraq views the changes that have affected the Iraqi domestic stage after the Anglo-American invasion as having worsened the environment of insecurity in Iraq to the point of prompting forced migration of an unprecedented scale. Whereas it is impossible to evaluate with any certainty the size of the flow of migrants and refugees who have left Iraq since 2003, it is true to say that the trend is not new and needs to be read as embedded in previous large movements of Iraqis that have long taken a regional and global scope. Any consideration of possible return trends also needs to acknowledge that, when the social organisation of migration is based on collective and chain dynamics with a transnational dimension, migratory trends might be only marginally affected by such changes in the superstructure as improvement in the internal security of the country of origin. The case of the 200,000 Iraqi refugees (some 50,000 of them assisted by the UNHCR) who returned to Iraq from Iran in the months following the fall of the Ba'thist regime does not disprove this thesis: those refugees were either the ones whose transnational ties were the weakest, or those whose political stakes in the new Iraq were most important. By all means, even if domestic stability improves in Iraq, it is more than likely that the country will remain for years to come a country of significant outmigration and that Iraqi exile communities worldwide will continue to grow.

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