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Democracy and Monarchy as Antithetical Terms? Iraq's Elections of September 1954

ELIZABETH BISHOP

Historian Bernard Lewis observes: "Americans tend to see democracy and monarchy in antithetical terms; in Europe, however, democracy has fared better in constitutional monarchies than in republics"[1]. Let us take this opportunity to consider elections held in the Hashemite Kingdom of Iraq during the Cold War, in order to assess how"democracy" fared during the years that country was a constitutional monarchy. As we do so, let's keep Saad Eskander's words in mind:

> "You cannot have democracy in Iraq by just holding elections... You need to enable Iraq's core of citizens to have free access to information, absolutely all, all of legislation. You have to have all the cultural and educational institutions so that they could sort the truth of Iraq"[2].

The Hashemite kingdom witnessed elections to the Chamber of Deputies *twice* during 1954: in the early summer, and again in the autumn. While most historians of the monarchy have chosen to analyze the June polls (which Adeed Dawisha called "perhaps the freest of all Iraqi elections"[3], which Eric Davis considered an event when "the monarchy relaxed its control over the electoral process"[4], and Charles Tripp evaluated "the freest elections yet held in Iraq"[5]) this essay will draw attention to the comparatively-neglected September voting to assess Lewis' generalization.

Iraq's Constitution delineated a western-style political system. Article 28 vested legislative power in the Palace and a bicameral Parliament. Iraq's delegate to the United Nations Dr. Fadhil al-Jamali (and professional explicator of local affairs for foreigners) explained: "The legislature is constituted of two chambers, the Chamber of Deputies, with its members elected by the people in the ratio of one deputy for every twenty thousand males of twenty-one years of age and over, and today consisting of 135 deputies", and a appointed senate[6]. The king was empowered to open, adjourn, prorogue, and dissolve the Chamber, and earmark members for the Senate.

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[1] Bernard LEWIS, "A Historical Overview", in Larry DIAMOND, Marc F. PLATTNER, Daniel BRUMBERG (eds.), *Islam and Democracy in the Middle East*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2003, p. 209.

[2] Greg LANDGRAF, "Saad Eskander, Iraq National Library and Archive Director: An Audio Interview from Baghdad", *American Libraries*, ALFocus, 1 October 2010, http://americanlibrariesmagazine.org/al_focus/saad-eskander-iraq-national-library-and-archives-director-audio-interview-baghdad.

[3] Adeed DAWISHA, *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2009, p. 111.

[4] Eric DAVIS, *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2005, p. 101.

[5] Charles TRIPP, *A History of Iraq*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, p. 136.

[6] Mohammed Fadhil JAMALI, *Iraq; Past and Present*, Government Press, Baghdad, 1954, p. 8.

The British designed a public order for the country after the First World War which was not without its merits; it is often forgotten that Iraq was the first Arab state admitted to the League of Nations (in 1932, four years before Egypt, and thirteen years before Egypt and Lebanon). While Egypt was still disengaging from the Capitulations and other restrictions on the full exercise of sovereignty, the Hashemite monarchy in Iraq was signing a Saadabad Pact with Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan[1]. And after the Second World War, when Egypt's leaders had suspended their country's Constitution, Iraqis still enjoyed the protections of Constitutional provisions with their English-derived models of liberty.

One of the dominant metaphors the UK intelligence community used at that time to conceptualize politics in Iraq was to compare it with eighteenth-century English politics. Freya Stark compared the difficulties between Kurds and "the Iraqis of the plain", with those "eighteenth-century Scottish Highlanders" caused the English; she returned to this motif twice, in *East is West* (1946) and also in *The Arab Island: The Middle East, 1939-1943* (1946). This comparison helped foreign academics such as Lewis understand a dynamic situation: as Timothy Mitchell observed:

> "The task of social science, like all science, is to simplify, to identify a limited number of more decisive agents; why not accept a simpler but more powerful story, one that can depict the big picture and even identify certain patterns or predictions?"[2].

What this comparison between Cold War Iraq and Georgian England neglected were Iraq's rulers' foreign cultural origins. The royal family and the leaders of the Senate spoke Ottoman Turkish, since after 1894, instruction in that language was mandatory in all the Empire's schools. Prime Minister Nuri es-Said had attended the military academy in Istanbul, joining the Ottoman army in 1908[3], and Iraq's representative at the United Nations Dr. Fadhil al-Jamali had also attended a Turkish-language high school[4]. Together with the royal family, "all spoke Turkish, though without the latest turns of phrase and new words introduced under Kemal Ataturk" [5].

At the time, Lewis Namier was revising his *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III*, originally published in 1929. Knighted two years before Iraq's dual parliamentary elections, his manuscript devoted an entire chapter to Britain's general election of 1761, paying particular attention to the question, "what constituted corruption in eighteenth century England?"[6].

Historian Amy Ng dwelt on Namier's analytic methodology, with its emphasis on "the socio-economic background of his historical subjects", noting that: "A certain

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[1] G.E.K., "Iraq, Egypt, and the Arab League", *The World Today*, vol. 11, no. 4, April 1955, p. 145.

[2] Timothy MITCHELL, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*, University of California Press, Berkeley CA, 2002, p. 34.

[3] Fred ZUSY, "Britain Has an Oil Ally in Iraq", *Washington Post*, 20 May 1951.

[4] Harry ALMOND, *Iraqi Statesman: A Portrait of Mohammed Fadhel Jamali*, Grosvenor Books, Salem, Oregon, 1993, p. 10.

[5] Gerlald de GAURY, *Three Kings in Baghdad, 1921-1958*, Hutchinson, London, 1961, p. 133.

[6] Lewis NAMIER, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III*, Macmillan & Co., London, 1929.

tendency towards economic determinism was apparent in many of his works"[1]. Hers signifies a revival of the controversy over Namier's methods, a controversy which dated back a half-century. During the early 1960s, Harvey Mansfield and Robert Walcott exchanged viewpoints in a debate over the terms of Namier's political analysis. Mansfield emphasized a relationship between King George II and Pitt which, in a number of aspects, take the foreground in a discussion of Iraq's politics of 1954; most notably, appointment of Bute as First Lord of the Treasury; "the intractability of Pitt… impeded the natural working of the constitution, in which an agreeable man whom the King liked best would become first minister"[2]. Robert Walcott rephrased the question in contemporary terms: was George II's maneuver in 1762 (whereby he took advantage of Pitt's resignation to advance Bute to the head of the Treasury) "unconstitutional" or not? Walcott's concern was historicity; to draw the analysis toward the eighteenth century's understanding of "tyranny"[3].

The electoral law on the books during the early Cold War (Law 11 of 1946) required candidates be announced a fixed period of time before polling[4]. The 1946 law also retained a two-stage process, in which every 100 citizens voted for one elector; these electors, in turn, chose representatives to the chamber[5]. The ruling parties were the Constitutional Union (*hizb al-Ittihad ad-Dastouri*) and People's Socialist (*Umma al-Istiraki*)[6]. Both represented notables, landowners, and sheikhs; "both… were founded less on a body of agreed principles than on the personalities of their leaders, on their hopes of freedoms from disturbance and on a natural fear of sudden and unpredictable changes"[7]. Nuri al-Said chaired the first ("Iraq's largest legal party, it contained the tribal supporters of the Regent, the allies of Nuri [es-Said], and originally many supporters of Salih Jabr")[8], and Saleh Jabr chaired the second (predominantly Shi'i in its membership).

According to historian Orit Bashkin, activists for the political parties in opposition sought to amend the electoral law to allow for direct elections[9]; and to colleague Noga

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[1] Amy NG, "A Portrait of Sir Lewis Namier As A Young Socialist", *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 40, no. 4, October 2005, p. 635.

[2] Harvey C. MANSFIELD Jr., "Sir Lewis Namier Considered", *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1, November 1962, p. 38.

[3] Robert WALCOTT, "'Sir Lewis Namier Considered' Considered", *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2, May 1964, pp. 95-96.

[4] Helen MILLER DAVIS, *Constitutions, Electoral Laws, Treaties of States in the Near and Middle East*, Duke University Press, Chapel Hill, 1953, p. 176. See also Michele PENNER ANGRIST, *Party Building in the Modern Middle East*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 2006, p. 68; Majid KHADDURI, *Independent Iraq, 1932-1958: A Study in Iraqi Politics*, Oxford University Press, London, 1960, p. 384; Charles TRIPP, *A History of Iraq*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002, p. 114.

[5] Michael EPPEL, *Iraq From Monarchy to Tyranny: From the Hashemites to the Rise of Saddam*, University Press of Florida, Gainesville FL, 2004, p. 101.

[6] *New Statesman*, no. 45, 1953, p. 115.

[7] Stephen Hemsley LONGRIGG, *Iraq, 1900 to 1950: A Political, Social, and Economic History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1956, pp. 362-363.

[8] Matthew ELLIOT, *"Independent Iraq": The Monarchy and British Influence, 1941-58*, I.B. Tauris, London, 1996, p. 192.

[9] Orit BASHKIN, *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2009, p. 117.

Efrati, sought to extend suffrage to women[1]. The legally-registered opposition started with the National Democratic Party (*al-Hizb al-Watani al-Dimuqrati*, which A.J. Toynbee described as "leftish")[2], led by Kamil al-Jaderji[3]. Jaderji's principles of "democratic socialism" recognized private ownership, promoted nationalization of industry, and state ownership of essential utilities[4]. The NDP served as political home to a large number of the urban bourgeoisie, including left-to-center intellectuals, students, and professionals.

On the one hand, it's been observed that during "the 1950s, the party came to articulate far more distinctly the interests of entrepreneurial capitalists, especially the manufacturing sector"[5]. The NDP's list of *desiderata* began with a demand for democratic liberties (freedom of speech and publication; the right to hold meetings, demonstrations, and strikes; the right to establish associations, political parties, and trade unions). Its following points included freedom of elections, abrogation of the 1930 treaty, and rejection of US military aid . In addition, foreign "monopolistic companies'" concessions (a transparent reference to the Iraqi Petroleum Company and its subsidiaries, the year after neighboring Iran attempted to nationalize its petroleum resources) must be abolished, so as to ensure social justice[6]. On the other hand, it's been noted that: "Simply because the National Democrats spoke the language of reform did not mean that they could therefore be taken at face value as a reforming party"[7].

Kamil Samarrai led the Independence (*Istiqlal)* political party, another other member of the opposition[8]. One of the party's founders, Muhammad Mahdi Kubba, was pan-Arab in his views[9]. Formed after the Second World War as a nationalist group, this became a rightist, anti-Communist party that abhorred the Soviet Union but supported a neutralist position in the cold war[10]. Strongest in Baghdad, Mosul, and Basra, its newspaper the *Flag of Independence (Liwa al-Istiqlal)* had little influence outside the cities and in tribal areas[11]. The *Istiqlal* was credited with transforming vague socio-political unrest among students and lower civil servants, mobilizing waves of demonstrations and riots[12]. The *Istiqlal* was well-represented among military officers, and identified with their interests[13].

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[1] Noga EFRATI, *Women in Iraq: Past Meets Present*, Columbia University Press, New York NY, 2012, p. 91.

[2] *Survey of International Affairs* (1955), p. 200.

[3] "Turmoil in Iraq", *The New Statesman and Nation*, no. 45, 31 January 1953, p. 115.

[4] Majid KHADDURI, *Arab Contemporaries; The Role of Personalities in Politics*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore MD, 1973, p. 138.

[5] Samira HAJ, *The Making of Iraq, 1900-1963: Capital, Power, and Ideology*, State University of New York, Albany NY, 1997, p. 87.

[6] British Embassy, Baghdad, to Foreign Office, London, 18 August 1954, *Records of Iraq*, pp. 271-272.

[7] Matthew ELLIOT, *"Independent Iraq"*…cit., p. 27.

[8] Alan de Lacy RUSH, Jane PRIESTLAND, *Records of Iraq, 1914-1966*, vol. 1, Archive Editions, Cambridge, 2001, p. 117.

[9] *The Encyclopedia of Islam,* second edition, vol. III, E.J. Brill, Leiden NL, 1971, p. 10.

[10] Michael EPPEL, *Iraq From Monarchy to Tyranny*…cit., p. 106.

[11] George Lawrence HARRIS, *Iraq: Its People, Its Society, Its Culture*, HRAF Editions, New Haven CT, 1958, p. 92.

[12] Michael EPPEL, "The Decline of British Influence and the Ruling Elite in Iraq", in Michael J. COHEN, Martin KOLINSKY (eds.), *Demise of the British Empire in the Middle East: Britain's Response to Nationalist Movements, 1943-1955*, Frank Cass, London, 1998, p. 194.

[13] Edmund GHAREEB, Beth DOUGHERTY, *Historical Dictionary of Iraq*, Scarecrow Press, Chicago, 2004, p. 104.

In Baghdad, the Bar Association had also become a center of resistance to the authorities' policies. The organization's successive presidents alternated affiliation with the National Democratic (NDP) and *Istiqlal* political parties; Tawfiq Munir, who served as vice president, came from the more radical Sha'bists. All used the Bar Association office to attack the government's controls over civil liberties. 'Abd al-Wahab Mahmud (arrested in November 1952) stepped down from its presidency in 1953, to become a leader within the "Peace Partisans"; Husayn Jamil, his successor, bombarded the government with protests, demanding an end to martial law, and condemning the mistreatment of prisoners and detainees[1].

Ordinance Number 6 of 1952 for the direct election of deputies put an end to the two-stage system, so vulnerable to manipulation[2]. A candidate could be duly elected should he win a plurality greater than 40 percent of the valid popular votes. As an observer put it, this law's significance was that it opened the possibility of "a redistribution of representatives according to the population... provided an increase of democratic opportunities"[3]. The new law also substituted one- and two- member constituencies for the former large constituencies, which varied in number from two to fifteen members. This reduction was to make it more difficult for the government to dominate out-of-district candidates.

Iraq's two senior statesmen were temporarily in London; the Crown Prince on summer vacation, and Nuri es-Said for medical treatment. Historian Behçet Yeşilbursa explains that Nuri es-Said sought to conceal a new defense agreement with Britain; the best camouflage would be to represent it as an incidental part of an agreement with other Middle Eastern states. July 16, Nuri es-Said explained his plan to Selwyn Lloyd, minister of state. His idea was to negotiate a pact with Pakistan which would bear a close relationship with the two parties' obligations under the United Nations Charter and in particular with Article 51, i.e. collective self-defense. The pact would be open to accession by any country interested in the peace of the Middle East, which would enable Britain to join at a later stage. By this means, the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930 could be revised without offense to Iraqi public opinion[4].

The Crown Prince was forced to approach his many-years rival. Both were stubborn men; "Nuri's strong-mindedness and Abdul Ilah's insistence on having a say in all decision of any importance, did not make for an easy relationship"[5]. When the Crown Prince telephoned, Nuri refused to take the receiver; eventually, the Emir Zayid (Iraq's ambassador to the U.K.) managed to obtain Nuri es-Said's consent to a meeting in Paris.

In the course of these Paris conversations, Nuri es-Said laid out a series of conditions under which he would accept public office. The Palace must approve dissolution of Parliament, and call for another round of elections. All political parties must be dissolved, and the Prime Minister must be granted extra-constitution powers

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[1] Majid KHADDURI, *Independent Iraq, 1932-1958: A Study in Iraqi Politics*, Oxford University Press, London, 1960, p. 274; *Middle East Journal*, 1956, p. 78.

[2] George GRASSMUCH, "The Electoral Process in Iraq, 1952-1958", *Middle East Journal*, vol. 14, no. 4, Autumn 1960, p. 399.

[3] Henry ATYEO, "Reform Through Riot", *Middle East Affairs*, no. 4, 1953, p. 91.

[4] Behçet Kemal YEŞILBURSA, *The Baghdad Pact: Anglo-American Defence Policies in the Middle East, 1950-1959*, pp. 53-54.

[5] Waldemar J. GALLMAN, *Iraq Under General Nuri: My Recollections of Nuri al-Said, 1954-1958*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore MD, 1964, p. 5.

to revoke press licenses. In return, Nuri es-Said would accept the premiership and terminate the 1930 Anglo-Iraqi treaty. He proposed to suppress communism, attack the opposition, and call upon Iraqis to rally around his government and defend the country from both. The new Prime Minister then published a letter to King Feisal II, reiterating the terms of the Paris agreement reached with the Crown Prince[1].

Notes from Nuri es-Said's meeting with Selwyn Lloyd in London circulated from hand to hand within the Baghdad diplomatic community[2]. Philip Ireland (chargé d'affaires at the US Embassy) understood the premier's new defense strategy to include three elements. The first element was that Egypt should be approached with the suggestion that any Arab collective security pact be broadened to include non-Arab Pakistan, the United States, and Britain. The second element was that, if the Egyptians reject this suggestion (as Nuri fully expected), Iraq is left free to set up an alternate defense arrangement with Pakistan, based on the UN charter's article 51; other Arab states (particularly Lebanon and Syria), as well as the United States and Britain would be invited to join, and the Turkish-Pakistani pact could be set aside. The third element was that this treaty would "substitute" for the 1930 treaty, due to expire in two years.

In the campaign leading up to the September elections for the Chamber of Deputies (the second in five months), only the *Istiqlal* limped along with the same slogans as they'd heralded in the June campaign. In September, though, they found itself bereft of allies, all the fire of opposition to the 1930 treaty stolen by the Prime Minister's August announcement that he did not intend to renew it when it expired the following years[3]. When nominations and withdrawals ended a week before the polls opened, it became clear that the CUP's former members had been nominated for hundred seats "unopposed"[4].

Philip Ireland, chargé d'affaires at the U.S. Embassy, reported back to the State Department: "There are innumerable means by which the government can bring pressure to bear either through coercion or patronage", information which was wide-spread among Iraq's citizens. Ireland then went on to contrast "western countries, where agencies of the government develop codes of fair practice which operate independently of the group in power", and "here [where] virtually the whole apparatus of the state is at the disposal of the ruling group to be used for political ends as they see fit"[5]. Reporting to Washington a state of affairs widely-recognized locally[6], Ireland distinguished between what he called a "rough" form, for one that was comparatively "polite". As an example of the first, he mentioned trial and deportation of three tribal leaders from Kenaan (a rural area, about six miles east of Baquba), all of who voted for Saleh Jabr's *Umma* Socialist party in the last elections. Kenaan was approximately 50 miles from the border with Iran, at a time when the government

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[1] "Principal Events in Iraq during 1954", *Records of Iraq 1914-1966*, vol. 11, 2001, p. 23.

[2] "Current Iraqi thinking on Egypt, regional defense and British treaty," *Central Intelligence Bulletin*, 19 August 1954.

[3] Tareq Y. ISMAEL, *The Rise and Fall of the Communist Party of Iraq*, Cambridge University Press, New York NY, 2008, p. 55.

[4] "Nuri es-Said's Majority", *London Times*, 13 September 1954.

[5] Amembassy, Baghdad, to the State Department, Washington, "Foreign Service Political Reporting Appraisal", 11 June 1952.

[6] *Baghdad, Iraqi Home Service – 1958-09-22*, U.S. Documents Cited, DAILY REPORT. Foreign Radio Broadcasts, FBIS-FRB-58-186 *on* 1958-09-24.

encouraged Kurds living within five miles of the border to purchase quotidian needs from Iraq[1]. Nonetheless, Phil Ireland hurried to qualify:

> "This is not to say that the charges of smuggling brought against the Kenaan leaders were false; but the fact that the Nuri government chose this particular time to take action against them was rather obviously intended as a demonstration that not only crime, but also political opposition to the regime does not pay" [2].

Of the "polite" form, he heard word of a dinner party, at which "a certain Dr. Bassam of the Royal Hospital in Khadhimein was the guest of Dr. al-Jamali (who had been born in Khadhimein); as Ireland related: "At the dinner table al-Jamali, with a great show of affability, said, 'I hear, Dr. Bassam, that you might run for Deputy'". Dr. Bassam replied that he had not yet made up his mind. "'You known, Doctor', al-Jamali continued, 'the government has been urging me to present myself in Kadhimein but I also am somewhat undecided. The last time I stood for election in Diwaniyah and was *unopposed*'"[3]. As Ireland explicated, if Dr. Bassam stood for election against the wishes of those in power: "The risks not only loss of the election but also his position at the government-controlled Royal Hospital".

From these two examples (a brigand and a MD) the diplomat extended to explain that:

> "Not an inconsiderable source of the government's power is derived from its large measure of control over the economy, over the leasing of state lands, over export and import licensing, over the control of hard currencies, over the location of bridges, roads and irrigation systems, etc.".

From this, he derived that "the possibilities of applying either benefits or pressure are almost limitless"[4].

Both benefits and pressures were evidently deployed in order to keep deputies, opposed to a treaty with Pakistan, out of the chamber. During the first days of August, Nuri as-Said had disbanded his Constitutional Union political party, explaining that the country no longer needed factions, and that elimination of political parties would allow those who wanted to serve in the new parliament to enter on an equal footing, unhindered by the biases and divisions which party affiliation provided[5]. Originally, Article 89 of the 1919 Baghdad Penal Code protected the state from seditious publications, and Iraqis from hate speech. "Whoever shall print or cause to be printed or published any newspaper, book or other printed material exciting hatred or contempt against the government or those invested with public authority, or in such a way as

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[1] "Travel from Kurdistan to Iraq Eased," Sanandaj, Kurdistan Regional Station in Kurdish, DAILY REPORT, FOREIGN RADIO BROADCASTS, FBIS-FRB-53-014 on 1953-01-22.

[2] Amembassy, Baghdad, to the State Department, Washington, Foreign Service Political Reporting Appraisal", 11 June 1952.

[3] Amembassy, Baghdad, to the State Department, Washington, Foreign Service Political Reporting Appraisal", 11 June 1952.

[4] *Ibidem*.

[5] A.I. DAWISHA, *Iraq: A Political History from Independence to Occupation*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 2009, p. 112.

to endanger the public peace against any class of persons shall be punished" with a fine, and further penalties against the publisher. A subsequent amendment added imprisonment (up to seven years) for propagation of "communism, anarchism, or immorality"; this was amended in 1948 to add "Zionism" to this list. While the original text of article 51 of the 1938 Iraqi penal code specified seven years' imprisonment (or a fine) for propagation of communism, anarchism, or immorality (and, in 1948, an amendment added "Zionism" to this list), even more stringent regulations were announced during the weeks leading up to the September elections.

Announced at the end of the August 1954, Decree 16 required that all non-governmental organizations to re-register with the Ministry of the Interior; members of organizations, "whether direct or through organizations aimed at serving the above-mentioned purposes or doctrines under the screen of any name, such as the Partisans of Peace, the Democratic Youth, and so forth", were threatened with seven years' imprisonment[1]. Historians describe these as communist front organizations[2]. The Bar Association was unanimous in its condemnation of this motion. As I.I. Garshin pointed out, "in the language of the law, the term 'similar' makes no sense, and has become a laughingstock among all the lawyers in Iraq"[3].

Not all NGOs could expect their applications to be approved; this provision revoked the legal status of so-called "communist front groups", at the same time as their members were forbidden to leave the country.

Announced over the radio[4], Decree 17 authorized the cabinet, upon the recommendation of the Minister of the Interior[5], and to revoke Iraqi citizens' passports and deport them[6] "should they enter into the service of a foreign power" and be convicted under Penal Law no. 51 of 1938[7]. Decree 18 closed all labor unions[8]. The Minister of the Interior published a notice inviting anyone convicted of crimes under supplemental laws, to report to the nearest police station "and certify in writing that he now abandons the doctrine for which he had previously been convicted"[9].

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[1] *Baghdad, Iraqi Home Service – 1954-09-01*, CONVICTED COMMUNISTS TO LOSE CITIZENSHIP, DAILY REPORT. FOREIGN RADIO BROADCASTS, FBIS-FRB-54-171 *on* 1954-09-02.

[2] Matthew ELLIOT, *"Independent Iraq"*…cit., p. 183; Tareq Y. ISMAEL, *The Rise and Fall of the Communist Party of Iraq*, Cambridge University Press, New York NY, 2008, p. 85; Walter Z. LAQUEUR, *Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East*, Praeger, New York NY, 1956, p. 196.

[3] I.I. GARSHIN, "Irakskaia kommunisticheskaia partiia v borbe za natsionalnuiu nezavisimost i demokraticheskoe razvitie strany", in *Bor'ba narodov protiv kolonializma*, Akademiia obshchestvennykh nauk, Moscow, 1965, p. 34.

[4] *Baghdad, Iraqi Home Service - 1954-09-01*, CONVICTED COMMUNISTS TO LOSE CITIZENSHIP, DAILY REPORT. FOREIGN RADIO BROADCASTS, FBIS-FRB-54-171 *on* 1954-09-02.

[5] "Iraq action against communists", *London Times*, 2 September 1954.

[6] British Embassy, Baghdad, to Foreign Office, London, 3 September 1954, *Records of Iraq*, pp. 276-277. See also Waldemar J. GALLMAN, *Iraq Under General Nuri*…cit., p. 94.

[7] "Iraq Action Against Communists", *London Times*, 2 September 1954; "Iraq Penalizes Reds, Zionists", *New York Times*, 2 September 1954; "Crackdown on Reds", *Washington Post*, 2 September 1954.

[8] Tareq Y. ISMAEL, *The Rise and Fall of the Communist Party of Iraq*, Cambridge University Press, New York NY, 2008, p. 53.

[9] British Embassy, Baghdad, to Foreign Office, London, 3 September 1954, *Records of Iraq*, pp. 276-277.

Members of the NDP vehemently attacked Decrees 16, 17, and 18 and demanded their withdrawal, declaring:

> "We consider these reactionary decrees issued by this government the worst of any government's action, not only in Iraq but in the world as a whole… not because it is contrary to the basic principles of democracy and violates the constitution, but because it violated one of the natural human rights of citizens which is the right of citizenship"[1].

Radio Baghdad responded swiftly, complaining that the NDP had departed from purposes stated on its application for a license:

> "It has appeared that those controlling the [political party's] administration, particularly those in charge of the newspaper which is its mouthpiece, have exploited the weaknesses of some of the governments and have embarked upon a campaign of misrepresentation, with the object of influencing simple people, misguiding them, and exerting them to riot and disturb public order and tranquility"[2].

As a result, Minister of the Interior Said al-Qazzaz ordered dissolution of the National Democratic Party, "as a result of the provocative activity conducted by the party". The Party's newspaper *Voice of the Nation* (*Sawt al Ahli*) was suspended and the offices that served as its headquarters trashed[3]. In mailboxes, members of the *Istiqlal* found their party's manifesto, addressed "to the good people of Iraq". The paper explained to the general population the reason why the Party's members would be boycotting this upcoming election, as previous contests, "in accordance with its positive policy". The Party refused to take part in elections "since intimidation was practiced to such an extent that party activities were paralyzed and the decision to dissolve the parties was considered legal". A boycott was not sufficient: "Existing circumstances called for further action on behalf of democratic principles and for renewed efforts to induce the people to maintain their rights and to struggle for their sake"[4].

As a result, all but one of the leading political parties announced that they would boycott the elections scheduled for 12 September. The National Democratic party announced it would boycott the election, and the United Popular Front suspended all political operations. In a "declaration to the noble people of Iraq", these parties of the political opposition pointed out that, "elections are an integral part of the basic rights of the people and mean, among other things, placing the question of the day before all citizens so that they may express their views about them in full freedom"[5].

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[1] Tareq Y. ISMAEL, *The Rise and Fall*…cit. p. 54.

[2] *Baghdad, Iraqi Home Service –1954-09-02*, Reason for Dissolution, DAILY REPORT. FOREIGN RADIO BROADCASTS, FBIS-FRB-54-172 *on* 1954-09-03.

[3] *Limassol, Sharq al-Adna – 1954-09-02*, NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY BANNED, DAILY REPORT. FOREIGN RADIO BROADCASTS, FBIS-FRB-54-172 *on* 1954-09-03.

[4] British Embassy, Baghdad, to Foreign Office, London, 18 August 1954, *Records of Iraq*, pp. 271-272.

[5] S. FALLE, Baghdad, to Foreign Office, London, 21 April 1958, [FO 371/134198]. *Records of Iraq, 1914-1966*, vol. 12, 2001, p. 217.

Not only was Iraq's participation in collective defense agreements at stake; so, too, was control over the country's petroleum wealth, according to Cairo Radio. "Iraq produces 2.3 million tons monthly…. Arab rulers awarded the imperialist companies an abundance of rights and concessions at the expense of the peoples who struggled and continue to struggle against them."[1] Historian Hanna Batatu noted that wealth derived from the petroleum industry distinguished Faysal II from his family. His grandfather, "Feisal I had not been, relatively speaking, a wealthy monarch; his civil list in the twenties was the equivalent of only 5.250 dinars". The grandson's wealth contrasted with the grandfather's penury: A contemporary journalist ranked Faysal among the three richest Arab heads of state. Since passage of Law no. 23 of 1950, government income from petroleum had been turned over to a National Development Board. The Board's eight members included two foreigners[2].

By 1958, Faysal II drew a salary of 48.000 dinars and 12.000 more as allowances, and had $124.000 stacked away in the First National City Trust of New York[3]. Crowned heads shared income from petroleum with the owners of oil companies Gulf, Socony-Vacuum, Texas, Standard of California and New Jersey, Britain's Anglo-Iranian and Shell, and France's E.I.E. Francaise des petroels"[4]. Citizens, however, did not share in this wealth. At the same time as the government was closing down the political opposition, "an enormous fire broke out in" the bustling town of Halabja, on Iraq's border with Iran. Most of the town's residents were Kurds[5]. The fire destroyed most of the town's buildings; the government made a paltry 10.000 dinars' credit available for the victims' relief[6]. According to Czech radio, "The forthcoming elections in Iraq [were] the outcome of the recent dissolution of Parliament", point to a "deep crisis through which the country is passing at present", connecting the "antipeople policy of the reactionary Iraqi government" with the conclusion of a military agreement between Iraq and the United States[7].

Elections for the 15th Chamber of Deputies were held, as scheduled, on 12 September. Election day, the King's uncle the Emir Abdul Ilah left Istanbul (where he had been holding talks with Turkey's Prime minister Adnan Menderes and the country's foreign minister Fuat Mehmet Fuat Köprülü, regarding Turkey's pact with Pakistan) for Paris, with plans to continue on to London[8].

A foreigner described voting procedures In Iraq, so as to eliminate the possibility that the basic act of an inclusive political system would itself be corrupt:

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[1] *Cairo – 1954-09-06*, OIL SEEN AS WEAPON IN ARAB HANDS, DAILY REPORT. FOREIGN RADIO BROADCASTS, FBIS-FRB-54-175 *on* 1954-09-09.

[2] *The Economist*, no. 176, 1955, p. 1126.

[3] Hanna BATATU, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists, Bathists, and Free Officers*, Saqi Press, London, 2004, p. 352.

[4] "Mud City Sheikh Gets Half Million A Day", *Chicago Tribune*, 30 March 1954.

[5] Anthony HAM, *Middle East*, Lonely Planet Publishers, London, 2009, p. 243.

[6] *Beirut – 1954-09-07*, BORDER TOWN FIRE, DAILY REPORT. FOREIGN RADIO BROADCASTS, FBIS-FRB-54-174 *on* 1954-09-08.

[7] *Prague, Czech Home Service – 1954-09-09*, U.S. INFLUENCE INCREASING IN IRAQ, DAILY REPORT. FOREIGN RADIO BROADCASTS, FBIS-FRB-54-176 *on* 1954-09-10.

[8] *Beirut – 1954-09-11*, AMIR ABD AL-ILAH, DAILY REPORT. FOREIGN RADIO BROADCASTS, FBIS-FRB-54-177 *on* 1954-09-13.

> "Election day began... one hour after sunrise, when the members of the election committee in each district held up a ballot box to prove to the waiting voters that it was empty. When all doubts had been satisfied the box was locked with two padlocks, one key for which was kept by the oldest voting member in the district, and the other by the chairman of the local election committee... The voting continued until one hour before sunset. Then the ballot box was ceremoniously unlocked and the votes counted in the presence of all citizens who wished to watch and either to accept or challenge the local election committee's count"[1].

On election day, Radio Baghdad congratulated the citizens on security they enjoyed as a result of the authorities' suppression of civil organizations. When the Muslim Brotherhood held a weekend conference in Damascus, "The government wishes to deny the existence of any organization or society legally recognized in Iraq under the name of the Muslim Brotherhood"[2]. Indeed, the U.S. ambassador noted that (on the surface) everything was calm, "Very few slogans were painted on walls.... on election day no extra police were called out, and balloting was carried out quietly"[3]. Descriptions of voting procedures and references to calm draw attention from the fact that Iraqi citizens were denied participation in their own government. While the laws extended male suffrage to all 20-year-old taxpayers[4], Iraq was one of only thirteen jurisdictions worldwide that denied women access to both the ballot box and public office[5]. Generally, on election days "only 15% of Iraq's 1.5 million registered voters actually went to the polls"[6]. Of these, "Many cast their ballots according to the wishes of persons whose authority they accept – father, employer, tribal chief, village head, religious or political leaders"[7]. Graduate student Hani Alwan, at the University of Wisconsin, later related:

> "One time I went to vote. I went to the polls and they were gone. I'm not sure that they were ever set up at all. The next day, the announcement was made that one fellow had won, and the people had to accept it passively. I am 28 and have never voted; the stories about elections were only for consumption of the rest of the world. Really, they were non-existent"[8].

The day after polling, while Ministry of the Interior officials opened the ballot boxes and counted the votes, Damascus Radio announced that Nuri es-Said would leave Baghdad for Beirut, where he planned to meet with Lebanese leaders, before continuing on to Cairo and Europe; Cairo Radio added its correction, that the Iraqi

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[1] Henry ATYEO, "Reform Through Riot", *Middle East Affairs*, no. 4, 1953, p. 90.

[2] *Baghdad, Iraqi Home Service – 1954-09-12*, Iraq Repudiates Brotherhood, DAILY REPORT. FOREIGN RADIO BROADCASTS, FBIS-FRB-54-177 *on* 1954-09-13.

[3] Waldemar J. GALLMAN, *Iraq Under General Nuri*…cit., p. 6.

[4] *Christian Science Monitor*, 11 March 1953.

[5] "UN Surveys Show Women Making Strikes Almost Everywhere", *New York Times*, 22 May 1950.

[6] *Christian Science Monitor*, 11 March 1953.

[7] George Lawrence HARRIS, *Iraq: Its People, Its Society, Its Culture*, HRAF Editions, New Haven CT, 1958, p. 85.

[8] Bud BAUER, "Iraqi Student Reveals Faisal Oppression", University of Wisconsin *Daily Cardinal*, 17 July 1958.

statesman would postpone his departure two days in order to attend the first session of Iraq's parliament after the elections[1]. As judges counted ballots in Baghdad, the clandestine "Voice of National Independence and Peace" broadcasting on the Budapest short-wave frequencies, reminded listeners in Arabic, "Nuri es-Said has openly declared that he intends to bring his country into the Turkish-Pakistani alliance; this is the military alliance recently organized by the American warmongers"[2]. Finally, Jerusalem broadcast in Arabic that Nuri es-Said would travel to Cairo to persuade the Egyptian government to give up its opposition to the annexation of Syria and Jordan in Iraq[3].

In this way, the ruling party was able to maintain its control over the lower house of the legislature. Of the 135 seats in the Chamber of Deputies, "110 members of General Nuri's Constitutional Union Party have been elected unopposed in the lower house"[4]; this left only 22 seats to contested among 38 candidates[5], that contests occurred in only four of the country's 14 provinces[6]. Later, Fadil Baban (once head of the royal *Bilat*, who was serving as a district governor at the time) testified that Minister of the Interior Sa'id Qazzaz took part in rigging the elections[7]. Nuri as-Said's political rival Dhia Jafar reported to the political counselor at the British embassy that, "even if the *pasha* had arranged the elections himself, he could not have done better!"[8].

Such, however, was not without its costs. Word circulated that, the day after the polls closed, a group of 100 schoolchildren and adults staged an illegal demonstration on the streets of predominantly-Kurdish Sulaimaniya. Editors of the *Flag of Independence* newspaper (the only one of the opposition parties' papers to remain in publication) reported that shots were fired; a police sergeant was injured, and two persons killed before six were taken into custody and the demonstration was dispersed. The governor of Sulaimaniya then requested that the Minister of the Interior proclaim martial law throughout the province[9].

After the polls had closed, an Englishman reported back: "The elections were more completely managed than ever and no deputy was elected who did not have the blessing of the government"[10]. The observer added:

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[1] *Cairo – 1954-09-12*, PREMIER NURI AL-SAID, DAILY REPORT. FOREIGN RADIO BROADCASTS, FBIS-FRB-54-177 *on* 1954-09-13.

[2] *Voice of National Independence and Peace – 1954-09-13*, TRAITORS IN EGYPT, IRAN AID IMPERIALISM, DAILY REPORT. FOREIGN RADIO BROADCASTS, FBIS-FRB-54-179 *on* 1954-09-15.

[3] *Jerusalem, Israel, –1954-09-14*, NURI SEEKING CAIRO SUPPORT OF UNION PLAN, DAILY REPORT. FOREIGN RADIO BROADCASTS, FBIS-FRB-54-178 *on* 1954-09-14.

[4] "Nuri es-Said's Majority", *London Times*, 13 September 1954; "Iraqi Premier Sure of Victory at Polls", *New York Times*, 12 September 1954.

[5] "Iraqis Vote Today", *Washington Post*, 12 September 1954.

[6] "Iraq Election Gives Premier Nuri Victory", *Chicago Tribune*, 13 September 1954.

[7] "Qazzaz Charged with Rigging Elections", Baghdad, Iraqi Home Service, FBIS-FRB-590-019 on 1959-01-28.

[8] Matthew ELLIOT, *"Independent Iraq"*…cit., p. 102.

[9] *Baghdad, Iraqi Home Service – 1954-09-20*, REPORT ISSUED ON SULAIMANIYA INCIDENTS, DAILY REPORT. FOREIGN RADIO BROADCASTS, FBIS-FRB-54-183 *on* 1954-09-21.

[10] Sir M. Wright, Baghdad, to Foreign Office, London (10 May 1958), [FO 371/134198]. *Records of Iraq, 1914-1966*, vol. 12,2001, p. 224.

> "The composition of the new chamber is therefore such that it can be expected to be completely obedient to the wishes of the Government and régime and there will not even be the opportunities for the expression of dissent which existed in the previous parliament".

Having expressed a wistful desire that "free democratic processes" might be introduced, he concluded, "Iraq will continue to be governed by authoritarian methods and at present the Government are in complete control"[1]. Radio Baghdad issued a royal decree summoning parliament to an extraordinary meeting on 16 September; a second decree appointed Minister of Justice Muhammad Ali Mahmoud to serve as acting premier and acting defense minister during Nuri es-Said's absence from the country[2]. Cairo radio responded with the allegation that British circles believe "Britain and Iraq will soon undertake to amend the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty, although neither of the two parties has proposed a date or a place for such discussions"[3].

With both houses of Parliament convened for the extraordinary session following the elections, long bladed-fans clacked overhead. At the time, the chambers at Iraq's houses of Parliament had become old and worn, their creaking wooden galleries lit by florescent tubes; only a dark curtain behind the speakers' platform relieved an expanse of cracked and whitewashed walls[4]. As required by the terms of the Constitution, the 19-year old King read his Speech from the Throne, by which he opened the legislature. In this speech, he referred to the prime minister and a letter he "submitted to us after we charged him with the formation of the present cabinet; the letter contained the cabinet's program and the important matters that it has resolved to carry out in order to bolster revival and progress in the nation". The recent elections were framed as a plebiscite regarding the proposed programs; towards attaining these goals, the cabinet allocated 5 million dinars "to be spent on setting up war and power projects and other works in all the municipalities of Iraq"[5]. After the speech, the chamber of deputies elected Abdul Wahab Murjan as its president, Izz al-Din Mulla first vice president, and Tariq al-Askari second vice president[6].

Representatives in the Chamber of Deputies (all were men) were awarded jeweled medals, which they wore on their suit lapels. In addition, their service brought an extra-legal status for their constituents. While eighteen months of military training were compulsory for all males between the ages of 18 and 25 years[7], Kurdish *agha* Bayazid of the Pizhdar tribe served as a deputy; consequently, the entire Pizhdar tribe enjoyed freedom from military service. Similarly, Da'ud and Hamid al-Jaf of the Jaf

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[1] *Ibidem*.

[2] *Baghdad – 1954-09-14*, ROYAL DECREES, DAILY REPORT. FOREIGN RADIO BROADCASTS, FBIS-FRB-54-179 *on* 1954-09-15.

[3] *Cairo – 1954-09-14*, ANGLO-IRAQI TREATY, DAILY REPORT. FOREIGN RADIO BROADCASTS, FBIS-FRB-54-179 *on* 1954-09-15.

[4] George L. HARRIS, et al., *Iraq: Its People, Its Society, Its Culture,* HRAF Publishers, New Haven CT, 1958, p. 120.

[5] *Baghdad, Iraqi Home Service – 1954-09-16*, KING OUTLINES PROGRAM OF NEW CABINET, DAILY REPORT. FOREIGN RADIO BROADCASTS, FBIS-FRB-54-180 *on* 1954-09-16.

[6] *Baghdad – 1954-09-16*, ELECTION OF OFFICERS, DAILY REPORT. FOREIGN RADIO BROADCASTS, FBIS-FRB-54-181 *on* 1954-09-17.

[7] *The Middle East*, no. 6, 1958, p. 190.

tribe, Fatah *Agha* of the Harki tribe, and Sidiq Miran *Agha* of the Khoshnaw tribe were able to obtain exemptions for those they represented[1].

Faced with such glaring examples of corruption, representatives of both conservative interests and the political opposition relinquished their public roles. Ahmed Mukhtar Baban (a strong supporter of the palace, at that time minister without portfolio) submitted his resignation[2]; so, too, did the members of the *Istiqlal* political party who had been elected to the chamber submit their resignations, "on the grounds that its presence in this parliament is inconsistent with the party's principles and with its faith in the parliamentary system"[3]. When Iraq experienced a revolution four years later, the Parliament building was transformed to new use as a supreme military court, the "Peoples' Court"[4].

Enganging Lewis's assertion "democracy has fared better in constitutional monarchies" in the spirit of Mansfield's and Walcott's exchanges, we might consider Rashid Khalidi's description of the 1912 Ottoman election campaign in the Levant[5]. Khalidi identifies four factors in which this contest (rather than some model of British liberties) prefigured following polls: first, voters had a choice of supporting or opposing a party in power; second, the election was held under martial law; third, sectarianism had been institutionalized into the legal system; and fourth, a ruling party which lacked the advantage in urban areas mobilized rural constituencies. While the Hashemite monarchs may have been established under the oversight of a British high commissioner, the model of governance evident during the September 1954 elections was that of the Ottoman 1912 elections.

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[1] Avshalom H. RUBIN, "Abdul Karim Qasim and the Kurds of Iraq: Centralization, Resistance and Revolt, 1958-1963", *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 43, no. 3, 2009, pp. 353-382.

[2] *Baghdad – 1954-09-16*, MINISTERIAL RESIGNATION, DAILY REPORT. FOREIGN RADIO BROADCASTS, FBIS-FRB-54-181 *on* 1954-09-17.

[3] *Limassol, Sharq al-Adna – 1954-09-16*, INDEPENDENCE PARTY QUITS PARLIAMENT, DAILY REPORT. FOREIGN RADIO BROADCASTS, FBIS-FRB-54-181 *on* 1954-09-17.

[4] Ibrahim AL-MARASHI, Sammy SALAMA, *Iraq's Armed Forces: An Analytical History,* Psychology Press, New York NY, 2008, p. 79.

[5] Rashid KHALIDI, "The 1912 Election Campaign in the Cities of *Bilad al-Sham*", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 16, no. 4, November 1984, pp. 461-474.