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Attaining Social Order in Iraq*

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Abstract

Social order in geographically extensive territories may be attained on the basis of direct or indirect rule. Each ideal-typical form of governance has its advantages and liabilities. Whereas the direct rule of central authorities minimizes agency costs and imposes normative and legal uniformity on the population, it is extremely costly to provide and is likely to engender the opposition of cultural and/or regional minorities. Indirect rule is best suited to provide order in culturally heterogeneous populations. To the degree that the resources of central authorities decline, however, indirect rule is likely to tempt local authorities to demand greater autonomy. This chapter explores how direct and indirect rule have been employed in Iraqi history, and draws implications for the attainment of social order in the wake of the recent American occupation.

Attaining Social Order in Iraq

In the year 1918, Arnold Wilson, Acting Civil Commissioner of the territory now known as Iraq, faced a dilemma. A self-confident British colonial officer, Wilson was charged with the task of establishing social order in a well-armed, culturally heterogeneous population that had been liberated from centuries of Ottoman rule. As is often the case in the modern world, British governance was made more difficult by the population's hostility to its new foreign masters. The dilemma, as the colonial officer later recounted, was this:

Ought we to aim at a "bureaucratic" form of administration, such as that in force in Turkey and in Egypt, involving *direct control* by a central government, and the replacement of the powerful tribal confederation by the smaller tribal or sub-tribal unit, as a prelude to individual in place of communal ownership of land, or should our aim to be retain, and subject to official safeguards, to strengthen, *the authority of tribal chiefs*, and to make them the agents and official representatives of Government, within their respective areas? The latter policy had been already adopted, in default of a better one, in Basra *wilayat*, and especially in the Muntafiq division: was it wise to apply it to the Baghdad *wilayat*? Both policies had their advocates (Wilson 1931; emphasis added).

After due deliberation, Wilson chose the first option. Two years later there was a massive rebellion and he was out of a job.

Today, the United States faces an uncannily similar situation to that of Britain at the end of World War I. Following its invasion of Iraq, it finds itself occupying a culturally heterogeneous and notably turbulent territory. Surprisingly, the answer to Wilson's question – is social order in societies like Iraq best attained by direct or indirect rule? – is as elusive now as it was at the end of World War I. If anything, the question is even more pressing today, for the increasing prevalence of civil war, state failure and terrorism has sharply underlined the problem of social order in many parts of the world. Critics of the invasion lament that the Bush Administration adopted no coherent plan for administering the peace before initiating the occupation. This seems to be the case,¹ but this is not because the administration turned its back on some received theory of governance. No such tried-and-true theory exists.² To promote social order in Iraq, one must understand how different governance structures affect the probability of unrest given the country's specific characteristics and circumstances.

For social engineers intent on attaining order, the choice of a system of governance is a dilemma because evidence supports both of the positions outlined by Wilson. Indirect rule allows the state to pass the high costs of rule on to subgroups. But indirect rule clearly has its downside -- ethnofederalism is associated with the fragmentation of the Soviet Union rather than order (Beissinger 2002; Bunce 1999; Roeder 1991), and much the same fate befell

¹ Thus Jay Garner, the initial American official in charge of postwar reconstruction, merely had eight weeks between the announcement of his appointment and the start of hostilities to organize a government in Iraq. As one American ex-general (Barry McCaffree) has pointed out, this is far too little time to set up a new Safeway supermarket, let alone the government of a sizable country (Traub 2004: 62).

² Even so, experts on nation building and Middle Eastern affairs presented the Bush team with possible post-war strategies before the occupation began, but the administration neglected to seriously consider their recommendations (Traub 2004).

Yugoslavia (Woodward 1995). Although direct rule is often a hedge against fragmentation, it isn't a sufficient guarantor of social order, either. On the one hand, some stateless societies (like traditional tribal societies in the Arabian peninsula) manifest a good deal of social order. On the other hand, sultanistic regimes (like Duvalier's Haiti) -- the *ne plus ultra* of direct rule -- are often visited by disorder (Chehabi and Linz 1998).

Evidently, the relationship between social order and these types of governance is complex. In some contexts, an increase in direct rule can instigate resistance in a polity, fostering disorder. But indirect rule is no necessary panacea: it too can hinder social order. Since governance structures are pivotal for attaining social order -- in contemporary Iraq as well as elsewhere -- this paper aims to explore their general effects.³

Social Order and Forms of Governance

To the degree that a society is ordered, its individual members behave both predictably⁴ and cooperatively. Mere predictability is an insufficient condition for social order. The denizens of the state of nature (think of the inhabitants of Rio's *favelas* as portrayed in the recent Brazilian film *City of God*) are quite able to predict that everyone will engage in force and fraud whenever it suits them. Hence they are accustomed to taking the appropriate defensive -- and offensive -- measures. But none of the fruits of social and economic development can occur in the absence of a cooperative social order. Thus, in a viable social order, individuals must not only act in a mutually predictable fashion; they must also comply with socially encompassing norms and laws -- rules that permit and promote cooperation.

Social order is not a constant but a variable; it exists to the degree that individuals in a given territory are free from the depredations of crime, physical injury, and arbitrary justice. Perfect order is an ideal, so it cannot be attained in Iraq, or anywhere else for that matter. By any reckoning, present-day Iraq falls far short of this ideal: Iraqis are facing the perils of looting, kidnapping, gunfire, rocket attacks and bombings on a daily basis. Despite this, there is a greater amount of order in certain Iraqi regions (Kurdistan) than others (the Sunni Triangle).

How can this woeful amount of social order in today's Iraq be increased? This question is an instantiation of the general problem of social order that has dogged social theorists at least since ancient times. The most popular solution dates from the seventeenth century (Hobbes [1651] 1996): it implies that social order is the product of direct rule, a multidimensional variable composed of at least two independent dimensions: scope and penetration.⁵ The scope of a state refers to the quantity and quality of the collective goods

³ Proposing an ideal governance structure for Iraq is not our aim here. Nor are we delineating the conditions under which states adopt direct rule, indirect rule, or a hybrid of the two -- an interesting question in itself. Rather, we provide a rudimentary analysis of the implications of direct and indirect rule so that we might better understand how greater social order can be attained in post-invasion Iraq.

⁴ Hayek (1973: 36), for example, defines order in opposition to entropy. For him it is "a state of affairs in which a multiplicity of elements of various kinds are so related to each other that we may learn from our acquaintance with some spatial or temporal part of the whole to form correct expectations concerning the rest, or at least expectations which have a good chance of proving correct."

⁵ For a more extended discussion of direct and indirect rule and their effects on patterns of group formation, see Hechter (2004).

that it provides.⁶ Welfare benefits, government jobs, state-sponsored schools and hospitals and a functioning system of justice are examples of such goods. Socialist states have the highest scope; *laissez-faire* ones have the lowest. Scope induces dependence: where state scope is high, individuals depend primarily on the state for access to collective goods.

In contrast, penetration refers to the central state's control capacity – that is, the proportion of laws and policies that are enacted and enforced by central as against regional or local decision-makers. Penetration is at a maximum in police states in which central rulers seek to monitor and control all subjects within their domain. Polities relying on local agents to exercise control (municipal police forces, for example) have lower penetration. Scope and penetration often covary, but not necessarily. For example, federal states with similar scope have less penetration than unitary states.

Just how direct rule may foster social order is a matter of some dispute.⁷ On one view, high scope and penetration foster order by instituting a common culture that provides the shared concepts, values and norms -- or in game-theoretic language, the common knowledge -- required for cooperation to emerge and persist. Intuitively, cultural homogeneity is essential for social order. However, the stability of culturally heterogeneous societies that have adopted indirect rule -- such as Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and Finland -- calls this conclusion into question.⁸ On another view, social order rests not on cognitive commonality, but rather on the power and authority of central rulers. Indeed, the popular concept of state failure implies the loss of this central authority.⁹

Though rational rulers strive for direct rule because it maximizes their income, revenue and power,¹⁰ direct rule has two distinct liabilities for the state. First, it engenders the opposition of traditional rulers (and their dependents), whose power is threatened as the state advances. Second, it is costly, for direct rulers must assume the financial responsibility of pervasive policing¹¹ while simultaneously providing the bulk of their citizenry's collective goods.¹² Moreover, the idea that social order is produced in a top-down fashion by resourceful central authorities leaves a fundamental question begging: Just how can this power ever manage to be concentrated in the first place? To this question, top-down theorists have little in the way of an answer, save for the (often valid) idea that it is imposed

⁶ Note that this category includes state regulations of the economy, polity and civil society, for these too are collective goods.

⁷ For a discussion of the major theories of social order and their limits, see Hechter and Horne (2003).

⁸ To say nothing of the attainment of social order in countries of immigration like the United States, Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

⁹ Nearly forty years ago, two eminent comparativists made the same point, albeit a bit differently. Nettl (1968) insisted that the state was hardly to be conceived as an institution carved out of marble and granite but rather a variable that he termed 'stateness.' And Huntington (1968: 1) assured us that "the most important political distinction among countries concerns not their form of government but their degree of government."

¹⁰ Rulers' demand for direct rule is subject to constraints, of course. Due to institutional constraints, the rational rulers in democratic regimes are forced to settle for the much more modest goal of re-election.

¹¹ The costs of policing are political in addition to pecuniary. In present-day Iraq, for example, the Bush Administration, unwilling to add more military boots on the ground, has contracted out an increasingly large proportion of the security responsibility to an international mercenary force. Although this adds considerably to the bottom line, it avoids domestic political costs.

¹² Whereas legitimation reduces the policing costs of direct rule, it does not reduce the cost of providing collective goods. Of course, attaining legitimacy in Iraq and other Arab societies is no easy task : "The central problem of government in the Arab world today is political legitimacy. The shortage of this indispensable political resource largely accounts for the volatile nature of Arab politics and the autocratic, unstable character of all the present Arab governments (Hudson 1977: 2)."

exogenously on fragmented territories by more powerful states. Beyond its inability to account for primary state formation, this answer underestimates the difficulty that modern states have had in attempting to impose order on less developed societies.¹³

The nature of this difficulty becomes apparent when we recall that the modern bureaucratic state in Western Europe emerged as the by-product of an extremely long and torturous process (Elias 1993; Ertman 1997; Gorski 2003). Feudal landholders who managed, against all odds, to secure a preponderance of political power were, for a time, invariably overcome by jealous rivals, rapacious invaders or intrusive agents of the Church. In consequence, the concentration of power oscillated around a highly decentralized equilibrium. This equilibrium persisted for centuries until factors such as the development of communications, military technology, and industrialization made it possible for power to be concentrated in the modern state.

In addition to the manifest implications of direct rule, an increase in state scope and penetration can have perverse effects. Direct rule can fuel the mobilization of both traditional and new groups that carry potential threats to order (as well as the state). When a state extends its scope -- when it becomes the primary provider of collective goods -- it increases individuals' dependence on central rulers. Yet state-provided collective goods -- like education, welfare benefits and government jobs -- are costly to produce and limited in supply. Not everyone receives as much as they wish, and not everyone gets an equal share. Direct rulers become the principal target of redistributive demands by new or traditional groups that can threaten to disrupt the social order.¹⁴ Moreover, to the degree that state-provided goods are culturally specific, they are likely to dissatisfy groups that have distinctive preferences regarding such goods.

Consider the recent shift from class- to culturally-based politics in advanced capitalist societies (Hechter 2004). By providing the bulk of collective goods in society, the direct-rule state reduces dependence on class-based groups (such as trade unions), thereby weakening them. To the degree that state-provided goods are distributed unequally to individuals on the basis of cultural distinctions, however, the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of these constituents is challenged. This provides such individuals with an incentive to mobilize on the basis of factors such as race, ethnicity, and religion. As a result, social disorder may increase. The rise of nationalist violence has been attributed, in part, to just this mechanism (Hechter 2000).

An increase in penetration may also spur disorder. As the state extends its control apparatus, it infringes on the traditional self-determination of social groups, particularly culturally distinctive ones. This imposition of a single set of norms on a culturally diverse population may motivate the leaders of disfavored groups to oppose the state. In pre-invasion Iraq, for example, the regime prevented Kurds from speaking Kurdish in public and pressured them to adopt Arab names and identities in official documents (Human Rights Watch 1995). In addition, it implemented a highly invasive system of surveillance by recruiting a network of spies that constantly monitored Iraqis. This Orwellian system of control, coupled with severe punishments marked by physical torture, created a culture of terror that encouraged Iraqis to seek refuge in more protected social spheres such as extended

¹³ These difficulties are perhaps the single principal concern of historians of the former colonies in Africa and Asia (Beissinger and Young 2002; Cooper and Stoler 1997).

¹⁴ Such preference heterogeneity is one of the principal rationales for the theory of fiscal federalism (Oates 1972).

families and religious groups (Makiya 1998). In spite of their relative lack of visibility, such groups likely play an important role in the current insurgency in post-invasion Iraq.

Effective governance need not reside exclusively with central rulers, however. In a system of indirect rule, authority is distributed among a number of sub-units or social groups. Distributed authority is especially likely to occur in culturally heterogeneous societies. Indirect rulers delegate substantial powers of governance to traditional authorities in return for the promise of tribute, revenue and military service. Although both direct and indirect rule foster dependence on the state, direct rule results in *individuals'* dependence, whereas indirect rule entails the dependence of *groups*. Since there is no compelling reason to believe that centralized rule is inherently more effective in promoting order than its more decentralized counterpart, bottom-up explanations of social order (which date at least from the time of Althusius ([1614] 1964) have recently been gaining greater attention. These theories explain how social order is enhanced when a variety of social groups and voluntary associations mediate between individuals and central rulers.

Theories explaining the relationship of indirect rule and social order come in two varieties. In one, *intra-group* relations are critical for the attainment of order. On this view, the internal solidarity of groups contributes to social order either by promoting pro-social norms and orientations to action (Tocqueville ([1848] 1969 and Putnam 2000), or by subjecting group members to heightened levels of social control (Fearon and Laitin 1996; Hechter, Friedman and Kanazawa 1992; Weber ([1919-1920] 1948).

The second theory suggests that the key to social order lies in the nature of *inter-group* relations. Societies that foster intergroup relations tend to have groups composed of socially heterogeneous individuals. In such societies, cross-cutting ties attenuate loyalty to any one group by providing individuals with a stake in many different groups (Simmel [1922] 1955). By contrast, socially segregated patterns of group affiliation strengthen group loyalties and foster inter-group competition. The first pattern of group affiliation should produce strong ties, few bridges between groups (Granovetter 1973) and low social order; the second should produce weak social ties, many bridges between groups and high social order. Whereas there is evidence that cross-cutting ties and network bridges indeed do promote social order (Blau and Schwartz 1984), too little attention has been paid to the difficulty of establishing such bridges in traditional societies characterized by strong ties.¹⁵

But indirect rule also has its liabilities. Its reliance on solidary groups is only justifiable if these groups do not set out to subvert order or threaten the state. Often solidary groups do subvert social order, however. Consider the large literature on failed states (Kohli 2002), which attributes disorder to a variety of solidary groups that act as hindrances to, and substitutes for, central authority. Moreover, such groups need not be perennially subversive; they can sustain social order at one time and subvert it at another.

Since each form of rule has strengths and liabilities, choosing an optimal form of governance is anything but child's play. Direct rule may quell insurgent activity in some contexts, but in others it may stimulate the emergence of social groups that threaten the regime. Under indirect rule, groups may use their autonomy to challenge state authority.

¹⁵ For example, Kurdish immigrants in Sweden have been known to employ honor killing as a means of preventing their daughters from having liaisons with Swedish males (Lyll 2002; see however Ahmadi 2004). Imagine how difficult it would be to establish social networks composed of Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, Serbs and Croats in Bosnia, Jews and Palestinians in Israel, or Shi'i, Sunni and Kurds in Iraq at this time.

Evidently, there is no universally optimal choice of governance structures for the attainment of order.

Nonetheless, insight into the problem of order in today's Iraq can be gained by examining the effect of varying forms of governance on social order in the history of this territory. Since the late Ottoman period, people in this region have experienced varying levels of direct rule and social order. Indirect rule was implemented in some time periods, direct rule at others. Occasionally, the Iraqi state simultaneously adopted different governance structures for different regions. The following discussion of Iraqi history focuses on the relationship between governance structure and order. It suggests that the choice of direct or indirect rule has been crucial for the attainment of order in this troubled land.

The Implications of Indirect and Direct Rule for Social Order in Iraqi History

Iraq Under the Ottomans: *Mamluks* and Young Turks

Ottoman Mesopotamia – the territory now known as Iraq – was born of conflict between the Ottoman and Safavid Empires during the early 17th century.¹⁶ Iraq's strategic position between these two rival empires destined it to be a frontier buffer zone. Due to their limited interest in the territory and its distance from Istanbul, the Ottomans ruled Iraq indirectly.

Centuries of famine, flooding, Mongol invasions and the collapse of irrigation systems had left much of the land unsuited to agriculture. Two distinct social structures emerged: the urban provinces of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra; and the outlying territories, which were dominated by tribes (Tripp 2000:18). Urban and tribal Arabs were so different that they comprised almost separate worlds (Batatu 1978: 13). Istanbul could not exert as much control over rural areas as urban ones (Nieuwenhuis 1981: 120). As was customary throughout their empire, in 1702 the Ottomans initially delegated governance in the urban provinces of Iraq to local authorities called *mamluks* – highly educated slaves who were trained specifically as indirect rulers (Hourani 1991: 251; Nieuwenhuis 1981: 14).

Though the *mamluks* were ostensibly under the Sultan's thumb, Istanbul wielded very little actual control over them. The *mamluks* recognized the Ottoman Sultan symbolically (in religious services and on coinage, for example) and obtained formal confirmation of their governorships from the Sultan, but they retained considerable autonomy *de facto* (Tripp 2000: 9). Ottoman Janissary troops were dispatched to Baghdad, but the *mamluks* kept them under their rigid control. The government of Baghdad was largely self-sufficient, consisting of military-administrative financial, and judicial branches (Nieuwenhuis 1981: 27). *Mamluks* provided what collective goods there were and funded their own local armies, enabling them in some cases (as in Mosul) to successfully maintain the Ottoman frontier (Khoury 1997: 188). *Mamluks* in the Iraqi region were obliged to send tribute to Istanbul, but did so only irregularly. Since Istanbul did not demand much of the *mamluks*, they had little cause for complaint.

Mamluk power, however, did not extend into the bulk of rural lands, which were arid and unsuited for agriculture. Most rural inhabitants adapted to the desert ecology by

¹⁶ The Ottomans finally took Baghdad in 1639 (Sluglett and Sluglett 1990: 2).

embracing pastoralism.¹⁷ Unlike agricultural crops, livestock are easily stolen, and in the absence of a strong state, pastoralists could rely only on their tribal affiliations for protection of their herds and families. Clans forged alliances based on the notion that “anyone who commits an act of aggression against any one of us must expect retaliation from us all, and not only will the aggressor himself be likely to suffer retaliation, but his entire group and all its members will be equally liable (Gellner 2003: 311).” This principle led to a system of strong, self-policing tribal groups that defended themselves by threatening to retaliate, and often retaliating, against individual members of aggressor groups.¹⁸ Because these tribes relied only on themselves for protection from outside threats, they had to develop effective means for self-defense: they amassed enough weapons and knowledge of warfare to become mini-states (Jabar 2003).¹⁹

Given their military capacity and acumen, the tribes often attacked settled areas, but they were held in check in two ways. First, the *mamluks* could rely on their own military strength to resist tribal threats. Strategies of tribal warfare rested primarily on surprise attacks by small groups, as this was the most effective means for engaging in conflict with other tribes. Since their weapons were relatively primitive, the tribes were largely incapable of defeating large provincial armies. Second, Baghdad lured some tribal leaders into the provincial government, providing them with wider-scale governance rights in exchange for their fealty.

But indirect rule came to an abrupt end in the mid-nineteenth century – and with it, the autonomy of the *mamluks* (Nakash 1994: 32). Reacting to the threat of rising European nation-states and the nationalist secession of Greece in 1828 (McDowall 1992: 14), the Ottomans attempted to increase their authority in Iraq. They consolidated their military forces and sent an army to capture the *mamluk* leaders in Baghdad, Mosul and Basra (Tripp 2000: 14). Under the *Tanzimat* reforms initiated by Sultan Abdulmecid, the three provinces fell under the direct rule of Istanbul. The increased presence of the Ottoman army and officials increased Istanbul’s penetration in the Iraqi region.

As direct rule progressed, the Ottomans favored Sunnis over other groups. Government jobs were given primarily to Sunnis, and schools provided by the state were hardly attended by Shi’i’s, who had their own schools (Sluglett 2003: 8).²⁰ Meanwhile, Kurdish tribal chieftains, threatened by a loss of autonomy, organized a series of revolts, some hoping for complete independence, others for the control they exercised before direct

¹⁷ That all tribes were nomadic is an overgeneralization. Some tribes settled in small sedentary areas. Nonetheless, these sedentary groups were organized much like their nomadic counterparts, through (fictive) kinship relations (Nieuwenhuis 1981).

¹⁸ Tribes are not necessarily pure kinship groups. “The concept of tribe is unclear and controversial. The word is used to refer to a kinship group, an extended family, or a coalition of related families. It may refer to the elite family from whom some larger confederation gets its name, to a cultural, ethnic, or other non-familial social group, or to conquest movements of pastoral people without regard for the internal basis of cohesion (Lapidus 1990: 26).” Whether blood relations are real or fictive, the bond helps to create group solidarity..

¹⁹ “Each strong tribe was a miniature mobile state, with its patriarchal headship usually head by a warrior household; its own military force; its customary law, which was preserved by the *’arfa* (literally, ‘the knowledgeable’, actually tribal jurists or adjudicators); its non-literate culture; its territoriality in the form of *dira* (tribal pastures) or, later, arable lands; and its mode of subsistence economy, i.e. pastoralism, commerce, and conquest (Jabar 2003:73).”

²⁰ “In general, religious Shi’is tended to view the state, whether the Ottoman Empire or Qajar Iran, as a sort of necessary evil; for this and other reasons, they were not inclined to press for bureaucratic, educational, or military employment (Sluglett 2003:9).”

rule was implemented (McDowall 1992:14). Ottoman direct rule created resentment along these ethnic and religious lines, foretelling the emergence of contemporary ethnic and religious political cleavages.²¹ All told, increased direct rule reduced social order in the urban provinces.

In addition to encroaching on *mamluk* rule, the Ottomans for the first time sought to bring the tribes in the countryside under their control. They did so by investing in irrigation,²² altering the region's ecology and thereby attaching tribesmen to the land (Nakash 1994: 33).²³ For the most part, Ottoman efforts to domesticate tribal nomads were successful. In Southern Iraq, for example, the percentage of nomadic persons decreased from fifty percent in 1867 to nineteen percent in 1905. Meanwhile, the rural settled population increased from forty-one to seventy-two percent during these years. New cities emerged, as well (Nakash 1994: 35).

At the same time, the Ottoman Land Law of 1858 transformed the tribal landscape by creating a new type of relationship between Istanbul and the Iraqi tribes. Although land was deemed the property of the Ottoman state, title deeds, which were handed to anyone who already possessed or occupied parcels of land, granted their holders virtually complete rights of ownership. Since these deeds could only be handed to individuals, tribal *shaykhs* were the most common recipients (Tripp 2000: 15-16). By offering land ownership benefits only to *shaykhs*, the Ottomans effectively bought their loyalty. The *shaykhs* became landowners -- indirect rulers of their tribesmen who now assumed the status of tenant farmers. Since land ownership still resided in the state, the Ottomans could revoke land rights away as easily as they could grant them.

The new land laws transformed tribal social structure. Under the new system, the state was no longer just a tax-extracting agency. As differential rights to land created tension and social conflict, landowners relied on the state to enforce their land rights and maintain order.²⁴ Conflict over land rights aided the regime, for it spurred competition between tribal *shaykhs*.²⁵ The Ottoman strategy of *divide et impera* weakened ties between tribes and principal *shaykhs* as well as those between *shaykhs* and their tribesmen. A classic form of interdependence -- characteristic of indirect rule -- resulted between tribe and state. The

²¹ We take the view that although opposition to the state can often be framed in terms of ethnic or religious discourse, organization, and not the mere existence of ethnic or religious diversity, is required for collective action (Brubaker 2002). Ethnic and religious groups are politically salient only in so far as they are internally solidary (Hechter 1987).

²² "Unlike *Mamluk* efforts to break the tribes by occasional blows without providing an alternative way of life, the new Ottoman governors encouraged the tribesmen to settle down and take up agriculture. The governors' effort reflected Istanbul's desire to settle the tribes so as to increase agricultural production and tax revenue to sustain the Empire's growing involvement in world capitalist economy (Nakash 1994: 32)."

²³ "The Ottomans considered settlement the means by which they could "civilize" the nomads.... In seeking to settle the tribes and bring them under strict government control, the governors attempted to restructure tribal society. They sought to break the great tribal confederations and to undermine the status of their paramount *shaykhs* as "lords" who controlled large dominions. In this struggle over taxes, and the control of food and trade routes, the governors attempted to reduce the power of the *shaykhs*, partly by conferring their position to others (Nakash 1994: 33)."

²⁴ Indeed, rebellions against the Ottomans broke out in 1849, 1852, 1863-66, 1878-83, and 1899-1905 (Nakash 1994: 34).

²⁵ The Ottoman practice of pitting *shaykh* against *shaykh* "so changed the conditions of life in the affected regions as to attenuate the old tribal loyalties or render them by and large ineffectual (Batatu 1978: 22)."

landowners' stake in state law made them complicit in the new political order (Tripp 2000: 17).

But resistance, including widespread revolt, grew among tribesmen who were disadvantaged by the new system. In ecologically accessible territories where Ottoman forces could crush the rebellions militarily, they did. Otherwise, they increased their exploitation of tribal *shaykhs*, becoming more adept at dividing the tribes. The Ottomans belatedly recognized that tribes were essential for maintaining social order at the local level, and that the indirect rule of tribes was essential for quelling disorder.²⁶

The Young Turk movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century increased direct rule as well as hardship for the majority of the region's rural population. Arab reactions against "Turkification" erupted as the Young Turks augmented state scope by bringing schools and other cultural organizations to Iraq. These were venues where like-minded individuals and intellectuals from different provinces could recognize their common interests. At the same time, the movement created social spaces for individuals dependent on and loyal to Arab cultural institutions to organize against the state. Secret societies emerged to challenge Ottoman hegemony and resist what they deemed to be encroachments on Arab culture. An estimated sixty newspapers and journals appeared in the early 1900s, as did a number of clubs, groups, and societies. Among the groups that flourished during this time was the National Scientific Club of Baghdad, whose members promoted knowledge of Arab language and culture. This club attracted both Sunni and Shi'i intellectuals. Groups such as the Reform Society of Basra, which organized to regain provincial autonomy, became crucibles of Arab nationalism. Despite Ottoman attempts to suppress them, these secret societies grew stronger (Tripp 2000: 22-28). Direct rule was fomenting social disorder.

All told, the Ottoman Empire's indirect rule seemed well-adapted to the region's social structure. The tribes and *mamluks* were self-sufficient and self-policing, and neither directly challenged the authority of the state. Low penetration afforded both groups a high degree of autonomy, giving them little reason to resist state authority. Because Istanbul's scope was low, individuals were generally not dependent on the empire for their livelihood. *Mamluks* supplied the bulk of the collective goods in the urban provinces, and tribal members provided one another with collective goods in the countryside. The Ottomans relied on *shaykhs* to control the tribes, but no tribe was permanently favored by Istanbul. Uncertainty about the prospect of receiving favored treatment encouraged the *shaykhs* to toe the Ottomans' line. No tribe was permanently denied the opportunity to receive the few favors the state provided, so in the long run all of them were in the same boat.²⁷ Neither *mamluks* nor *shaykhs* had much reason to challenge Istanbul for a larger share, or a more preferable bundle of collective goods. Indirect rule worked. When the Ottoman Empire began to institute direct rule, however, new bases of opposition arose both in the cities and the countryside.

²⁶ A Baghdad deputy to the Ottoman Empire wrote in 1910, "To depend on the tribe is a thousand times safer than depending on the government, for whereas the latter defers or neglects repression, the tribe, no matter how feeble it may be, as soon as it learns that an injustice has been committed against one of its members readies itself to exact vengeance on his behalf (Batatu 1978: 21)."

²⁷ With respect to the tribes, the Ottomans employed a strategy of *divide et impera*, which constituted a macrosociological form of intermittent reinforcement. This kind of reinforcement regime – exemplified by Louis XIV's differential allocation of prestige among the nobles at Versailles (Elias 1983) -- is notable for its capacity to induce compliance.

This analysis of the Ottoman period suggests that when indirect rule is maintained by a strong central state it can be cost-effective. To the degree that local groups have high autonomy and are not perpetually disadvantaged by the state, they have little incentive to challenge central authorities. Moreover, when individuals have low dependence on the center, they are unlikely to regard it as a target of collective action. An increase in direct rule, however, carries with it the potential for disorder. As direct rule impinges on previously autonomous groups, they are more likely to become restive.

British Hegemony: Exercises in Direct and Indirect Rule

World War I brought with it the end of Ottoman governance in Iraq. British troops took Baghdad in March of 1917, and the British occupation of Mosul and Kirkuk followed shortly thereafter (Sluglett and Sluglett 1990: 9; Atiyah 1973: 151). Interested in controlling a land bridge to India and becoming increasingly aware of the importance of oil, the British initially opted for a sharp increase in direct rule. Considering the Iraqis incapable of managing their own country, they abolished Ottoman governing institutions (such as the elected municipal councils), and installed British political officers in their stead (Tripp 2000: 37).²⁸ In August 1915, the Ottoman Penal and Criminal Procedure Code was removed; its replacement, modeled on the Indian Civil and Criminal Codes, was called the Iraq Occupied Territories Code.

Direct rule displaced former Iraqi officers and government officials with British counterparts. By August 1, 1920 the Civil Administration consisted of 534 high-ranking officers and personnel, but only twenty of these were Iraqi (Atiyah 1973: 214). The British military presence was also pervasive. One American observer of the British occupation noted in March 1917 that “the British meant to show the native population that there would be no trouble in the city while they were running it. Every man on the street had his rifle and bayonet (Mathewson 2003: 54).”

The British increased the scope of their rule by providing Iraqis with the bulk of their collective goods. Funding for education and medical services, although meager, increased almost three-fold from 1915 to 1918. The British army and civil administrations employed Iraqi laborers to build roads as well as railway and irrigation systems (Atiyah 1973: 219, 224).

In some respects -- particularly regarding tribes -- British rule remained indirect, largely because their initial efforts at direct rule spurred resistance. Initially, the British miscalculated the tractability of tribal *shaykhs*, only to discover that they could pose serious threats to social order. For example, when the British took Qurna in 1914, they relied on the support of *Shaykh* Khaz'al, known to command obedience from a number of different tribes in the area. But most tribesmen soon deserted Khaz'al, causing him to demand aid from the British lest the tribes rise up against him. The British faced similar experiences with other tribes. When force was used to subdue the tribes, tribesmen readily declared their support for the occupiers, but as soon as the British forces retreated, the tribesmen turned against them (Atiyah 1973: 109-112). The British eventually gave generous amounts of money to *shaykhs* to secure order indirectly (Atiyah 1973: 219). They also enacted the Tribal Civil

²⁸ This was not done in the Kurdish territories, which were least amenable to direct rule for reasons of their ecology (Kocher 2004).

and Criminal Disputes Regulation, which gave *shaykhs* the authority to adjudicate disputes within their tribe as well as to collect taxes for the government (Tripp 2000: 37).

The initial reaction to British occupation varied by region, but by 1920, most of Iraq was resistant to British rule. Leading figures in Basra, for example, first accommodated British authorities, as reflected in the words of an Expeditionary Force commander, who telegraphed, “We were cordially welcomed by the inhabitants, who appeared eager to transfer their allegiance to the British Government (Atiyyah 1973: 87).” This acceptance arose because leading figures in Basra had pre-existing economic relationships with British merchants desiring access to the Persian Gulf. Since the British were at war with Turks, this appealed Arab nationalists (Atiyyah 1973: 86-87; Tripp 2000: 32).

Kurdish tribal leaders initially welcomed the British as well. Leaders in Sulaimaniyya handed control of the region over to Britain, which shortly thereafter granted *Shaykh* Mahmud Barzinji, believed to be influential among the Kurds, the governorship of Lower Kurdistan. By passing its control capacity to a local ruler, the British hoped to rule the region indirectly. But they miscalculated the scope of *Shaykh* Mahmud’s influence. Conflicts between Kurdish *shaykhs*, as well as *Shaykh* Mahmud’s ambitions, resulted in a series of revolts. When *Shaykh* Mahmud declared Kurdistan an independent state in May 1919, the British dispatched a military unit to reclaim Sulaimaniyya. Although it successfully suppressed *Shaykh* Mahmud, this increase in state penetration nonetheless stirred new opposition against British intrusion into Kurdistan (Tripp 2000: 34).²⁹

In other areas, however, resistance to the occupiers appeared almost immediately. In early 1918, a group of clerics, *shaykhs*, and other influential persons in Najaf and Karbala formed the Society of Islamic Revival to defend Islam against the British (Tripp 2000: 33). When a British officer in Najaf was killed in 1919, the British blockaded the city and responded with sweeping arrests and executions. Shi’i clerics and civilians also opposed the British, some even forming alliances with Sunni groups who shared their sense of frustration over losing jobs and status under direct rule (Yaphe 2003). By April 1920, resistance to the British became increasingly organized. Shi’i Ayatollah al-Shirazi issued a *fatwa* against employment in the British administration. Shi’is and Sunnis met to formulate strategies for obtaining Iraqi independence, as did Shi’i *‘ulama* and tribal *shaykhs* of the mid-Euphrates region (Tripp 2000: 41). A number of secret organizations and parties also emerged, including Haras, the leading nationalist party of the time, whose success can largely be attributed to Sunni-Shi’i cooperation.

Much of the response to British direct rule was framed in terms of Arab self-determination. A goal of Iraq’s major political parties, for example, was to obtain Iraqi independence for Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul. The British reacted to these developments by strengthening direct rule: they increased the number of security forces and intelligence officers in the cities, making public protest virtually impossible. Iraqi resisters were forced to meet in mosques, which quickly became forums for stimulating Arab nationalism. With 130 mosques in Baghdad, 35 in Basra, and 51 in Mosul, anti-British propaganda was easily spread throughout the Iraqi population (Marr 2003: 23; Atiyyah 1973: 275-280).

²⁹ “Often local in nature, these could be aimed against neighbours as much as against the British authorities, but they stemmed from a similar desire, even compulsion, on the part of the Kurdish tribal chieftains to exploit any perceived weakness of central power and to assert their own autonomy. They resented any attempt by outside powers to curb their own freedom of action.... (Tripp 2000: 34).”

In April of 1920, the League of Nations awarded Britain the mandate to rule Iraq (Dodge 2003: 5), fueling even more anti-British sentiment and culminating in outright revolt in June 1920. An estimated 130,000 Iraqis rebelled, but the movement was not effectively organized; it lacked the support of some Sunni groups who feared the movement would undermine traditional Sunni dominance in the region (Tripp 2000: 44; Marr 2003). Even so, the British only managed to quell the rebellion by the end of October. Thus direct rule fared no better under the British than it had under the Ottomans.

After the revolt the British abruptly changed course, abandoning direct rule. The subsequent government included Iraqis and adopted a variety of once-spurned Ottoman institutions. Iraqi officials replaced British political officers in the provinces. To further economize on control costs, the Royal Air Force (RAF) was enlisted to pacify rebellious tribes in the countryside by bombing them (Dodge 2003: 154; Sluglett 2003: 7).³⁰ In 1921, the annual military budget for Iraqi operations was reduced from £25 million to £4 million (Mathewson 2003: 57).

In 1921, the British installed the Hashemite *Amir* Faisal as King, marking the beginning of a period indirect rule in Iraq that lasted 37 years under three different Hashemite monarchs. Despite Faisal's exalted title, the British maintained much control over Iraqi politics. British "advisors" functioned behind the scenes, while Britain maintained control of the country's foreign relations as well as veto power over military and financial matters (Sluglett and Sluglett 1990: 11). Faisal – a non-Iraqi Arab widely perceived as a British puppet -- had little legitimacy among the Iraqi people (Bengio 2003: 16). Because he was too weak militarily to withstand tribal opposition, Faisal was largely dependent on the British, and specifically the RAF, to enforce order. But Faisal was also less tractable than the British had hoped. From the start, he insisted on playing the key leadership role in Iraq, a demand that the British conceded to only to avoid any resistance that might have emerged were the government seen as illegitimate (Dodge 2003: 20). This tension between Faisal and the British reflects a fundamental problem with indirect rule: local autonomy can spur non-compliance with state authority.

Given the failure of the experiment with direct rule, however, the British were willing to take this risk. Faisal's strategy for ruling the tribes was shaped after the Ottomans' – namely, the parceling out of land rights; and, like them, he used it to bind the *shaykhs* to his regime. In 1933, the monarchy passed the Law Governing Rights and Duties of Cultivators. This law protected and increased the landowning rights handed to *shaykhs* during the Ottoman Empire, but afforded the cultivators fewer rights. Peasant tribesmen were required to pay money rents and shares of their crops to their *shaykhs*. If they did not have enough money or crops, they were required to remain on the land and work until their debts were paid off (Tripp 2000: 47-52).³¹ This strategy bound tribesmen to their local rulers; as a result, they were more dependent on their *shaykhs* than on the state for goods and control.

³⁰ Winston Churchill, the responsible minister, chose the air force because planes could "police the mandated territory of Mesopotamia for less cost than the traditional method of military occupation (Omissi 1990: 16)., Arthur Harris, the strategist who devised the bombing strategy to control the tribal areas of Iraq, later employed the same tactics in the bombing of Dresden.

³¹ By the late 1950s, fifty-five percent of cultivable land was held by only 2,500 people, mostly Sunni. Further, seventy percent of Iraq's arable land consisted of 3,400 large haciendas. By 1957, a large proportion of the rural population was landless. In short, augmented indirect rule immiserated the peasantry. The Law also reduced urban migration, effectively tying many peasants to their *shaykhs'* lands (Cole 2004).

Faisal also attempted to build an Iraqi army, at first consisting of Sharifian officers and Sunni tribesmen. The Sharifian officers held strong pan-Arab ideologies that left Shi'i and Kurdish elements in Iraq feeling marginalized; for them, the military was an arm of the Sunni-dominated government and not a mechanism for national integration (Kelidar 2003: 31). Later, the army consisted largely of Kurdish and Shi'i conscripts, antagonizing members of these communities who were not inclined to fight for a country that did not afford them much political representation (Kelidar 2003:31; Tripp 2000:87).

Faisal's rule was a balancing act: while reigning in potential challengers he also tried to keep British interference at bay. Although the monarchy was a retreat from direct rule and a response to the liabilities of direct rule, indirect rule proved no panacea for the British either. The Sunni-dominated state was anything but even-handed in its distribution of collective goods. Government jobs were provided primarily to Sunnis, and though the Iraqi educational system preached Arab nationalism, this message rang hollow to many non-Sunnis (Tripp 2000: 95). The Kurds were incensed when, despite British promises to grant Kurdish autonomy, the 1930 Anglo-Iraqi treaty failed to even mention minority rights, much less Kurdish self-determination (Natali 2001: 263). Dissatisfaction with these policies led to the formation of new political and potentially threatening organizations among underrepresented cultural groups.

Despite a series of military coups in the mid-1930s, British hegemony remained unchallenged.³² In 1941, however, a coalition of nationalists and constitutionalists raised the stakes when they tried to topple the monarchy, end British control, and open the territory to Axis influence. The British responded by increasing its military assets in Iraq, thereby ramping up direct rule. Anti-government protests were violently repressed.

By creating a highly personalized and generous central governing body – now enriched by the growth of oil revenues – the monarch was for the most part successful in pitting groups in civil society against one another. Consider the state's response to Shi'i demands for greater representation in government. In the 1920s the state hired only twenty-one Shi'i ministers, but by the 1950s, this number had risen to seventy six. This increase in Shi'i representation is misleading, however, because it does not account for the fact that the size of the state apparatus also grew. Despite the doubling of Shi'i representation in government from 18 to 36 percent between 1920s and 1950s, Sunnis continued to hold the key positions and the Shi'i remained underrepresented (Nakash 1994: 127).

Demonstrations and uprisings continued to pose challenges for the British-backed government. Many demonstrators were killed in the *al-Intifada* of 1948. Courts martial led to the imprisonment of hundreds of agitators. Oppositional groups gained more ground; the Democratic Party of Kurdistan, for example, held its founding congress in Baghdad in 1946 (Tripp 2000: 117; Natali 2001: 263). The Shi'i disseminated literature attacking pan-Arabism and the state and submitted petitions to the government demanding freedom of expression and a greater share of various public goods (Marr 2003: 42; Nakash 1994: 119). Moreover, class-based oppositional groups emerged for the first time; various artisan associations began to coalesce and form the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) (Sluglett and Sluglett 1990: 22). The class divisions fostered by indirect rule -- and an upsurge in Arab

³² Although both Kurds and Shi'is rebelled, these actions were largely confined to specific tribal groups rather than a grand coalition of Kurds or Shi'ites. While some Shi'i tribes revolted, others either sided with the state or remained neutral, unwilling to risk their own arms and tribesmen without first witnessing the outcome of other uprisings.

nationalism in the Middle East -- set the stage for a violent military coup in 1958 led by 'Abd al-Karim Qasim (Tripp 2000). So ended British domination in Iraq.

To some extent, the era of British rule recapitulates that of direct and indirect rule under the Ottomans. Although the British imposed direct rule to strengthen their control of Iraq, the strategy backfired. Direct rule fostered Iraqi nationalism and increased the solidarity of different religious and ethnic groups. When the British reverted to a more indirect form of rule, order was restored, but only temporarily. Indirect rule under the Hashemites was unsuccessful primarily because the British failed to recognize that its effectiveness rests on the basis of equitable treatment of solidary groups. Because Iraqi society was so culturally diverse, and because the Hashemite monarchs favored one status group over all others, social order was continually at risk.

Why was indirect rule under the Ottomans more successful? Although the Ottomans also played favorites, they did not allocate collective goods on a cultural basis. Nor was any particular tribe persistently favored over its rivals. The Ottomans provided goods such as land rights to different tribal leaders, but they did not hesitate to rescind them, as well. Preferential treatment was so short-lived and indeterminate that no local group felt permanently disfavored. Moreover, under British rule, the military was afforded more freedom to mobilize against the occupation; this helped bring about the coup that ended British rule in Iraq altogether.

Iraq Under Qasim and Saddam

Qasim's regime marked the beginning of an era of an unprecedented growth in direct rule. Qasim transformed himself into the personification of Iraq, a tactic later adopted by Saddam Hussein. He dramatically increased state penetration, repressing rebellious groups more vigorously than his predecessors.

This repression is exemplified by Qasim's relationship with the Kurds. Qasim initially provided the Kurdish population with its own cultural space: Kurds were awarded positions in government, opportunities in education, and even some cultural rights. Briefly, Kurds and Arabs experienced a sense of unity, and the KDP even publicly recognized Qasim for acknowledging Kurdish cultural rights. By 1959, however, the Kurds began to use their autonomy to distinguish themselves from Arabs. Despite regarding themselves as Iraqis, they insisted on being recognized as members of a distinct culture with a non-Arab language and heritage. For a short while, a Kurdo-Arab state seemed possible, and Kurdish relations with Qasim were positive (Natali 2001:267-268).

External influences (not least those emanating from the United States) convinced Qasim to change his policies towards the leftist Kurds. Ultimately he arrested Kurdish nationalists and bombed Kurdish rural areas, fueling greater Kurdish resistance to the regime (Natali 2001: 269). Qasim's policies towards the ICP -- like those towards the Kurds -- ran hot and cold. Initially, Qasim lent some support to the ICP, which reached the height of its power between 1958 and 1959. The ICP grew rapidly, building a peoples' army of up to 11,000 volunteers, as well as organizing a number of protests, student movements, and trade unions (Sluglett and Sluglett 2000: 53-54, 63). But Qasim later withdrew his support from the communists, and towards the end of his rule the state banned ICP newspapers, broke up communist unions, and even shut down other leftist groups such as the Youth Federation, the

Partisans for Peace, and the Women's League (Sluglett and Sluglett 2000: 75-76; Batatu 1978: 948; Yousif 1991: 187).

While Qasim's increasing penetration of the north spurred the Kurds' demands for cultural autonomy, heightened state scope undercut the ICP by replacing it as a source of collective goods. Qasim increased state scope dramatically. Like other Third World nationalists of that era, Qasim extended direct rule by nationalizing Iraq's oil, increasing state welfare, and distributing land to the impoverished peasantry (Al-Eyd 1979: 41). His efforts were only partially successful, however. The oil industry, the major source of foreign exchange, remained in private hands.³³ Nonetheless Qasim was able to divert funding from infrastructural projects to public housing schemes and housing loans in the cities. Educational investment trebled and many new schools and hospitals were built (Tripp 2000: 167). Qasim imposed ceilings on individual holdings (618 acres in irrigated areas, 1,236 acres in rainfall areas), and promised that the sequestered land would be redistributed to landless peasants in plots of about 20-40 acres each (Dann 1969: 57; Sluglett and Sluglett 2001: 138). Due to inadequate enforcement, however, little redistribution actually occurred (Khadduri 1970: 117; Sluglett and Sluglett 2001: 38). Even so, Qasim's concerns for the poor won him popular support.

Since direct rule is so costly to implement, how did Qasim fund this increased state largesse? Half of the new funds came from appropriation of revenue from oil wealth, and half from loans offered by the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia. The increased scope provided by these resources was successful in muting much class-based opposition to the regime (e.g. the ICP), suggesting that extreme levels of direct rule are effective at maintaining order. However, the increased level of penetration stimulated opposition among disadvantaged status groups. The Kurds were particularly eager to see Qasim overthrown, so much so that they looked to pan-Arab groups -- like the Ba'ath -- for support (Tripp 2000: 168). In fact, it was the Ba'ath who staged a coup against Qasim. The Ba'ath party ruled for only a few months before being overthrown by members of the armed forces. Five years later it re-emerged to overthrow the existing regime.

The Ba'athists -- and Saddam Hussein in particular -- vastly increased direct rule. Saddam completed Qasim's mission against class-based opposition by emasculating the country's trade unions (Dodge 2002: 160). Following a huge increase in the price of oil in 1973, he used oil revenues (which increased eight-fold from 1973 to 1975 [Tripp 2000: 314]) to substantially increase state employment, the size of the military and the quantity of state-provided welfare benefits. State employment rose from 20,000 to more than 580,000 from 1958 to 1977 (Dodge 2002: 160). The army and security services grew rapidly, as well. In 1967, the ratio of military manpower relative to population was 10 per 1000; by 1984, this

³³ Although Qasim tried to nationalize the oil companies, he first had to settle a number of old disputes and work towards self-sufficiency in production and the market. The government attempted to negotiate with the Iraq Petroleum Company for control of un-exploited areas of oil resources. When negotiations failed, the state passed a law that withdrew the IPC's concession rights to the area. The state also imposed cargo dues and port charges on IPC shipments through Basra (Al-Eyd 1979: 19). The IPC did not accept the law, and in an act of defiance cut production in order to penalize the country and put pressure on Qasim. This move ultimately cost Iraq 550 million dollars between 1950-1970. The state responded by establishing the Iraqi National Oil Company (INOC), but this venture failed to remove the state's dependence on the IPC. In ensuing years, the IPC and the INOC collaborated on joint ventures.

ratio was 42 per 1000 people (Makiya 1998: 34).³⁴ All told, the civilian arm of the state is estimated to have employed twenty one percent of the working population, with thirty percent of Iraqi households dependent on government payments in 1990-91. These revenues also enabled Saddam to establish a patronage system that divided potential rivals.³⁵ He invested heavily in schools, hospitals, food subsidies, and housing projects. In 1968, Saddam also implemented land reform: "Tribal Shaykhs were no longer paid off for their expropriated land. The government helped form a large number of agricultural cooperatives and became the primary distributor for agricultural surplus, and there were genuine improvements in rural standards of living (Khadduri 1970: 119)." These measures laid the foundation for a high degree of social order by increasing dependence on the state and by aligning personal and state interests.

Saddam's state vastly increased its penetration. On assuming power, Saddam expanded the party militia and restructured the secret police to forestall political opposition. Saddam established three separate secret police agencies, each independently responsible to the Revolutionary Command Council. The *Amn*, designed with the help of the Soviet KGB, was responsible for internal security. The *Estikhbarat* was set up to root out dissidents operating outside of Iraq. And the *Mukhabarat* -- or Party Intelligence -- was the most powerful and feared agency among the three (Makiya 1998: 14). The *Mukhabarat* penetrated every aspect of Iraqi life, to the extent that Iraqis never knew when or by whom they were being spied on. Members of Saddam's regime were themselves spied on (Roberts 2000). Spying created a heightened sense of fear and paranoia that kept dissent and political unrest at a minimum. Saddam also resorted to torture and execution to keep people in line (Makiya 1998).³⁶

Although Saddam's access to oil revenue and foreign aid funded the growth of direct rule, his resources were hardly sufficient to counter the opposition of disfavored groups. Resistance principally emanated from two directions. Tensions between the state and the Kurds had been escalating, as Ba'ath promises for Kurdish autonomy were only honored in the breach. When oil production in Kirkuk was nationalized in 1974, the Kurds demanded a

³⁴ "The army that carried out party policy in the second half of the 1970s was different from the one that waltzed in and out of governments in the 1960s. It had metamorphosed into a creature of the Ba'ath party. Three things account for this. The first change was the comprehensive series of purges of all influential high-ranking officers....The second change... was the establishment of a new system of accountability in which party men could thwart the orders of their senior non-Ba'athist officers if they suspected them.... The third change was to separate ideology from the military. Comprehensive party organization robbed officers of the opportunity to see themselves as surrogates and guardians of a national identity otherwise in jeopardy (Makiya 1998: 25-26)."

³⁵ Thus, "The capacity of certain Shi'i figures to command respect and to exercise authority within the community clearly unnerved a regime based on narrow circles emanating from the Sunni lands of the north-west.... It was the hidden potential of these forms of social solidarity which worried... Saddam Husain. Consequently, like previous rulers of Iraq, they tried to undermine that solidarity, channeling resources towards the Shi'i community at large, whilst ensuring that certain groups, families and individuals were more favored than others. In this way, a patronage network was established, drawing many Shia into the widening circle of those who were in some sense complicit in the order being established in Iraq (Tripp 2000: 204)."

³⁶ "As the terror struck deeper into the population - and no longer solely at its margins - withdrawal, cynicism, suspicion, and eventually pervasive fear replaced participation as the predominant psychological profile of the masses.... The post-1968 stratification of Iraqi society, unlike that of other Third World countries, evolved by compromising people in the violence of the Ba'ath, by sucking them into the agencies of the secret police, the army, and militia. The inordinate role of fear in Iraq can only be understood from this standpoint (Makiya 1998: 58)."

proportionate share in oil revenues. Saddam refused, and a Kurdish revolt broke out with Iranian support. When this support dried up, the Kurds were defeated. But far from securing stable order, increased penetration encouraged the creation of a new Kurdish party – the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). Whereas the PUK opposed the regime, its competition with the KDP gave some Saddam political leverage to divide the Kurds (McDowall 2001: 27-29).

The secularism of the (now much more efficacious) central government encouraged greater Shi'ite solidarity, however. Saddam's secular clientelism harassed the Shi'i population. For example, in the course of a 1969 territorial dispute with Iran, the Ba'ath regime demanded that the Shi'i Ayatollah Muhsin al-Hakim condemn the Iranian government. Al-Hakim refused and Saddam responded by shutting down a university in Najaf. Demonstrations by the Shi'i followed, as sermons turned into political protests. The state arrested high-ranking religious leaders and shut down Islamic schools, spurring riots and demonstrations the violent oppression of which only furthered the cycle of protest and violence. The Safar *intifada* of 1977 was soon followed by the expulsion of the Shi'ite leader Ayatollah Khomeini (Tripp 2000: 202-203) and the Iranian Revolution fostered more Iraqi Shi'ite Islamist resistance. To counter this threat, Saddam initiated the Iran-Iraq war with the tacit support of the United States and the Soviet Union (both alarmed by the Shi'ite takeover of Iran). Finally, the failure of Iraq's Kuwaiti occupation opened the door for a series of spontaneous revolts in the Shi'i south (Cockburn and Cockburn 2002: 188). The increase of state penetration was only effective in the short term. The imposition of direct rule stimulated opposition among culturally disadvantaged groups, especially those, like the Shi'i, which already had an organized base. Thus, as had occurred under Qasim, Ba'ath Party direct rule favored some groups and severely repressed others.

The Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988) lasted far longer than anyone had anticipated, not least Saddam. At the war's end, Iraq faced a severe recession. Since direct rule is costly to maintain, the downturn in the country's economic fortunes posed a grave challenge to the regime. To forestall the possibility of a military coup, Saddam purged and divided the officer corps, and replaced and killed high-ranking political officials with members of his clan, transforming the regime in a sultanistic direction. Last, he attempted to overhaul the economy through economic liberalization; the failure of this policy motivated his invasion of Kuwait.

Following the Gulf War, many anticipated that the no-fly zones and United Nations sanctions would significantly weaken Saddam's regime. But this did not occur. By allowing for indirect rule in the northern part of the country, the no-fly zones compromised Iraq's territorial integrity.³⁷ Ironically, the no-fly zone shored up the regime by relieving the resource-poor center of much of the cost of controlling Kurdish territory. Although the United Nations sanctions severely affected the Iraqi economy and the standard of living, Saddam also found a way to use these to his advantage. He created a government food rationing system to dissuade dissent in the general public, and rewarded his supporters in the party and military by giving them privileged access to food. Moreover, Saddam and his immediate circle profited handsomely from kickbacks in the United Nations' Oil for Food

³⁷ In contrast, Iraqi helicopter gunships were permitted in the southern no-fly zone, substantially reducing Shi'i autonomy.

Program (Alnasrawi 2002: 100).³⁸ For these reasons, invasion was arguably the only means of toppling the regime.

While Saddam's use of direct rule did not fully succeed in quashing the opposition – both Kurds and the Shi'ite Marsh Arabs caused him trouble – it provided the greatest level of social order in Iraqi history. High scope – in the form of welfare benefits and government employment -- left much of the population dependent on the state and unwilling to challenge it. At the same time, high penetration instilled such fear in the country that merely to express disapproval of the regime was to court the prospect of the harshest of punishments.

But this level of direct rule could only be sustained in Iraq by exogenous windfalls derived from oil revenues and foreign aid. After 1973 the price of oil soared, and after 1979 both the Soviets and Americans turned a blind eye on Saddam's efforts against the Iranian revolutionaries. Once the center lost these sources of revenue and political support, however, direct rule should have been imperiled. Paradoxically, foreign intervention – in the form of United Nations sanctions and the no-fly zones – helped Saddam economize on control costs and maintain a higher-than-expected level of direct rule.

Implications for Post-Invasion Iraq

Full-scale direct rule is a surer means of attaining social order in culturally diverse societies than indirect rule. But since direct rule results in a shift in dependence – for jobs, security, insurance, education and other collective goods -- from traditional authorities and intermediate social groups to the central state, it is extremely costly to implement.³⁹ The center has but three means of providing the requisite largesse. First, it can do so by its capacity to generate revenue and public goods endogenously on the basis of robust economic development. This is difficult to accomplish in less developed countries (and no option in the near term for Iraq), but the examples of the four tigers and Market-Leninist China reveal that it is not impossible.⁴⁰ A second endogenous means of doing so is through central control over the revenues provided by the export of key resources, like oil. Were it not for Iraqi oil wealth, it is highly unlikely that Saddam would have been effective in implementing direct rule. Absent these means, direct rulers must rely on exogenous sources of aid.

In addition to its manifest costs, direct rule can stir opposition. Competition over collective goods and resistance to encroachments on autonomy can result in challenges to state hegemony by ethnic, religious, or tribal groups. In response to British direct rule, for example, new political parties emerged in Iraq, Sunni and Shi'i groups collaborated, and traditional tribal affiliations were strengthened. Extreme direct rule, as occurred under Saddam, was more effective because it combined extensive welfare benefits with the harshest of sanctions for noncompliance.

³⁸ <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/international/AP-UN-Iraq-Humanitarian.html?ex=1080633635&ei=1&en=9132ad4bd4d88356>

³⁹ The socialist U.S.S.R. and its Warsaw Pact allies probably represent the apex of direct rule in modern history. Given their level of economic development these states did attain high levels of social order – especially when compared to the more liberal successor regimes. But maintaining socialism in a global economy proved to be infeasible in the medium run (Przeworski 1991: Ch. 2).

⁴⁰ Likewise, Ireland's entrance into the European Union spurred rapid investment-led economic growth.

Although indirect rule imposes considerably fewer costs on central authorities, it too is costly.⁴¹ In addition to agency costs, which substantially cut into potential central government revenues (Kiser 1999), indirect rule is only effective when it devolves decision-making to groups that are willing to comply with central authorities. What determines whether a given group will be compliant? This question is akin to the classic problem of federalism (Riker 1964), and the solution resides in the center's ability to render the groups (and subunits) dependent on it for access to vital resources. To the degree that groups are dependent on the center, their leaders' interests will be aligned with those of the state, and they will therefore be motivated to curb their members' oppositional proclivities. This dependence derives from, but is not limited to, financial, kinship, military, and welfare relations with the center.⁴² Indirect rule of Iraq by the Ottoman Empire, for example, was largely enforced by the looming threat of an Ottoman invasion. Indirect rule by the British during the first Hashemite monarchy also hinged on the RAF's ability to subdue subversive elements in Iraq.

What implications does this analysis have for the United States, the new occupier of Iraq? How can it bring order to this turbulent land? Direct rule of Iraq is simply not an option; it has resulted in social disorder throughout Iraqi history, save during the Ba'ath regime when Saddam's rule was absolute. In the unlikely event that it would even countenance such a strategy, the United States possesses neither the requisite material nor political resources to rule Iraq directly. Nor is it likely to have the commitment to provide the future Iraqi state with the resources necessary to implement its own version of direct rule.

Indirect rule has been effective in Iraq only when the center has refrained from systematic differential treatment of cultural groups. When Qasim, for example, played favorites, disorder (in the form of Kurdish revolts) ensued. The British made the same error when they favored Sunni groups. Indirect rule of the tribes under the Ottomans, however, was most successful because it did not perpetually favor one tribe over another. The likelihood of obtaining state-provided goods was just as great for one tribe as the next; ditto for the likelihood that such goods would be withheld. Since local leaders in such regimes were always on edge, challenging the regime was seldom in their long-term interest. Indirect rule in Iraq today may only be effective if the state treats its constituent cultural groups equitably, even if that means implementing a *divide et impera* strategy.

Just as the British did in the aftermath of World War I, the Americans banked heavily on direct rule in post-invasion Iraq. But like the British before them, this attempt is hampered by inadequate military and economic investment. A staggering domestic economy and growing political resistance to the Iraq war at home suggest that any American effort at direct rule will falter due to underfunding. Since direct rule is so costly, this cannot be a solution to the problem of order in Iraq. Further, the high but not absolute degree of

⁴¹ In the physical world, the second law of thermodynamics states that systems spontaneously change towards greater entropy. The cell, for example, does not exist in isolation: "it takes in energy from its environment in the form of food, or as photons from the sun ... and it then uses this energy to generate order within itself. In the course of the chemical reactions that generate order, part of the energy that the cell uses is converted into heat. The heat is discharged into the cell's environment and disorders it, so that the total entropy – that of the cell plus its surroundings – increases, as demanded by the laws of physics (Alberts et al. 2002: 71)." To the extent that these laws also apply in the social world, this would explain why all forms of social order are costly to attain.

⁴² Group dependence is maximized in hierarchical societies like Japan (as reflected in Japan's *keiretsu*, headed by large financial institutions [Gerlach 1992]), and minimized in loosely integrated warlord societies like contemporary Afghanistan (Fairbanks 2002).

American penetration – as reflected in the overwhelming presence of United States military personnel – incites insurgency. Iraq’s cultural and ethnic diversity poses grave challenges to centralized rule, Attacks on American ground troops have emanated from tribal, ethnic, and religious organizations (such as Moqtada al Sadr’s) fueled by nationalist fervor.

In the present circumstances, social order in Iraq can best be extended on the basis of solidary intermediate groups that can control their own members, thereby reducing the cost of state rule.⁴³ This strategy may seem unwise, for it would place power in the hands of leaders who could very well use their enhanced position to disrupt the nascent state. But this apparent obstacle can actually promote social order. By nurturing existing social groups and fostering the creation of new ones, the United States can help establish a social structure that is more conducive of social order. Because there are only a small number of such groups, the state is in a position to nurture and foster their development. So long as these groups – qua groups – are dependent on the center for welfare and security, and so long as none is perpetually disfavored by the state, these indirect rulers would be dissuaded from challenging the regime.⁴⁴

What sorts of groups might these be? The effectiveness of indirect rule hinges on the solidarity of local groups. Therefore, the United States should rely on whatever groups happen to be most solidary in each of the territory’s many regions. Given that Iraqi society is divided by religion, ethnicity, and tribal affiliation, these new indirect rulers will be religious, ethnic, and tribal leaders. The basis of group affiliation might not be significant; what matters is the state’s ability to create an interdependent and even-handed relationship between itself and the groups. Even if the United States can manage to reinvigorate Iraqi civil society on the cheap – a dubious proposition, at best – this process cannot occur overnight. In the meantime, an increasingly vigorous resistance consumes resources that could otherwise be used for vitally important civil investment. Indeed, the headlines trumpet the news that the vaunted Sunni/Shi’ite conflict may be overcome in a renewed outbreak of Iraqi nationalism. Such sentiments can only be strengthened by the Iraqi perception that the Americans must someday go home. These events hark back to the 1920 revolt against British rule. As Yogi Berra would have it, this is *déjà vu* all over again.

⁴³ These remarks about American policy in Iraq were written in the spring of 2004, and have not been amended in the wake of subsequent developments.

⁴⁴ Further, the more that membership in these groups cross-cuts the major axes of conflict, the greater the resulting order (Varshney 2002). However, at the present time, prospects for the establishment of socially integrated intermediate groups in Iraq are exceedingly slim.

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