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OIL, POLITY, AND CIVIL SOCIETY: THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE
HEGEMONIC APPARATUS IN IRAQ

by

Zeinab F. Shuker

A Thesis

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Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

Major: Sociology

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To the people of Iraq

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ABSTRACT

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Social scientists believe that rentier economies have a negative impact on the development of a democratic political system. This study fills an existing gap in research through focusing on the interaction between oil rent, the behavior of the political elite, and the civil sphere in Iraq through examining the period between 1950-1958. I concluded that, first; in Iraq, rent generated from oil had provided the resources for the state to oppress the political, social, and cultural opposition in all of their forms. Second, depending on the nature of the economic system, and a variety of internal and external factors, oil could generate different outcomes in rentier states. And finally, the battle for democracy is fought in the civil sphere, and the hegemonic development is the product of a long process of political, economic, and social action.

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INTRODUCTION

The endemic political turmoil that has engulfed the Iraqi state since its creation cannot be divorced from nature of the economic system. To understand how Iraq became what it is today, one must consider how oil—as the principal economic commodity—has shaped the development of the political system, on the one hand, and the civil society on the other. Nevertheless, while scholars have debated, more generally, about the relationship between the rentier economy¹ and the retardation of democracy (Ades and Di Tella 1999; Aslaksen and Torvik 2006; Aubrey 1951; Basedau and Lay 2009; Haber and Menaldo 2011; Mehlum, Moene, and Torvik 2006a, 2006b; Niblock and Wilson 1999; Robinson and Acemoglu 2006; Robinson and Torvik 2005; Robinson, Torvik, and Verdier 2006; Ross 2001; Torvik 2009), as well as specific studies of nations like Argentina (Gervasoni 2010) Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Sierra Leone (Olsson 2006), a dearth of research has focused on Iraq. On the other hand, previous historical work that focused on Iraq has examined the processes associated with political development in the state, like rural-to-urban migration or colonialism (Baali 1966, 1969), and the development of oil economy (Dawisha 2009; Khoury 2005; Springborg and London Middle East Institute 2007). Yet, researchers did not engage the more general examination of the development of the civil sphere and its relation to the political and economic system in Iraq despite the fact that the two different lines of research could offer a more robust and comprehensive view of Iraqi history.

However, when one looks at the period of 1950-1958, a puzzle that requires a solution is revealed: we find a country in transition, in which a thriving civil sphere

¹ Or economies that create wealth through the monopolization by small proportions of the population over resources, foreign aids, and primary commodities.

participated in a vibrant political scene during the late 1940s, only to be oppressed by the political elite in the 1950s and the years that followed. Thus, we must ask: Why did Iraq move towards dictatorship when it had all the scaffolding for democracy? Why did not the thriving civil society crystallize as it had in other places in the world? Drawing from historical data (Al-Khafaji 2004; Batatu 2012; Davis 2005), the proposed thesis will show that it was the development of an oil rent economy that constrained the development of democracy, and led to the formation of a ruling class ideology that “poisoned” the nascent civil sphere. Furthermore, in recent years, it is this same economic structure that has prevented the emergence of democracy in Iraq, despite a foreign invasion that deposed the long-standing dictator, the establishment of a parliamentary system, and a series of free elections. We can see these historical events that happened in Iraq in table 1.

Table 1: A chronology of key events in the modern history of Iraq 1534-2003

Year	Event
1534 - 1918	Region is part of the Ottoman Empire.
1914 - 1918	World War I.
1917	Britain seizes Baghdad.
1920	Britain creates state of Iraq with League of Nations approval.
1920	Great Iraqi Revolution - rebellion against British rule.
1921	Faysal, son of Hussein Bin Ali, the Sharif of Mecca, is crowned Iraq's first king.
1932	Iraq becomes an independent state.
1939-1945	World War II. Britain re-occupies Iraq.
1958	The monarchy is overthrown in a military coup led by Brig Abd-al-Karim Qasim and Col Abd-al-Salam Muhammad Arif. Iraq is declared a republic.
1963	Prime Minister Qasim is ousted in a coup led by the Arab Socialist Baath Party (ASBP). Arif becomes president.
1963	The Baathist government is overthrown by Arif and a group of officers.
1966	After Arif is killed in a helicopter crash on 13 April, his elder brother, Maj-Gen Abd-al-Rahman Muhammad Arif, succeeds him as president.

Table 1: A chronology of key events in the modern history of Iraq 1534-2003

Year	Event
1968	A Baathist led-coup ousts Arif. Revolution Command Council (RCC) takes charge with Gen Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr as chairman and country's president
1972	Iraq nationalizes the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC).
1979	Saddam Hussein succeeds Al-Bakr as president.
1980	The pro-Iranian Dawah Party claims responsibility for an attack on Deputy Prime Minister, Tariq Aziz, at Mustansiriyah University, Baghdad.
1980-1988	Iran-Iraq war.
1981 June	Israel attacks an Iraqi nuclear research center at Tuwaythah near Baghdad.
1988 March	Iraq attacks Kurdish town of Halabjah with poison gas, killing thousands.
1990 March	Farzad Bazoft, an Iranian-born journalist with London's Observer newspaper, accused of spying on a military installation, is hanged in Baghdad.
1990	Iraq invades Kuwait, prompting what becomes known as the first Gulf War. A massive US-led military campaign forces Iraq to withdraw in February 1991.
1991 April	Iraq subjected to weapons inspection programme.
1991 Mid-March/early April	Southern Shia and northern Kurdish populations - encouraged by Iraq's defeat in Kuwait - rebel, prompting a brutal crackdown.
1991 April	UN-approved safe-haven established in northern Iraq to protect the Kurds. Iraq ordered to end all military activity in the area.
1992 August	A no-fly zone, which Iraqi planes are not allowed to enter, is set up in southern Iraq, south of latitude 32 degrees north.
1993 June	US forces launch a cruise missile attack on Iraqi intelligence headquarters in Baghdad in retaliation for the attempted assassination of US President George Bush in Kuwait in April.
1995 April	UNSC Resolution 986 allows the partial resumption of Iraq's oil exports to buy food and medicine (the "oil-for-food programme").
1995 October	Saddam Hussein wins a referendum allowing him to remain president for another seven years.
1996 August	After call for aid from KDP, Iraqi forces launch offensive into northern no-fly zone and capture Irbil.
1996 September	US extends northern limit of southern no-fly zone to latitude 33 degrees north, just south of Baghdad.
1998 October	Iraq ends cooperation with UN Special Commission to Oversee the Destruction of Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction (Unscm).
1998 December	After UN staff are evacuated from Baghdad, the US and UK launch a bombing campaign, "Operation Desert Fox", to destroy Iraq's nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programmes.
1999 February	Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr is assassinated in Najaf.

Table 1: A chronology of key events in the modern history of Iraq 1534-2003

Year	Event
1999 December	UNSC Resolution 1284 creates the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (Unmovic) to replace Unscm. Iraq rejects the resolution.
2001 February	Britain, US carry out bombing raids to try to disable Iraq's air defence network. The bombings have little international support.
2002 September	US President George W Bush tells skeptical world leaders at a UN General to confront the "grave and gathering danger" of Iraq - or stand aside as the US acts. In the same month British Prime Minister Tony Blair publishes a "dodgy" dossier on Iraq's military capability.
2002 November	UN weapons inspectors return to Iraq backed by a UN resolution which threatens serious consequences if Iraq is in "material breach" of its terms.
2003 March	Chief weapons inspector Hans Blix reports that Iraq has accelerated its cooperation but says inspectors need more time to verify Iraq's compliance.
2003 March	UK's ambassador to the UN says the diplomatic process on Iraq has ended; arms inspectors evacuate; US President George W Bush gives Saddam Hussein and his sons 48 hours to leave Iraq or face war.
2003 March	US-led invasion topples Saddam Hussein's government, marks start of years of violent conflict with different groups competing for power.

Note: Table 1 was recreated from the BBC website. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-14546763>

As such, this thesis contributes to the literature by bringing two different literatures (the political economy of rentier states, and the sociology of culture and power) into dialogue that, arguably, generates a much more robust theory for understanding rentier states, as well as their political systems and civil spheres—or, lack thereof. Hence, to better understand the formation of the Iraqi political system, one must first make the connection between the literature which has been written on oil rent (income generated from oil exports) and the formation of the political system, and second, how civil society has developed differently in Iraq (as opposed to the development of civil society in capitalist societies) because of the oil economy and its effects on the political institution.

In doing so, this research will contribute to the existing literature in three ways. First, it helps fill an existing gap in research related to the effect the rentier economy had on Iraq. Second, it will provide a better understanding of the relationship between rentier modes of production and the behavior of the state on shaping the historical memory of the people. Third, this study will focus on how the interaction between the political elite, oil, and the civil sphere had started the process of creating a hegemonic system that was realized few years later. Depending on secondary historical data, my goal, then, is to understand the relation between oil rent and the development of the Iraqi political system, and how that relation has shaped the civil sphere. I will argue that the rentier economy in Iraq has provided the means to: control the civil society and through it, the collective consciousness of the citizens, which, in turn, helped create and sustain an authoritarian non-democratic political system

To establish that argument, I begin by providing the reader with a clearer understanding of the concepts *rent* and *rentier economy*. This discussion naturally leads to a review of the literature concerning the relationship between rentier economies and political institutions (Basedau and Lay 2009; Le Billon 2001; Niblock and Wilson 1999; Ross 2001, 2004; Tsui 2011). Then, I will make the case that these types of theories cannot explain Iraq alone, but must be supplemented by sociological theories of hegemony, power, and the production of knowledge and culture (Adamson 1983; Bates 1975; Bieler and Morton 2004; Cox 1993; Femia 1981; Foucault 1982; Gramsci 1971). Finally, I will tie all this together through examining the historical development of polity, oil, and the civil sphere in Iraq during the 1940s and the 1950s.

LITERATURE REVIEW OF RENT AND RENTIER ECONOMY

Because my argument rests on the impact of oil rent on polity, it would be helpful to examine the meaning of rent in political economy. Besides the “classical” meaning, I will also discuss the disagreements contemporary political economists have regarding the relationship between economy and polity, especially when it concerns oil rent (Andersen and Ross 2013; Aslaksen and Torvik 2006; Batatu 2012; Mehlum et al. 2006a, 2006b; Robinson and Torvik 2005; Robinson et al. 2006; Ross 2001, 2004; Torvik 2009).

Early Scholarship On Rent

The concept rent has long been central to the study of political economy, and that concept has continued to evolve. Originally, Ricardo ([1819] 2004:53) conceptualized rent as “that portion of the produce of the earth, which is paid to the landlord for the use of the original and indestructible powers of the soil”; a definition, which later came to be known as Ricardian rent (Marshall [1890]1997). The importance of studying rent for political economists is due to the role of rent as an essential source of wealth,² and can therefore be something that can be monopolized and extracted by elites.³ While Ricardo

² Rent is one of the three modes of income in classical economy, along with wage (labor) and profit (capital).

³ The term elite is used rather causally by sociologists, however, as long as we can define our particular use of the term, we should save the reader the confusion of attempting to guess what does the word elite means in this instance. Raymond Aron (2003) recognized three different terms that are being used interchangeably by scholars of stratification and power, *elite*, *political class*, and *ruling class*. The elites, are all of those who are high in the hierarchy, who occupy privileges positions, and who have access to wealth, power, or prestige. The political class is reserved for the minority who exercise the political function of governing. The ruling class is the group between the elite and the ruling class, and it includes the individuals who without exercising any political duties still influence those who govern. I will talk about the elite more in details during my discussion of the civil society, however, when I speak of the elite in Iraq, I recognize them as the group who both function as the political class and the economic elite class, all combined in one group that have access to and monopoly over power, wealth, and prestige.

introduced the concept of rent, his definition was limited to rent generated from the land. The concept has evolved since then, and other scholars have extended this definition to include other resources, such as oil, diamonds, and other primary commodities (Olsson 2006; Snyder and Bhavnani 2005).

Eventually, political economists wondered what happened when the state derives the largest portion of its wealth from rent. Labeling these types of nations “rentier states,”⁴ Mahdavy (1970) expanded Ricardo’s definition of rent so that it included resources received from foreign individuals and governments. More precisely, states that derive 40 percent or more of their wealth from primary commodities and/or foreign aids—such as humanitarian aids, which are distributed to people, rather than used to aid to the economic development of the state—can be defined as rentier states (Luciani 1990). Beblawi (1987) further extended the concept rent state so that it could help explain the unique political, social, and economic structure of the Middle East. Rentier states are characterized by, as Beblawi (1987:53) had argued, “an economy where the creation of wealth is centered around a small fraction of the society [the political elite]; the rest of the society is only engaged in the distribution and utilization of this wealth.” This subtle shift means that the definition of rent is not merely a description of an economic system, but rather it includes the description of the political and social systems as shaped by the economy. As such, a “rentier system” is not only an economic phenomenon, but is, in

⁴ Rentier state—also known as *an allocation or exoteric state*—is a state that adopts a rentier economy as its economic system. The reader should note that when I use the term rentier state, I am referring mostly to the state and the political system. However, when I use the term rentier economy, I am referring to the economic system.

fact, a sociocultural system in which most members of that system receive a share of the “produce” even when not actively participating in the production process.⁵

Rentier Economies and Political Institutions

More recent scholarship has focused on the effect rentier economies have on creating and sustaining conflict; and on the political outcomes related to rentier economies. As I stated earlier, I am interested in the political outcomes of adopting a rentier economy, particularly those in which oil is the principal source of rent, such as is the case in Iraq.⁶ However, we cannot truly understand the nature of the political outcomes without understanding the role of rent as a factor in generating and sustaining conflict. Mainly because rentier economies do not generate a functional political system; and internal conflict is a strong sign of that. Adding to this, conflict will tend to accompany authoritarian regimes, which maintain their authority often times through force. In Iraq, both conflict and political dysfunctions have shaped the political and social modern history of the state. Thereupon, to understand the structure of the rentier state in Iraq and in other rentier nations, one must look at the political system and conflict as structures that complete and shape each other.⁷

In particular, oil, as a primary commodity, has been found to be especially related to the emergence and continuation of civil war (Basedau and Lay 2009; Le Billon 2001;

⁵ What I mean by a rentier system is the totality of economic, political and social systems that are shaped by rent.

⁶ However, the characteristics of rentier economies and their effects, regardless of which commodity is generating the rent, are similar, and thus the theories of rent economy, even if they were dealing with rent generated from commodities other than oil, must be examined.

⁷ These two lines of research are within the discipline of political economy. There is rich work within the economics discipline, which has been written on the effect of primary commodities on the local and international economy (Ross 2001).

Buchanan and Faith 1987; Collier and Hoeffler 1998; Collier, Hoeffler, and Soderbom 2004; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Ross 2004).⁸ In part, this is because of oil's relative scarcity and importance in modern life, in addition to the high income that is generated from exporting oil, small group of specialists needed to extract oil, and the propensity for political elite's control over distribution. Hence, resources, and the power generated from controlling these resources, are controlled by only a small group of individuals. Of course, other factors, such as "initial income, ethno-linguistic fractionalisation, the amount of natural resources, and initial population size" (Collier and Hoeffler 1998:1), also contribute, sometimes positively and other times negatively, to the possibility of initiating civil war. Yet, natural resources like oil not only increase the likelihood of separatist conflict, but are also considered important predictors of conflict in comparison to the other factors (Collier and Hoeffler 1998).

Likewise, past research has highlighted the significant role lootable resources — such as diamonds — play in generating and lengthening civil conflict (Ballentine and Sherman 2003; Gibbs 1991; Hodges 2003; Horne and Hodges 1985; Robinson and Torvik 2005; Ross 2004).⁹ One reason natural resources exacerbate or generate various types of conflict is that they provide much needed income and resources for any group involved or looking to get involved in the conflict (Reynal-Querol 2002; Ross 2001,

⁸ Oil generates civil conflict – and as we will see later- due to its role in hindering the development of a functional political system. Thus, due to the lack of a working civil sphere, political change and the different groups' expiration of their needs will occur through conflict, rather than a peaceful political process. Adding to that, once civil conflict emerges, primary commodities, such as oil, will provide the resources to increase the length of the existing conflict.

⁹ Primary commodities according to the Encyclopedia Britannica (2015), are the "raw or partly refined materials whose value mainly reflects the costs of finding, gathering, or harvesting them; they are traded for processing or incorporation into final goods. Examples include crude oil, cotton, rubber, grains, and metals and other minerals."

2004). Generally speaking, the ruling elite’s monopoly over these types of resources is at the center of the emergence of conflict (Snyder and Bhavnani 2005).¹⁰ It is worth noting, however, that monopolies do not automatically generate civil conflict, as various historical, sociocultural, and political contingencies must also be weighed (Snyder 2006).

In short, most qualitative and quantitative research has shown three patterns that are associated with rent and conflict: first, a clear positive relation between oil exports and the onset of civil war; second, lootable commodities increase the duration of conflict; third, the effect of primary commodities (broadly including both oil and agricultural goods) do not have a robust effect on generating conflict (Ross 2001). We can see the general pattern in table 2.

Table 2: Quantitative Research on Resources and Civil War

	Coverage	Resource Measure	Dependent Variable	Funding
Collier & Howffler (1998)	27 wars, 1960-92	Primary exports/GDP	War onset	Increases likelihood of war (curvilinear)
Collier & Howffler (2002a)	52 wars, 1960-99	Primary exports/GDP	War onset	Increases likelihood of war (curvilinear)
Collier & Howffler (2002b)	48 wars, 1960-99	Primary exports/GDP	War onset	Increases likelihood of war (curvilinear)
Elbadawi & Sambanis (2002)	108 wars, 1960-99	Primary exports/GDP	War onset	Weak or no effect
Fearon & Laitin (2003)	97 wars, 1960-99	Primary exports/GDP	War onset	No significant effect
Fearon & Laitin (2003)	122 wars, 1945-99	Oil exporter	War onset	Increases likelihood of war
Hergre (2002)	50 wars, 1960-97	Mineral exports/total exports	War onset	No significant effect

¹⁰ This is because monopoly over resources and power generate resistance among people, due to the lack of the development of the civil spheres, which allows for interest expiration.

Table 2: Quantitative Research on Resources and Civil War

	Coverage	Resource Measure	Dependent Variable	Funding
Hergre (2002)	50 wars, 1960-97	Primary exports/GDP	War onset	Increases likelihood of war (curvilinear)
Humphreys (2003)	122 wars, 1945-99	Oil production	War onset	Increases likelihood of war
Humphreys (2003)	122 wars, 1945-99	Oil reserves	War onset	No significant effect
Humphreys (2003)	122 wars, 1945-99	Diamond production	War onset	No significant effect
Humphreys (2003)	122 wars, 1945-99	Diamond production	War duration	Reduces was duration
Reynal_Querol (2002)	91 wars, 1960-95	Primary exports/GDP	War onset and prevalence	Increases likelihood of non-ethnic wars only
Elbadawi & Sambanis (2002)	108 wars, 1960-99	Primary exports/GDP	War prevalence	Weak or no effect
Collier, Hoeffler & Soderbom (2004)	52 wars, 1960-99	Primary exports/GDP	War duration	No significant effect
Fearon (2004)	122 wars, 1945-99	Contraband (drugs, gems)	War duration	Increases duration of war
Doyle & Sambanis (2000)	124 wars, 1945-97	Primary exports/GDP	Peacebuilding success	Harms successful peacebuilding
De Soysa (2002b)	77 states, 1989-99	Natural resources stocks/capita	Conflict onset (>25 deaths)	No significant effect
De Soysa (2002b)	77 states, 1989-99	Mineral stocks/capita	Conflict onset (>25 deaths)	Decreases likelihood of conflict (curvilinear)
De Soysa (2002b)	138 states, 1989-99	Oil exporter	Conflict onset (>25 deaths)	Increases likelihood of conflict
Buhaug & Gates (2002)	262 conflicts, 1946-2000	Mineral resources in conflict zone	Size of conflict zone	Increases size of conflict zone

Note: Table 2 was recreated from Ross, Michael L. 2004:339. "What Do We Know about Natural Resources and Civil War?" *Journal of Peace Research* 41(3):337–356.

Besides the emergence of civil conflict, oil has other possible negative effects on political equilibrium. These negative effects can be summarized in terms of five basic factors elucidated by scholars studying these types of economies and the lack of democratic development. First, rent economy provides the means for the political elite to monopolize tax revenues and capital within the state (Beblawi 1987; Tornell and Lane 1999). Second, the elite's control over oil revenues provides the resources for the state to control the population through providing public sector jobs (Robinson et al. 2006). Third, rent economies provide the resources for the elite to buy any political opposition and loyalties (Acemoglu, Verdier, and Robinson 2004). Fourth, the government, represented by the political elite, attempts to mobilize the means to block certain forms of technology, such as access to cell phones or the internet, which can be used to organize a successful rebellion, or in general to form any thoughts of rebellion (Robinson et al. 2006). Fifth, rent economy lacks the needed tools such as the technological, political, and legal infrastructures to "progress" toward an industrial and service economy (Ross 2001).

Haber and Menaldo (2011) have recently argued that oil rent was not associated with authoritarian regimes, but, in fact, oil rent may weaken these types of government. Such arguments highlight the role of other historical factors in determining the type of political system found in a given state. Nevertheless, the period between 1800-1970, which represented the majority of time in the Haber-Menaldo study, is not as important in studying the role of oil economy on polity for several reasons. Before 1918 oil did not play an important role in generating the wealth of states, especially among Middle Eastern states. Additionally, oil production was controlled by "the seven sisters" or the western oil companies, and not by the governments in the oil producing states, as a result,

the concept of the political elite controlling oil wealth did not apply at that time. Finally, nationalization of oil production did not start until the 1960s in the majority of oil producing countries, and it was not until the 1970s that the authoritarian regimes became more common in many of these states (Andersen and Ross 2013).

To summarize, the type of the economic system determines, in many cases, the nature of the political system. A high level of economic development, “is correlated with a decline in collective political violence; a decline in coercion as a means of rule and an increase in persuasion and manipulation; an increase in pluralism, and, less surely, an increase in democracy. All democracies are market oriented” (Wilensky 2002:62).

However, states with high resource wealth that engage in a rentier economy will generate their wealth through extracting and exporting primary commodities, and through receiving financial aids from foreign individuals and governments; not through engaging in a highly productive industrial system, as it is the case in capitalist systems.

Furthermore, citizens will not gain their income and wealth through engaging in a competitive, entrepreneurial economic system, nor through contribution to the productive process itself. Rather, there is little incentive for the former while the latter is the domain of the political elite; the rest of the population are only recipients of the revenues generated from that production process or services provided by the state.

Historical materialism, or an explanation rooted solely in economic and material factors, has severe limitations. As my thesis will show, it is not enough to explain Iraq’s historical development by drawing only from the political economy discussed above. Indeed, using historical data, I will show that culture did not only shape the trajectory of Iraq’s development, but also that culture—as found in the ruling class ideology and what

little civil sphere was left in Iraq—impacted the social reality of the population. By merging this political economy with cultural sociology, a robust theory of rentier systems can be offered. For now, however, I will elucidate the cultural theory I intend on drawing from to help frame this historical research project.

THE IDEOLOGY OF THE ELITE AND THE HEGEMONIC APPARATUS

The rentier processes discussed above clearly describe the rentier Iraqi state and its political development, yet if one looks closely at the pre-autocratic state (1946-1958), conventional theories of political economy make it difficult to explain *how* the transition towards authoritarianism had happened. That is, all of the makings for a thriving democracy were present in Iraq, as political parties and institutions associated with a free civil society emerged and played a vibrant role in political life. Why did not Iraq move towards democracy instead of a dictatorship? Why could not a thriving political scene crystallize? Before trying to answer these questions, we must first establish the theoretical framework of how power dynamics interact in a society. We begin by asking why political and economic factors are not enough to explain Iraq or any state's development. Consider, for instance, Polanyi's thoughts on the economy:

The human economy is embedded and enmeshed in institutions, economic and *noneconomic*. The inclusion of the noneconomic is vital. For religion or government may be as important for the structure and functioning of the economy as monetary institutions or the availability of tools and machines themselves that lighten the toil of labor. (Polanyi 1957:250)

In other words, the economy is as much a *human*—and therefore cultural—institution as it is a material force in the Marxian sense of economy (Abrutyn 2014); and while economic factors may condition culture, once extant, cultural reciprocally acts on

economic relations. Moreover, economy is deeply embedded in other human (cultural) institutions, and therefore, economic processes must be understood in terms of cultural as much as material dynamics. Hence, to fully understand the role of rentier economy, we must look beyond the economic institution, and towards other non-economic institutions, where the economic practices are integrated in the general social practices (Parsons and Smelser 1984). In part, while the economic institution may provide the conditions for a certain political system to emerge, the creation and reproduction of elite ideology can only be done through knowledge producing institutions such as, education and law. That is why the theories of the political economy of rent reviewed above fall short: without taking into consideration the role other social institutions play in protecting non-democratic political practices, our understanding of how governments in rentier states create political ideologies, and protect their power, will be seriously lacking. For the actions of these political elite can only be understood as a part of the social formations of the society.

Above all, because of the important role elite ideologies play in shaping societies during a particular era, I believe it is important to consider the way the political elite shape the civil sphere in rentier states, and, in turn, the negative effects these types of civil societies have on the formation of democracy. And if we accept that “societies differ from each other in the degree to which the collectivities of which they are composed are differentiated in terms of functional primacy” (Parsons and Smelser 1984:16), then we can see why the study of civil society is essential: it reveals the nature of the interaction between the political institutions, the economic institutions, and the

civil sphere, where one can see the clear difference between how democracy developed in advanced economies and how authoritarian regimes developed in rentier economies.

Ultimately, I will suggest that the political dysfunctions in rentier states are not the product of one institution, but rather, they are an expression of a deeper social phenomenon. They are in the nature of the interaction between the ruler and the ruled: a relation that persisted on perpetuating itself. In the next section of this paper I will briefly discuss the main pillars of cultural production and the theories that have been written on them, before starting the discussion on the Interaction between rent, polity, and culture in Iraq.

The State

Generally speaking, for a specific type of social relations to continue in a society, they must reproduce their conditions of existing. However, these social relations rise in the beginning from the dominant mode of production in the society (Marx [1867]1996). As long as the conditions persist for this mode of production, the social relations in a specific society will continue to reproduce themselves. Furthermore, the reproduction of social relations does not only come about through reproducing labor power and the means of production, these relations are also maintained through the reproduction of the ideology of the ruling class through the state apparatus (Gramsci 1971). Put differently, advanced capitalist states are both economic and political, and we cannot separate one from the other—e.g., they are “functionally promiscuous” (Mann 1986). In a society, there are meaningful interdependencies between the different sources of power (economic, ideological, military, and political), where the role of one source can be traced back through the system (Parsons and Smelser 1984:14-15). Therefore, in order for

us to understand power structures in a given society, we must understand the social totality of the interplay of these four dimensions (Weber 1978).

In modern political science, the state (the political dimension), as Weber ([1919] 2004:1) defined it, is the, “human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.” The state does not only monopolize the legitimate use of power; state power comes from its ability to control and shape class conflict, monopolize knowledge production, and maintain its legitimacy and produce its ideology (Miliband [1969] 2009). Thus, the collective and distributive power of the state comes from its ability to monopolize meanings (Weber [1922] 1978). Adding to this, the state, in Marxist theory, is a tool of repression (Althusser [1968] 2001). It is an institution, which allows the elite (political and economic) to control the people, through force (military and administrative state apparatus), and cultural production (ideology and the civil sphere). In both, democratic and non-democratic states, ideological production is the most important tool in reproducing social relations and creating hegemony, as we will see later in this paper (Althusser 2001; Weber 1978).

Cultural Hegemony

Gramsci (1971) adopted the concept *hegemony* to capture the fact that domination is often consensually accepted because of the ruling class ideology. Hence, hegemony can be defined as the process by which the many are ruled by the few through consent, whereby their interest and values are aligned with the interest and values of the ruling elite (Khan 2012:370). Hegemony occurs through the legitimation of the elite ideology, which can be done through knowledge producing institutions in the civil sphere, and through the role of intellectuals. The rulers or the elite can be defined as the group that

has vastly disproportionate access to, and control over power and resources (political, economic, cultural, social, and knowledge capital), where they occupy a dominant position in society, and their ideology represents the dominant ideology (Khan 2012:1).

This notion of hegemonic creation cannot only be class-based,¹¹ but rather it is also based on interest groups or historical blocs (Bates 1975; Gramsci 1971; Weber 1978). Because Gramsci's hegemony is rooted in culturally distinct groups, and not in economic classes, we are freed from the limitations of Marx's class theory, which focuses purely on the economic processes with no real consideration of culture or other sources of power. In addition, it is a more powerful tool to understand societal formations,¹² the interaction between individuals, and the values and the norms produced by institutions in the society. In essence, social formations are not just a reflection of the relation of production, but also are the product of the interaction between the system of thoughts imposed by the elite and the patterned behavior of the masses within the society (Shils 1962). And for that reason, the ideologies of the dominant class are hard to change, because they are integrated within social institutions and discourse (Foucault [1969]1982).

¹¹ A class is made of individuals who share a common economic position in society, and it is based on their relationship to means of production, assets, and resources. Statuses on the other hand are based on the positive and negative privileges, where members in a status group claim similar social esteem and monopolize certain privileges (Weber 1978:302-306). However, we cannot separate or disregard one of the two classification systems, for they are equally important for our understanding. A historical bloc, on the other hand, is not only based on class, but it also represents the mutual intellectual, moral, and ideological leadership of several classes (Gramsci 1971). In Iraq, the elite group was not made of one economic class, or of one status group: the Iraqi economic-political elites were members of a historical bloc.

¹² Is a term developed by Althusser, and it refers to the institutional context that provides the conditions of survival of the modes of production (Althusser 2006).

For hegemony of the dominant class to succeed, three mechanisms must be in place. Hegemony requires universalization, naturalization and rationalization. In universalization, the dominant class portrays its interest as the dominant interest of the people. Thus, the citizens would not feel the need to question actions that serve the elite, because they believe these actions are for the benefit of everyone. In naturalization, the “culture” of the dominant class becomes associated with being “natural.” And finally with rationalization, the dominant class will give rise to a group of intellectuals who rationalize the system (Litowitz 2000). Hegemony occurs on all levels of the society, from the public sphere to the private sphere, where the ideology of the dominant class is felt within the personal boundaries of human existence, where the person, in his or her mind, will be reluctant to question these ideas, thus creating a uniformed system of thoughts (Marcuse [1964] 1991; Williams 1977).

Hegemonic apparatus is the representation of the moral order in the society. This moral and social order is created and re-created in the ideological institutions of the civil society, such as schools, entertainment spheres, and the law, all of which shape the ideas and social relations of a given society (Cox 1993; Mouffe and Sassoon 1977). Because of these reasons mentioned above, the control and the monopolization of the poli-economic elite in rentier states over ideological production and historical memory in the civil sphere, did not only prevent democracy, but it also controlled thoughts and ideas, limiting them to nothing. And, while the civil sphere is considered as a tool of democracy and communication in capitalist states, the civil sphere in rentier states is transformed into a tool of control and monopolization of historical memory. If ruling class ideology is institutionalized in legal, educational, and media-related spheres, then, using historical

data, it should be found that the nascent ruling class in Iraq had fashioned a set of cultural institutions meant to reshape the civil sphere in ways that supported their claims to hegemonic control.

Historical Memory

Creating historical memory is an indispensable part of the state's effort to establish its power, legitimacy, and "its intellectual and moral leadership." Historical memory includes the myths and stories that serve to generate a collective identity, which unite the nation together. Or, "the collective understanding that a specific group shares about events in the past [that] shaped its current economic, social, cultural, and political status and identity" (Davis 2005:4).

The collective memory of the group is generated through the process of socialization. In the sense that, an individual who lives in isolation will not have a memory, but the group creates and generates the memory of its individuals through the socialization process (Assmann 2011). For that reason, the control of the elite over the historical memory of the society is necessary for creating hegemony, because with the control over the historical memory of the society, the elite can regulate the creation of the collective memory of the individuals. In addition, the control over a society's memory is a condition of the hierarchy of power. The elite's control over memory (collective and historical) means they have control over legitimation, ownership of information, and the moral consciousness of the group (Connerton 1989).

Briefly, for the dominant historical bloc to enforce its power and create cultural, social, and political hegemony through civil society, it must direct these institutions to produce and reproduce a specific type of historical memory, which serve to enforce the

position of the dominant class and to create collective consciousness, which represents the ideology of the dominant class. In addition, the historical memory must represent the realities of the people, and must convey the message that only the dominant class is able to address such realities. And only through this, “social order can be held together through rational consent, not through ideology or coercion. Gramsci’s term for this ‘State without a State’ is a regulated society” (Riley 2011:14-15). Thus, one of the aims of my thesis, in addition to examining the institutionalization of ruling class ideology, is to bring historical data to bear on the formation and maintenance of a new historical memory; one that was reciprocally supported the legal, educational, and media-based spheres of hegemonic reproduction.

The Civil Sphere

The civil sphere can be defined as:

A solidary sphere, in which a certain kind of universalizing community comes to be culturally defined and to some degree institutionally enforced. To the degree that this solidary community exists, it is exhibited and sustained by public opinion, deep cultural codes, distinctive organization—legal, journalistic and associational—and such historically specific interactional practices as civility, criticism, and mutual respect. Such a civil community can never exist as such: it can only be sustained to obey degree or another. It is always limited by, and interpenetrated with, the boundary relations of other, non-civil sphere. (Alexander 2006:31)

Thus, we can see that the civil sphere—made up of several institutions, such as mass media, political parties, associations, etc.—is where norms and values are shaped (but also imposed), power is mediated, and ideologies are created and enforced by both the elite and the people. It is the sphere of solidarity between people, justice, and democratic practices. The premise of civil sphere is that societies are not only governed by power, but most significantly, by consent.

In democratic societies, civil society is where individuals who are members of a society interact with each other and with other social institutions in a complexity of non-state activities, where culture is produced (Keane 1988). Hence, the civil sphere is democratic in nature, and it has a long history in western culture.¹³ According to Gramsci (1971), hegemonic states with capitalist economic systems, are divided into the following: an autonomous political institution, a group of economic elites, and the masses. Both the political and the economic elites are in a position of power, where they interact with each other, yet they are independent from each other: and at the lower end of the power structure, the people are located. For Gramsci, the civil sphere serves as the means through which the elite and the people communicate. This communication goes both ways: the economic and the political elites, independent from each other, communicate their needs to the people as much as the people express their needs to the elite. As a result, institutions of civil society are not simply a sphere of expression of the individuals' needs, but they are also, in the ideal, a sphere of rational thought and self-regulation (Habermas 1991). The state in such societies is both autonomous from the dominant class and an instrument of the dominant class. Thus, in democratic countries, the state is built on consent and the rationalization of the ideology of the elite. When the system is challenged in such states, the long history of civil activism, and the developed civil sphere will maintain the order in the society, with no need for conflict (Alexander 2006; Gramsci 1971).

¹³ Reinhard Bendix (1966:84-85) has noted in his discussion of the stratification and political community in Europe during the great transformation that, "the growth of the market economy and the adoption of universal franchise have given rise to interest groups and political parties which mobilized collectivities for economic and political action." Farther discussion on the matter can be found in his analyses of the implications of the development of market economy on the comparative study of social structures.

In rentier systems, the domination of the political sphere over the economic sphere, and the monopolization of resources by the elite, will block the development of the civil sphere. The civil sphere must have, first, a harmonious interchange with the “non-civil” institutions (polity and economy); second, the civil sphere must have enough power to invade, demand, monitor, and reform the non-civil spheres (Alexander 2006:34). In rentier states, such a relation between the civil and the non-civil spheres does not exist. In such states, where the state has monopoly over political and economic power, the civil sphere is absorbed and controlled by the state. It is a tool of cultural domination, rather than a tool of democratic expression. Hence, the political and the economic elite are not separated from each other: the same group that controls political power also controls the economic resources of the state. With such a social arrangement, power will be centered in the hand of the poli-economic elite, thus limiting the role of the civil society, and reducing it from a method of communication between the people and the elite, to a tool to create a complete hegemonic control. And while the political system shifts from an inclusive political system to a dictatorship, the civil society loses all its power and becomes part of the state. In Iraq, the elite has transformed the civil sphere into a tool to create and enforce their hegemonic ideologies, and to create mass consciousness that is monitored and controlled by the elite.

To summarize, the civil sphere, in its “ideal” form exists in capitalist societies but not in rentier states. In these capitalist societies, the state is inclusive of the civil society. In other words, the state includes the political society and the civil society, both in a balanced relation. Most importantly, the civil sphere is vital to the development of democracy (Almond and Verba 1989), and it goes beyond the “simple” creation of

democracy, but rather the civil sphere creates social capital for the members of the society (Putnam 2001). The civil sphere, thus, is a sphere of rational and democratic social interaction (Habermas [1962] 1991).

In the next section, I will discuss methodological limitations and advantage of using secondary historical data. The qualitative data will be presented in the form of a narrative of the historical events and facts. With the presentation of the data, I will analyze and discuss the material from a sociological perspective. Through this form of historical analysis, I will bridge an existing gap between the purely quantitative analyses of economists and political economists on the rentier economy and state, and between the purely qualitative story-like narratives of the historians. Recall, this study is designed to examine the relationship between rent economy, civil society, and polity. I am arguing that the allocation economy in Iraq had provided the means to: control the civil society and through it, the collective consciousness of the citizens—thus, creating cultural hegemony—and, thereby, create and sustain an authoritarian non-democratic political system.

METHODOLOGY

Certain problems arise in comparative historical research, which can affect the integrity of the research, and the researcher. First, the crucial problem in historical research is the problem of identifying useful and accurate sources. A researcher might be tempted to include only the sources that support his or her hypotheses, thus compromising the value of the research, and never arriving at the organic historical reality of the phenomenon that is being described (Bousquet 1958). Second, when using

secondary historical data, the researcher is depending on the material written by historians who are the product of their environment, sociocultural context in which they wrote their material, data they had access to, and material they elected to include in their work. For that reason, if one is not careful, the researcher can fall victim to biased data. Therefore, the process of selecting the appropriate material can be very challenging. However, the benefits of conducting historical research are enormous. Historical research allows us to re-visit past periods of time, and observe how human societies and institutions have evolved and changed over time. We can gain insights that could aid us in recognizing the challenges of the present and the possibilities of the future.

In this paper, I will be depending on secondary historical data, using past historical research that has been conducted by pioneers in the field. In particular, I will be using two main sources, which are considered by scholars in the field, as the most comprehensive and accurate detailed description of Iraq and Iraqi society during the period of 1950-1958. First, the most important source that I shall use is the work of Dr. Hanna Batatu's ([1978] 2004) *The Old Social Classes and The Revolutionary Movement in Iraq*. Dr. Batatu wrote what is considered one of the most important historical records on the history of Iraq, covering the period before 1958. Although Batatu has dedicated a good portion of his book to the history and the development of the Iraqi Communist Party, his work—using methodology that is grounded in political sociology—expands beyond that, to include firsthand accounts of witnesses who lived during that period of time, to deliver one of the most complete accounts of the political, economic, and social spheres of the Iraqi society.

The second source I will use is Eric Davis's (2005) *Memories of State: Politics, History, And Collective Identity in Modern Iraq*. This work is considered one of the most insightful works that have been done on the development of Iraq's historical and collective memory. In addition, work by other scholars (Aburish 1998; Alnasrawi 2002; Anderson and Stansfield 2005; Dodge 2003, 2005a, 2005b, 2013; Haj 1997; Marr [1985] 2012; Nakash 2007; Nasr 2007; Salucci 2005; Simon 2004) will also be used to shape my understanding, and to add to the already rich information that have been provided by the above mentioned research.

The period that will be covered in this paper (1950-1958) is a critical period in the history of Iraq in that the institutions of civil society flourished. It is, at the same time, a period of transition between different political systems, and a period of conflict between different political and ethnic groups over power. Economically, the production system in Iraq started to change from an agrarian system toward a rentier system, until oil became the main source of wealth. Hence, although the process of building hegemony is a long process that lasted until the collapse of Saddam's régime, the period of 1950-1958, with its active civil society, will give us a better understanding of how the political-economic elite had changed an active political and civil society into a silent society of fear. Using the theoretical framework that I will introduce in this paper, and with this type of historical methodology, we can create similar models that we can apply to different rentier states, and cover different time periods. But first, I start by examining the social, political, and economic events that shaped the history of Iraq during the 1950s, and the years that followed.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF IRAQ BETWEEN 1950-1958

In the introduction of this paper, I emphasized the important role oil rent had played in shaping the political and social nature of the society. In the next part of this paper, I will particularly examine Iraq's economic, political, and social development during the period of 1950-1958, and the historical circumstances that led to the creation of the rentier state. However, it is important to emphasize the unique nature of the Iraqi political, economic, and social institutions, and how such uniqueness determined the extent of the effect oil had on the development of the state in relations to other rentier states. For that reason, it is important to understand that while we can distinguish mutual characteristics of rentier states and economies, we must also realize that the development of each rentier state depends on historical and sociocultural contingencies.

Generally speaking, scholars, who studied these historical developments in Iraq, have adopted two forms of theoretical thinking: modernization theory and Marxist political economy. Adopters of modernization theory have focused on the process of the rationalization of the economy, and how such a change has influenced the future political, social, and economic outcomes of the state. Conversely, the Marxist tradition has focused on the role external forces – colonialism, global trade, unequal exchange, dependency, and precapitalist methods of production – play in shaping the development of the Iraqi state (Haj 1997). In the discussion that will follow, we will see that the historical circumstances that shaped Iraqi society cannot be explained with one theory. Moreover, Iraqi society cannot be fully understood from solely a western theoretical prospective, because Iraqi society did not develop in the same way western, capitalist societies

developed. For that reason, what is considered a democratic moment in Iraq might be considered repressive state behavior in the west; and, thus, we must look at the behavior of the state, and the actors within the state, in relation to their location, and the social, political, and economic circumstances of their time period (Cohen 2000).

However, before examining the historical period this research is interested in, we must delineate several important factors that shaped the development of the modern Iraqi rentier state. Specifically, the most notable features were (1) the evolution of a new agrarian structure that had given rise to two distinct, and contradictory, agrarian systems: a commercial non-capitalist agriculture system and a nascent capitalist agriculture system (Haj 1997). (2) Despite technological advancements, rationalization of the economy, and participation of the state in the global economy, Iraq never developed a true class system: the bourgeois class was in its infancy, and only under severe circumstances—and for only a short period—did its members unify to defend their existence (Batatu 2004). (3) Iraq had an active civil sphere during mid and late 1940s. However, this civil sphere existed under a political elite – which was fragmented, sympathetic to their British overlords, and severally aggressive. In addition, the political elite was fighting for control during changing circumstances that affected the whole region at that time (Davis 2005). It was under these conditions that oil economy was introduced, and through these conditions we must understand the development of the civil sphere, and the behavior of the political elite in Iraq.¹⁴

¹⁴ Though it is beyond the scope of this paper, future research will have to further contextualize on the 1950s in relation to some of the previous historical epochs that played a role in shaping the nature of Iraq's institutions and, therefore, the behavior of actors during the 1950s. For instance, the historical development of modern day Iraq can be divided into three distinct historical periods. The first period, the last stage of the Ottoman rule of 1850-1914, represented the beginning of a social and economic progressiveness, where the old social structure started to

By the start of the 1950s, Iraq was in the middle of an economic and social crisis that was the product of poor domestic policies (the over cultivation of land), and global forces (the global economic crisis). These circumstances subsequently led to an increase in the exploitation of peasants and workers in rural and urban regions, as well as the creation of large poverty stricken neighborhoods in many cities. Coupled with the lack of social services – such as health care and education –citizens (the poor, youth, overeducated, undereducated, and all who were witnessing the liberal political and social waves that effected the region) were attracted to civil activism, leftist movements, political rebellion, and the promise of change through strikes and violent encounters with the state. At about the same time, oil revenues were becoming the main source of income for the state. On the one hand, this increase in income allowed the state to get out of the economic crisis that it was part of, while, on the other hand, it signaled the beginning of an oppressive regime that lost interest in listening and catering to the people and its political opposition. This in its turn had increased the rage among the citizens who were repeatedly ignored by a more and more economically independent, and politically aggressive government. The situation escalated until it reached its breaking point with the revolution of 1958 that had ended the monarchy, created the republic of Iraq, nationalized oil companies, and ended the landownership system of the previous economic system.

disintegrate under the effects of modernization and technological development. The second period, began after the outbreak of World War I in 1914, and continued throughout the British occupation of Iraq until 1932, when British rule officially ended. Politically, during that period of time, the British created the state of Iraq out of the three provinces of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul. On the economical level, the development of a transportation system between the different major cities of the newly established state, commoditization, and early industrial development had helped push Iraq into the world market economy. Finally, the period between 1932 and 1958: in that period of time, a monarchic oligarchic bloc had developed and ruled Iraq during a time where the country suffered from an economic crisis and developed the oil industry, and only ended with the establishment of the republic and the end of monarchy with the revolution of 1958 (Haj 1997).

The product of that revolution was a government that possessed the tools to eliminate political opposition, weaken the economic elite, and monopolize control over oil revenues. Next, we shall see how these systematic changes occurred in relation to each other, shaping the history of Iraq for many years to come.

Economic Transformation: Land, Industry, and Oil

LAND. Throughout the modern history of Iraq agriculture had represented the main source of revenues for the Iraqi state. Before 1950, the agrarian labor force represented about four-fifths of the overall labor force. The sector contributed to Iraq's non-oil GDP between 22 and 36 percent (Haj 1997). However, the agrarian sector had also suffered from chronic problems, which ranged from seasonal unemployment (which reached 75-80 percent) to ineffective policies (e.g., over cultivation of the land) (Alnasrawi 2002:41). In large part, these problems were due to the economic behavior and political influence of the landowner class, who were supported by the British, as well as to the nature of landownership. For example, ownership of land was concentrated among a very small fraction of landholders, leading to, first, the formation of an oppressive relation between the landowners and the cultivators¹⁵ and, second, to the concentration of political power in the hands of those influential landowners. As a result, it was impossible to create and enforce any levies and polices that protected the land, and the workers, without the support of the landowning class (Batatu 2004).

¹⁵ According to Alnasrawi, depending on the region of the country, the share of the landlord ranged from one-half to five-sevenths of the crop. In addition to other problems with cultivation methods, the peasants ended up not only with little to no return on their labor, but they could not even pay the debt that they own to the landlord (2002:42).

For instance, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) had recommended that more investment be dedicated, and steps taken, to solve the shortage in production, regulate the drainage system and the use of the exhausted land, and solve the problem of low ratio of labor to land. Presumably, this could be done through investing in mechanization, improving the living conditions of workers, and stopping the overuse of land in lower Iraq (where most of the agrarian production occurred) (Haj 1997). However, when a bill that asked landowners to fund these projects was introduced to the Iraqi parliament, the landowners' representatives immediately rejected the bill and blocked future similar bills. As a result, in Amarah and Kut,¹⁶ productivity declined; and by the 1950s, sharecroppers received no more than 15 to 20 percent of their annual crop, which they used to pay their rent, and to pay for their tools and other expenses (Haj 1997:37). Hence, the decline in agrarian production and the oppressive relation between the landlords and the peasants encouraged peasant flight to urban regions such that the rural population in Iraq declined from 70 percent in the 1930s to 58 percent in the 1950s; a phenomenon which merely shifted the burden of poverty from the country to the city (Haj 1997:38).

Therefore, Iraq entered the 1950s suffering from significant economic problems in the agrarian sector. As a result, one would expect that the investment in that sector would have been a priority for the state (Batatu 2004; Haj 1997). In 1952, a new law, *Law for Granting Lazma Rights in Miri-Sirf Land in Amarah Liwa*, was introduced and passed. This law allowed tribal leaders and their relatives to have control over the transfer

¹⁶ Two cities in the southern part of Iraq.

of all Miri-Sirf.¹⁷ The passing of this law led to a peasant uprising, which in its turn forced the elite to conceal the law under emergency decree. The decline of production, unjust treatment of the workers by the landowners, peasant flight, and resulting uprisings had a significant weakening impact on economic development in Iraq. It created an incentive for the political elite to develop the oil industry – which started to play an important role during that same period of time – rather than focusing on solving the various problems that were related to agrarian production. However, Iraq’s economic problems did not stop with agriculture, as it included the decline of industry as well.

INDUSTRY. The industrial sector in Iraq did not fare better than the agrarian sector. Developing advanced industry in a given state is important due to its role in generating higher income, and achieving diversity in the state’s source of income and wealth, as it contributes to the development of other sectors of the economy, such as agriculture. However, the industrial sector had generally suffered in Iraq for multiple reasons. The most important of these reasons was the nature of the agrarian sector. Agriculture had generated an economic system that was high in labor consumption but low in productivity and generating income. In addition, and due to the large influence the landowners’ class had on the political process; the industrial sector was largely ignored compared to the agrarian sector. Wallerstein (1974) for example had pointed out that the presence of a strong landowners’ class in peripheral countries could be undermining to the development of other economic sector in the state. He said:

In peripheral countries, the-interests of the capitalist landowners lie in an opposite direction from those of the local commercial bourgeoisie. Their

¹⁷ Miri-Sirf refers to lands that were given by the government to landlords temporally (opposite to complete ownership), a characteristic of landownership in southern part of Iraq. This type of land ownership had a negative impact on the productivity of the land, and the relationship between the landlords and the peasants (Batatu 2004).

interests lie in maintaining an open economy to maximize their profit from world-market trade (no restrictions in exports and access to lower-cost industrial products from core countries) and in elimination of the commercial bourgeoisie in favor of outside merchants (who pose no local political threat). (1974:403)

Thus, industry in Iraq did not have the ability to develop faster, or the time to mature, before the increasing role of oil. In addition, constraints on wages and labor had proven to undermine the overall industrial development in the country.

However, in the 1940s, the country had witnessed an increase in interest among some businessmen to develop capitalist, labor-intensive industries; and as a result, the investment in industry increased from 4 million dollars in 1930s to 49 million by the late 1950s (Alnasrawi 2002). In 1950, the government created *The Law For The Encouragement Of Industry Law*, which granted income and surtax exemptions for a four-year period for industries that used local raw material, invested in capital intensive industries, used 55 percent Iraqi capital, and employed Iraqi labor (Haj 1997). However, the amount of capital that was given, in reality, was significantly less than what was originally planned, and significantly less than what was dedicated for the oil sector during the 1950s.

Table 3: Planned and Actual Development Expenditures and Revenues, 1951-1958
(millions of dollars)

	Planned \$	Actual \$	Actual:Planned %
I Expenditure			
Agriculture	330	172	52
Industry	143	53	37
Transportation and Communications	186	108	58
Building and Housing	107	67	63

Table 3: Planned and Actual Development Expenditures and Revenues, 1951-1958
(millions of dollars)

		Planned \$	Actual \$	Actual:Planned %
	Other	108	99	91
	Total	874	499	57
II	Revenue			
	Oil	754	689	91
	Total	722	718	93
III	Actual Expenditure: Actual Revenue			70

Note: Table 3 was recreated from Alnasrawi, Abbas. 2002:39. *Iraq's Burdens: Oil, Sanctions, and Underdevelopment*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

As a result, in 1956, a newly formed group of industrial capitalists had decided to break from the Chamber of Commerce and create their own independent organization, the *Federation of Industries*, in an effort to organize towards developing an industrial sector (Batatu 2004; Haj 1997:62). Yet, the *Federation of Industries* lacked power to influence the economic scene at that time, and the question of developing the industrial system was largely ignored by the state, which found itself with access to an easier source of income: oil.¹⁸

OIL. International and national interest in Iraqi oil had existed before the 1950s. Between the 1930s and the 1950s, oil production in Iraq was controlled by Western European and American companies.¹⁹ Investment in oil production in Iraq had started

¹⁸ Iraq was also competing in a slow growing consumer market, and in a highly competitive foreign market that had access to the local market before and during the 1950s.

¹⁹ Before the 1950s, oil production contributed very little to the national economy, for it supplied only 15 percent of state revenues, and 80 percent of that were used to improve agriculture and domestic industries (Haj 1997:71).

when The Iraq Petroleum Company (ICP),²⁰ the Basra Petroleum Company (BPC), and the Mosul Petroleum Company (MPC) were awarded a concession to explore and produce oil in Iraq in 1925. This concession had also allowed these foreign companies the liberty to determine the duration of the concession, the area it covered, the output, the prices, and the export levels, which gave these companies large economic and political control over Iraq (Alnasrawi 2002:20).

Yet, despite these early foreign investments in developing the oil industry, the oil sector did not initially contribute in a major way to the revenues of the state; nor did it contribute to improving domestic industries or to lower the level of unemployment. This is mainly because the oil industry did not depend on domestically produced goods, or need intensive labor. In fact, between 1929 and 1953 Iraqi oil workers represented only 2.7 percent of the total non-agricultural labor force (Haj 1997:71).

The changes that occurred in the oil industry were also related to several political and economic changes that occurred in the region. For example, by offering better deals to local governments, American companies started gaining more control and influence in the Gulf region, such as the ARAMCO agreement with Saudi Arabia. A similar agreement was concluded with the Kuwaiti government, and in that same year Iran nationalized its oil production (Haj 1997). These events predictably generated a lot of demand for nationalization of the oil industry in Iraq, and the nationalist political parties attacked the British-loyal government for not seeking nationalization and protection for Iraqi industries. As a result, the Iraqi government decided to create the Development Board, and to accept the ARAMCO Agreement. The Development Board was created in 1950, to develop a strategy to locate oil revenues to develop and improve different

²⁰ It was owned by five foreign oil companies.

sectors of the economy. However, these plans came up short, and the board was not independent in making its decision, as it lacked political power and independence and, therefore, the ability to implement many of these decisions (Haj 1997). The government also accepted the Oil Agreement of 1951 that nationalized oil companies in Iraq. The new Oil Agreement that was concluded between IPC and the Iraqi government granted the Iraqi government higher royalties, and half of the earned profits (Haj 1997:71).

As a result, oil production rates increased sharply, and oil became the leading source of revenues in the state. In 1952, IPC reached a new agreement with the Iraqi government that enforced the 50 percent share, increased output, and forced IPC to concede to minimum royalty payments from 20 million in 1953 and 1954 to 25 million in 1955, thus making oil the leading sector of the national economy (Haj 1997:72). In addition, the method of calculating revenues was changed from a flat rate of \$0.22-\$0.25 per barrel to 50 percent of the difference between production cost and posted price. In 1949 total receipts by the government was \$19 million, while by 1959 the amount has increased to \$243 million (Alnasrawi 2002); concomitantly, Iraq's oil production increased from 0.1 million barrels per day in 1949 to 0.7 in 1955, raising revenues from \$87 to \$207 million (Alnasrawi 2002:20). Thus, it was the highly capitalized, efficient, and profitable oil industry that rescued Iraq from the economic crisis that it suffered from in the 1940s, as we can see in Table 4.

Table 4: Oil Revenues Compared to Total Government Revenues, 1951-1958

Year	Total Government	Oil	%Oil/Gov.
		Revenues	Revenue
1951	44.9	13.9	39.9
1952	74.4	40.1	53.8
1953	82.9	58.3	70.3

Table 4: Oil Revenues Compared to Total Government Revenues, 1951-1958

Year	Total Government	Oil Revenues	%Oil/Gov. Revenue
1954	97.8	64.3	69.2
1955	125.9	73.7	58.5
1956	113.8	68.8	60.4
1957	97.6	48.8	50
1958	137.2	79.8	68.2

Note: Table 4 was recreated from Haj, Samira. 1997. *The Making of Iraq, 1900-1963: Capital, Power, and Ideology*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press

In theory, oil provided the resources to not only help Iraq relieve its economic crisis, but also create economic development in the country. Yet, the political elite had failed to take advantage of these resources to build the emerging industrial system.²¹ In addition, increasing revenues and the centralized nature of oil production²² had increased the power of the political elite in comparison to the power of the economic elite, thus, limiting the latter's ability to bargain with the former to take advantage of the increase in revenues (Batatu 2004).

Furthermore, as oil started playing an important role in the economy, the political elite's autonomy started to increase. And as the government became less dependent on the domestic economy (agriculture and industry), it became less responsive for the

²¹ The reasons behind the failure of the political elite to use oil revenues to improve the economic system could be many. For example, the political instability in the region during these time, and the fear the political elite sensed from losing control during that revolutionary climate, could have played an important role in pushing the state towards more violent methods to secure its power. However, it is beyond the scope of the study to fully examine and explore such a question. Nevertheless, it is an important question, and it must be examined completely soon.

²² Oil production could be centralized in the hands of few actors. The steps the Iraqi government took towards nationalizing oil production had allowed that centralization to be in the hands of the political elite, rather than the economic elite.

people's demands.²³ After 1954, the Iraqi government under Prime Minister Nuri Al-Sa'id not only stopped responding to the people's demands, it started also taking away previously achieved political and social rights that had been gained in the 1940s. The Iraqi government became more oppressive, and the political opposition became more defiant. The conflict between the nationalist and the oil companies ended with the 1958 revolution that ended the monarchy and started the republic, as we will see in the next section. In 1961, Iraq passed law No. 80 (Defining the Exploitation Areas for the Oil Companies), which allowed these foreign oil companies only one-half of 1 percent of the concession area, and three years later, the Iraq National Oil Company (INOC) was created (Alnasrawi 2002). In the next section, we will examine the political changes that accompanied the economic changes during the 1950s, which led to the 1958 revolution and the outcomes that followed.

Political Transformation: The Rise of the Authoritarian State

Politically, the 1950s started with hopes of liberalization among the people and the political opposition, and with significantly more political and social rights compared to earlier years. After the coup Rashid Ali of 1941,²⁴ the political elite worked with the opposition to generate political and social changes. The first critical moment that shaped

²³ This is true because while the civil sphere was active during the 1940s, a culture of democracy was still underdeveloped in Iraq. And thus, the elite aggressive behavior was a product of an already existing political culture of violence, which long had been present. In addition, Nuri Al Said, who was appointed as the prime minister in 1954, was notorious for his undemocratic political behavior, which had worsened the political scene even more once he held power. Who was in power during the various periods of time, and what was their relationship with surrounding is important to our understanding of the political scene at that time.

²⁴ The pro-Nazi coup lead to overthrew the regime of Regent 'Abd al-allah and installed Rashid Ali as Prime Minister. However, on May, the 8th, the British forces had crushed the Iraqi air force, thus ending the coup, and reoccupying Iraq until 1947 (Marr 2012).

the political scene during the 1940s and the 1950s came in 1945, when the government licensed five new political parties – a move that had not been attempted before. These political parties, such as the National Democratic Party, and the Istiqlal Party, came to play an important role in influencing government’s decisions,²⁵ and in mobilizing the people on many fronts (Marr 2012). And although the Communist Party (ICP) was not one of the recognized parties, the ICP by 1946 was the best-organized political party in the country, as it was responsible for many, if not most, of the political and social uprisings during that period of time and the years that followed. The ICP, the National Democratic Party, and the Istiqlal were only a small number of many more political parties, social and economic groups, and cultural gatherings that represented an active and an effective civil sphere in Iraqi society.²⁶ For example, when a strike by oil workers in Kirkuk led to clashes between the protesters and the police – leading eventually to the death of eight workers and the injury of many more, when the police fired on the crowd – the political opposition, which was led by the ICP, staged protests everywhere in the

²⁵ Iraq during that time was a monarchy. It also had a parliamentary system, however, the power was in the hands of the prime minister, the king, and some of their close allies. In addition, the prime minister and the king were not always allies in their work together. Conflict had emerged many times, weakening the state as a whole. I deal with the state here as a whole, however, it is important to the story to explore the dynamics of the political relations between the elite to form a better understanding of the overall behavior of the political elite. This must be explored in a different paper.

²⁶ The ICP, the National Democratic Party, and the Istiqlal were the most active, largest, and most influential parties in the political scene. For example, most the uprisings and protests that occurred during that time were organized by the ICP. Smaller parties were either on the side of these three political parties, or they had little effect on the political process. That of course does not mean that these parties were a monolithic entity – they had many differences in ideologies – however, they, at that time, shared the goal of opposing the state. The lack of a post revolutionary strategy was one of the most significant reasons that the political process did not evolve into democracy after the revolution. I will talk more about this later.

country, and mobilized the media against the government, which eventually led to the resignation of the cabinet (Batatu 2004).

A second critical moment in shaping the nature of the political system during that time came in 1947 when the Iraqi government entered negotiations with the British government regarding the terms of the *Portsmouth Treaty*.²⁷ The political opposition was against this process, as they demanded that the treaty be brought in front of the public for discussion. The government ignored all these demands, and an Iraqi delegation signed the treaty in London on January 15th, 1948. The treaty was an improvement on the 1930 version, providing for the removal of the British from Iraq and giving Iraq's government sovereignty over its military bases. However, the treaty tied the Iraqi government to the British until 1973, only to be renewed later, thus, ensuring the continuous influence of the British over Iraqi affairs (Marr 2012). Thus, while the treaty was an improvement on the previous one, the political opposition did not accept such conditions. In 1948, the *Wathba* ("uprising") happened as a response to the government's disregard for the demands of the opposition. Demonstrations occurred at a size that Iraq had not witnessed before: according to reports, it is estimated that 300 to 400 demonstrators had been killed, and many more were wounded (Marr 2012:65). The *Wathba* led to resignation of the Prime Minister Salih Jabr, the cabinet, and the cancellation of the treaty (Batatu 2004).

However, starting in 1950, the Iraqi state had transformed from a pre-capitalist, agrarian, and (almost) democratic state into a politically aggressive rentier state that depended mostly on the revenues from the oil sector. And while these economic changes represented the first time the Iraqi budget gained surplus, they had also allowed the

²⁷ Also known as the The Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1948. The treaty was a revision of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930. The treaty led to the creation of a "commission of joint defense", while it ensured that a territory of Iraq would remain a base for British armed forces (Marr 2012).

government to relieve itself from depending on the economic elite and the workers (who were mobilized by the political opposition). These economic changes had guaranteed the government a freedom that it lacked in the past. That is, once the political elite eliminated the need for revenues coming from other economic sectors, they became less responsive to public demands.

For instance, in 1952, the government promised the political opposition that it would organize free elections. However, before the elections the students at The College of Pharmacy went on strike over an amendment regarding their examination, and the government's response was severe. This strike, which was no different from many previous strikes the country had witness, had come in a time where the government was struggling with instability in the region and the rising tides of revolution that characterized that period of time, on the one hand, while, on the other hand, it recently had obtained resources from oil, which had gave it the ability for the first time to ignore the workers and the opposition without risking an economic disaster. On November 23rd, Iraq's first military government was appointed, martial law was announced, all political parties were banned, several newspapers were suspended, and many arrests of protesters and politicians were made (Batatu 2004). As might be expected, the use of force emboldened the opposition to use more radical strategies to try and achieve their goals leading to what is known as the intifada (another word for uprising). Because of this uprising, the military state of 1952 did not survive for long; yet, the opposition's success would be fleeting as the aggressive behavior of the state would become commonplace (Marr 2012).

In the meantime, the uprising against the military state led to the promised 1954 elections. The ruling party, led by former Prime Minister Nuri Al Sa'id, had 51 seats, thus falling to gain the majority. The National Democratic Party had 6 seats, Istqlal had 2 seats, and one member who was a communist sympathizer was elected (the communist party continued to be illegal during all of this). Again, this could have been the beginning of a new era in the history of Iraq, where reforms were achieved through the political process, but unfortunately, this did not happen. One of the key obstacles to democracy was the fact that *The Anglo-Iraqi Treaty* was due to expire in 1957. Many in the political elite feared that Al Sa'id was essential to the successful renegotiation of the treaty between Britain and Iraq, and thus Al Sa'id was once again appointed Prime Minister. Almost immediately, he worked to dissolve the new parliament and organize new elections to consolidate his power. Finally, on June 27th, 1954 the parliament was dismissed, and Al Sa'id became the *de facto* government by centralizing both economic and political power. He started a process of systematic suppression of all political activities, cancelled the previous reforms and political rights that were gained in recent years, announced a series of decrees which deported anyone who was associated with communism and anarchism, and he broke relations with the former Soviet Union. In late 1954, a new election was held in which 100 of the 121 delegates ran unopposed, with only 21 seats available for new runners (Marr 2012:71-73).

For the years that followed, after Al Sa'id came to power, Iraq lived under a police-military state, where power was concentrated in the hands of one man. Political opposition was pushed into underground resistance, where it eventually turned more revolutionary. Already, in 1953, many of the political parties had begun working together

to gain more political freedoms. This coalition naturally led, in 1957, to the United National Front, which included the ICP, NDP, Istiqlal, and a newcomer, the Ba'th party (Batatu 2004). The opportunity for change occurred in May 1958, where a civil war broke out in Lebanon, and King Husain of Jordan feared a similar thing would happen in his country, so he requested Iraqi troops be sent to Jordan to provide assistance. The Iraqi army, instead of marching toward Jordan, marched towards Baghdad. This led to the 1958 revolution, which ended the rule of the Hashimite monarchy and Al Sa'id's regime for good, and created the Republic of Iraq (Marr 2012).

The 1958 revolution was the product of the aggressiveness of the political elite towards, not only the political opposition, but also towards actors and organizations within the civil sphere in general. In the next section, we will explore the nature of the civil sphere, and the changes that occurred within the civil sphere in relations to the political and economic circumstances.

The Rise and Demise of Civil Sphere in Iraq

To say Iraq had a democratic political system during any period of time is an overstatement. However, and as we had seen earlier with the political transformation in the country, the 1940s represented the golden age in Iraq's civil sphere. On the political level, several parties were formed, and the activism of the political opposition had played an important role in changing policies, improving conditions, changing several governments, and at one point, even demanding and obtaining a relatively free elections. Most significantly, the political opposition was able to create changes through democratic tools, such as peaceful protests, media, and the culture of the Coffeehouse (Batatu 2004; Davis 2005).

On the cultural level, the period had witnessed extensive intellectual and cultural development, which helped shape the emerging historical memory and the national identity of the masses. Many examples can be seen of this intellectual development. For instance, Iraq was in the frontier of many innovative trends, such as the Free Verse Movement,²⁸ led by Badr Shakir al-Sayyab and Nazik al-Mala'ika (a woman). The Pioneers Movement (contemporary and modern art movement) was established as well, which led later to the creation of the *Baghdad Association of the Friends of Art* in 1952, and the *Baghdad Association for Modern Art* in 1953. In the field of architecture, the journal *Sumer* was founded in 1945, which made many important contributions to the field, and facilitated the funding of many archaeological excavations by the Directorate of Antiquities (Davis 2005). Yet, one of the most significant trends in the civil sphere, and what became the core of the intellectual development and the scene of political and social activism in Iraq, was the creation of the culture of the public Coffeehouse, where political, social, and economic debates occurred. Most importantly, this establishment allowed the illiterate poor to be involved in the political and social process – a luxury which they lacked in the past – while also allowing the intelligentsia to deliver its political strategies and potentially mobilize the masses for social and political change (Davis 2005:94).

²⁸ The free verse is a “poetry organized to the cadences of speech and image patterns rather than according to a regular metrical scheme. It is “free” only in a relative sense. It does not have the steady, abstract rhythm of traditional poetry; its rhythms are based on patterned elements such as sounds, words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs, rather than on the traditional prosodic units of metrical feet per line. Free verse, therefore, eliminates much of the artificiality and some of the aesthetic distance of poetic expression and substitutes a flexible formal organization suited to the modern idiom and more casual tonality of the language.” (Encyclopedia Britannica 2015)

Similar developments can be seen in media as well. After the ban on journalism was lifted in 1945, many new newspapers were established, and the existing ones were improved, which provided the political opposition tools that did not exist in the past to deliver express their grievances to the people and the government. The media became the scene of historical memory making and political activism.²⁹ On the one hand, many of these newspapers featured literary pages that were designed to educate the masses, through publishing short stories, novels, and poems. On the other hand, the media, bitterly critical of the political system, played an important part in creating political change, and advocating for the ideologies of nationalism, economic and political justices, anti-colonialism, and equality (Marr 2012).

For instance, Al-Jabba al-Sha'biya, a politically active front, wrote in its newspaper what they called the “summary of the complaints of the Iraqi people,” where they discussed the poor living conditions, corruption, economic stagnation, and demand for political and democratic changes. Their criticisms reached the Regent, 'Abd al-Ilah of Hejaz, as well, holding him, “responsible for this aberrant situation.” Sawt Al-ahali called the Prime Minister unbalanced, and added that “many Iraqis...could not imagine that such a man would attain the important political position that he was now occupying... they treated his appointment with apathy, indeed with not a little ridicule.” When Prime Minister al-Umari reacted to this criticism, he sought legal action against the paper’s owner and the leader of the NDP, Kamel Al-Chaderji (Marr 2012). Seventeen lawyers

²⁹ The ICP alone had several newspapers such as, The voice of Struggle, The Workers’ Union, The Peasant’s Struggle, The Voice of the Euphrates – continued to publish till well into the 1960s – Women’s Right, The Student’s Struggle, and two papers dedicated to the Armenian community. This does not include the many organizations, meetings, and various other tools the party used to deliver its ideas, and shape the civil sphere in many ways, including shifting the thinking and action of the political opposition and the masses to the left (Davis 2005:96-97).

volunteered to defend Al-Chadrji and the sedition was appealed. Thus, while the government was not democratic, it did not yet use coercive force to shut down the civil sphere, and, in fact, it allowed the institutions of the civil sphere to operate with unprecedented freedom (Dawisha 2009:129-130).

This liberal period started to diminish starting in the 1950s, until it came to an end in 1954. Political parties were disbanded, press licenses were canceled, elections were rigged, and all forms of protesters were assaulted and controlled violently. As noted above, this shift towards authoritarianism started in the early 1950s when the political elite attempted to build their own historical memory and create a hegemonic system of ideology. In the early 1950s, the government created the Ministry of Guidance, which later became the Ministry of Guidance and Information (1958). Moreover, by 1953, the Ministry of the Interior was actively creating propaganda by creating institutions that controlled media and structured how information was delivered (Davis 2005:105-106).

In addition to promoting its own propaganda, the government sought to transform the civil sphere by revoking fundamental political and social rights. After parliament was dissolved in 1954, the political elite targeted employees, students, workers, or anyone with any political interest. Activists were imprisoned, driven underground, expelled from the country and their citizenship was revoked. Oppressive behavior escalated with the continuous use of brutal force against the opposition, where it reached its peak point during the negotiation of The Baghdad Pact of 1956 between the political elite and the opposition, forcing the opposition to realize that there was no path toward creating reforms through democratic tools, and thus, pushing them towards a more revolutionary path, which was realized with the 1958 revolution (Davis 2005; Dawisha 2009).

One important conclusion that we reach from the previous historical discussion is that the aggressive behavior of the political elite had generated temporary solidarity between the political opposition, while the hegemonic development is not as clear and present during that time period. Next, I will discuss, among other things, how this process came to be, and why we cannot see the hegemonic development as clear as I argued that we would see earlier in this paper.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS ON THE FUTURE OF IRAQ

After examining the events in Iraq's modern history in the previous section, we arrive to three conclusions. First, there are evidence to support my original hypothesis: rentier economy provided the means for the state to control the civil sphere and produce hegemony. Second, depending on the nature of the civil sphere, and the amount of the economic development in the state, oil would generate different outcomes. Third, the battle for democracy is fought in the civil sphere, and hegemonic development is the product of a long process of political, economic, and social action.

The Hypothesis

In the beginning of this paper I argued that the rentier economy in Iraq had provided the means for the state to control the civil society and, through it, the collective consciousness of the citizens; thus, creating cultural hegemony on the one hand, and creating and sustaining an authoritarian non-democratic political system on the other hand. To examine this point farther, we must break this statement into three distinct parts. (1) The rentier economy in Iraq had provided the means for the political elite to control the civil sphere, through allowing them to oppress all political, social, and cultural forms

of opposition during the 1950s. (2) Controlling the civil sphere during the 1950s had opened the door for the political elite to create cultural hegemony of the elite, through controlling and shaping the consciousness of the citizens in the following years after the revolution. And (3) successful enforcement and repetition of this strategy created and sustained an authoritarian, non-democratic political system, which persisted until this day.

It was shown that with the increasing role of oil in generating revenue, starting in the early 1950s, the political elite had gained more economic independence from their need for the labor of the workers in both the industrial and agricultural sphere. Thus, the pressure to please the workers, through pleasing the various political parties, was slowly disappearing. The political elite started to realize throughout the 1950s that the oil industry could provide large amounts of resources for the state to get out of the economic crisis of the previous years, without the need for them to negotiate or give up their political privileges. As a result, the behavior of the political elite slowly started to worsen towards the opposition. Karl Marx argued that, “civil society as such only develops with the bourgeoisie; the social organization evolving directly out of production and commerce” (Marx and Engels 1978:163). In other words, the civil sphere does not only facilitate the exchange between the economic, social, and political actors, but it also develops alongside capitalist production (Schwedler 1995). Throughout the 1950s, we can see three events that were happening simultaneously: oil started playing a larger part in generating state revenues, other industries were being ignored and set aside to make room for developing the oil industry instead, and the civil sphere started losing its power and influence.

While the political elite had more resources and less incentive to work with the political opposition on their political, economic, and social demands, the process of controlling and limiting the role of the civil sphere as a force of change had begun. Peter Mansfield has argued that in the Middle East the civil sphere has been co-opted by the state, to a degree that it became virtually useless (Schwedler 1995:9). In Iraq, the political elite started this process on two levels: first, through cracking down on the opposition, and second, through creating alternative forms of knowledge. The crack down on the opposition came in the form of closing newspapers and coffee shops, and controlling the meetings and conferences of the various political parties. That behavior escalated when the government dissolved the fairly democratic parliament, organized a controlled and non-democratic election, banned political parties – and forcing them underground, executed and deported leaders and members of these political parties, and virtually took away all political rights that were achieved in the past decade. Thus, silencing all actors who were participating in creating the historical memory of the people, such as the ICP. Furthermore, the state started actively creating institutions that were designed to create an artificial Iraqi identity. With the crack down on the opposition, and the economic elite, the political elite were in the position to present themselves as the only source of power, and the only actors that had the ability and the resources to produce historical memory. Eric Davis said in the preface of his book, *Memories of Stats*,

The goal of the project, which focused on the political and sociocultural impact of oil wealth, was to reveal how political elites attempted to use such wealth to strengthen the state, particularly through efforts to appropriate understandings of the past and cultural production more broadly defined. Through visits to Iraq and extensive contact with Iraqi intellectuals, it became clear that no other Arab oil state was devoting as much of its resources to this process. (2005:xi)

The political elite's control over the civil sphere during the 1950s had opened the door for the elite to create cultural hegemony of the elite, through controlling and shaping the consciousness of the citizens (Mann 1986:7). Lenski had argued that:

Institutions which shape public opinion serve as a second instrument for legitimizing the position of the...elite. Through the use of a combination of inducements and threats, educational and religious institutions, together with the mass media and other molders of public opinion, can usually be transformed into instruments of propaganda for the new regime. A determined and intelligent elite working through them can usually surround itself with an aura of legitimacy within a few months or years. (1966:53)

In addition, the successful enforcement and repetition of this strategy created and sustained an authoritarian, non-democratic political system, which persisted until this day. That process – the monopolization of power, ideologically, economically, and politically – had just started to crystallize, yet, we know that the condition of the civil sphere in Iraq only got worst with time (Baram 1997; Davis 2005; Dawisha 2009; Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett 1991, 2001; Haj 1997; Marr 2012; Salucci 2005; Simon 2004), especially with the increasing role of oil in the decades that followed (Alnasrawi 2002; Springborg and London Middle East Institute 2007). In addition, previously, I mentioned that the political opposition were disorganized and lacked a post-revolutionary vision (Davis 2005), thus, when the opposition held power after the revolution, they were ill prepared, lacked faith in the political process, and as a result, they repeated the same mistakes – of aggressive behavior towards the civil sphere, and propaganda making. Once the democratic political process was destroyed the country never recovered. The state entered a cycle of conflict, then political violence, then conflict, until Saddam came to power in 1979, starting a long period of non-democratic governing, and complete

control over knowledge production and the historical memory, which we can see its results until this day (Davis 2005; Diamond 2004; Dodge 2003, 2005, 2013).

The Different Outcomes of Rent

I will argue that depending on the nature of the economic system, and a variety of internal and external factors, oil could generate different outcomes in rentier states. We know from the previous discussion that oil was introduced to the Iraqi economic system during a period where the country was going through a stage of economic, political, and social transformation. In addition, under the Ottoman Empire, the geographical region which later became Iraq consisted of several distinct regions and tribes (the rural vs. urban divide) who had very different economic, social, and political background. Once the Iraqi state was created, many of these distinct groups were forced to live together and form a nation; a nation that was created and controlled by colonial powers. As a result, individuals had to find their individuality and sense of identity as members of a nation-state, rather than as members of a tribe, an ethnic, or a religious group, and this process was occurring through the civil sphere. Edward Shils had argued that:

The idea of civil society is the idea of a part of society which has a life of its own, which is distinctly different from the state, and which is largely in autonomy from it. Civil society lies beyond the boundaries of the family and clan and beyond the locality: it lies short of the state. (Shils 1991:3)

Iraq was a country that was in the very early stages of building itself, as a state, and as a democratic system. And in the middle of economic and political instability, the country was not ready to take advantage of the massive resources that were generated from the oil industry, to advance its economic system, improve the living conditions of the people, and eliminate some of the pressure that motivated the masses and the political opposition to engage in unrest (Auty 2003; Basedau and Lay 2009; Kurtz and Brooks

2011; Okruhlik 1999). In other words, resources generated from rent could be an important addition to improve the living conditions of people, and to strengthen the economy in developed countries, as we can see in many democracies that have access to these rent resources (Ross 1999, 2001). These countries had the sufficient time to develop and mature economically, politically, and socially, and as a result, an industrial base had already developed before rent was discovered, therefore, rentier resources improved – rather than crippled – the economic system. According to Ross, “the oil-impedes-democracy claim is both valid and statistically robust; in other words, oil does hurt democracy. Moreover, oil does greater damage to democracy in poor states than in rich ones” (Ross 2001:356). In Iraq, the resources from oil only served to further harm the dysfunctional agrarian system and the young local industries.³⁰ In other words, rentier states that took advantage of their rentier resources under different historical circumstances would most likely have a very different economic, political, and civil system. The development in Egypt and Tunisia – compared to Iraq – is a good example of such differences (Ross 2008). It is important to add to that, that while oil might generate different outcomes in different states, oil rentier states still have many features in common with each other. And hence, looking at the similarities and differences in the civil sphere formation, pre and post rent, will give us a much better understanding of the nature of polity in that state.

The Battle for Democracy

The battle of democracy is fought in the civil sphere. While many scholars of Iraqi history had argued that many factors had hindered the development of democracy in

³⁰ Through providing resources for people to buy exported goods, and due to the government policies, and the lack of investment in the industrial and agricultural spheres.

Iraq, such as the lack of development of true classes (Batatu 2004), the nature of land relations in Iraq (Haj 1997), colonialism (Marr 2012), or the lack of development of a post-revolutionary strategy among the political opposition (Davis 2005), I will add that while all these factors had contributed to hindering the development of a democratic political system in Iraq, it was the interaction between oil rent, polity, and the civil sphere that led to generating the biggest obstacle in creating democracy. The battle towards gaining political rights was fought in the civil sphere during the 1940s, and government's control and oppressive behavior was similarly fought in the civil sphere. The political elite had realized the important role the political opposition was playing in forming the collective consciousness and the historical memory of the people, and as a result, the state targeted the civil sphere first, and in the process, killed the democratic process. While all the previously mentioned factors had played a role in hindering democracy in Iraq, the damage to the civil sphere was irreversible.

To conclude, rent generated from oil in Iraq had provided the resources for the state to oppress the political, social, and cultural opposition in all its forms (through coercive force and knowledge production, in the form of propaganda making), after a period of relative democratic behavior before the increase in oil revenues. However, while the early process of creating hegemony, through destroying the civil sphere, can be seen from the previous discussion, we cannot see the true nature of hegemony making before 1958. In other words, the destruction of the civil sphere had started in the 1950, yet hegemony is the product of a political, social, cultural, and economic behavior, that occurred over a long period of time. And that is why hegemony became more significant for Saddam's rule (starting in 1979), compared to earlier times.

CONCLUSION

I started this research paper with the larger question of why the democratic process had failed in Iraq, even when the old political regime collapsed? This rather complicated question had led me to start with examining the concepts of *rent* and *rentier economy*, and how such an economic system shapes the nature of polity. Many of the scholars who are interested in the questions of democracy have emphasized the role of oil in shaping the political system and hindering the democratic development in these rentier states (Ross 2001; Ross and Andersen 2012; Tsui 2011). However, when I started examining the previous literature – on the nature of rent in general, and Iraq in particular – I noticed a research gap that could hinder, to a large degree, our understanding of the nature of rentier economies, and the nature of the Iraqi rentier state. First, Iraq was largely ignored in studies that focused on the rentier effect in the region. And second, while most scholars have focused on the relationship between oil and the lack of democratization in rentier states, the role of the civil sphere was largely ignored. As a result, I attempted to fill this gap by examining the interaction between oil rent, polity, and the civil sphere in Iraq, during the period of 1950-1958. I argued that the allocation economy in Iraq had provided the means to control the civil society and through it, the collective consciousness of the citizens, thus, creating cultural hegemony, on the one hand, and creating and sustaining an authoritarian, non-democratic political system on the other hand. I have attempt to examine this hypothesis by, first, examining the effect of rentier economy on conflict and political formations in the previous literature (Ross 1999; Ross and Andersen 2012). Second, introducing the concept of culture to the conversation of rent, through examining how the concepts of the state, hegemony, historical memory,

and the civil sphere come together to create a democratic system, and to shape the interaction between the different institutions in democratic states vs. rentier states (Adamson 1983; Alexander 2006; Cox 1983; Gramsci 1971). And finally, highlighting the historical development of the Iraqi state – economically, politically, and socially – during different distinct historical periods, before examining the transnational period of 1950-1958, where oil rent became a significant source of revenues for the Iraqi state (Alnasrawi 2002; Batatu 2004; Davis 2005; Haj 1997; Marr 2012).

The historical examination led to three conclusions: (1) There is evidence to support my original hypothesis. The rentier economy in Iraq had provided the means for the political elite to control the civil sphere, through allowing them to oppress all political, social, and cultural forms of opposition during the 1950s. Furthermore, controlling the civil sphere during the 1950s had opened the door for the political elite to create cultural hegemony of the elite, through controlling and shaping the consciousness of the citizens in the following years after the revolution. And finally, the successful enforcement and repetition of this strategy created and sustained an authoritarian, non-democratic political system, which persisted until this day. (2) Depending on the nature of the economic system, and a variety of internal and external factors, oil could generate different outcomes in rentier states. (3) The battle for democracy is fought in the civil sphere, and the hegemonic development is the product of a long process of political, economic, and social action.

This paper was an effort to highlight a gap in research concerning the role of oil in shaping the political institution in Iraq, as well as introducing a different theoretical take to the existing conversation on the resource curse. I argued that the conversation of rent

economy and polity would be lacking without discussing the role of culture, and in particular, the role of the civil sphere, in shaping the political outcomes of rentier states. In this research I highlighted the process in which by it the civil sphere transformed from an active sphere of democratic interaction, into a dysfunctional institution that was used by the elite to shape historical memory and enforce the political elite's hegemony over the population. While, this research was focused on a specific historical time period that long had passed, the implications of that historical period can still be felt today. The effect of the distraction of the civil sphere can be seen today through the failure of the country to transit into democracy after the collapse of the old political régime. In fact, even after several years of efforts, nationally and internationally, to build democratic institutions in Iraq, the country continues to slide into chaos and institutional failure. While, the lack of the development of a civil sphere in Iraq is by no means the only factor behind the current political and social situation, understanding the relations between polity, oil, and civil society can provide us with very important insights into the factors that shaped the nature of the political system, and the behavior of the political elite on one hand. On the other hand, it will provide us with the tools to create more effective policies to deal with the many problems that are facing the region, like political and economic chaos, extremism and radicalization, displacement of citizens and human rights violations. However, there are many layers that had not been examined yet – such as the interaction between the individual and the civil sphere in rentier states, forms of counter hegemony and their effect on the overall structure of the state, and how different forms of behavior (such as religious and political radical behavior) emerged in a civil and political vacuum. These aspects must be examined in future research to provide us with a better

understand of Iraq, the region, and rentier states, and I hope that this research will provide a starting point towards engaging in these conversations.

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