

مركز البيدر للدراسات والتخطيط

Al-Baidar Center For Studies And Planning



Weimar Republic and its lessons for Iraq

In order to restore the vitality of the
state and society in Iraq

Lukman Faily

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About Center

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The Center seeks to contribute to developing the state and its institutions, by proposing ideas and practical solutions to the main problems and challenges facing the state, including improving public sector management, policies and strategic planning, using reliable data and best practices. The Center engages the relevant authorities in the state with regular meetings to support this objective and utilises the support of international organizations dedicated to assisting Iraq's development. The Center also seeks to support economic reforms, sustainable development and provide technical assistance to the public and private sectors. The Center also seeks to support development of the private sector to provide job opportunities for citizens through training and upskilling, in a way that reduces dependence on government institutions and contributes to supporting and diversifying the country's economy.

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Weimar Republic and its lessons for Iraq... In order to revitalize the State and society in Iraq

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Center's Introduction

The paper seeks to articulate the features and characteristics of the political chapter of the Weimar Republic, its analysis and its comparison with the political development of the Republic of Iraq after 2003; and to determine the main points of comparison at the historical, social and political levels, international relations and the main events that contributed to the formation and development of the two political systems in both the Iraqi and German experiences within the framework of historical borders. Also, to articulate both republics elements that constitute it politically, economically, and culturally, and the contexts surrounding them.

The paper focuses on benefiting from the lesson of the “Weimar Republic” system and how to transfer those lessons to the Republic of Iraq and its political, social and institutional systems after 2003. Thereafter identifying the commonalities and differences within both cases, and not to be dissuaded by focusing on the time, culture, and political differences. Undoubtedly, differences exist between both examples, however the laws governing society and politics lead to similar results if similar circumstances and contexts are present, even if the elements of geography, society and time differ.

Hence, Al-Baidar Center for Studies and Planning is pleased to present to its valued readers this publication, and hopes to contribute by publishing this study of the experience of the political system in Germany's “Weimar Republic” and other similar experiences; To be a beneficial and useful resource for the new Iraqi political system, and to take lessons from the advantages and mistakes that those historical political systems faced. In the same context, we extend our sincere thanks and gratitude to his excellency Ambassador Lukman Abdul Rahim Al-Faily for the ideas he presented in this study, and

for the effort, analysis, and methodological approach he implemented between both systems and the German and Iraqi experiences. Thanks are also extended to the Research Department at Al-Baidar Center for producing and completing this study in the form befitting it.

Al-Baidar Center for Studies and Planning

Introduction

Since the foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949, Germans and others have been anxiously recalling the early 1930s collapse of the German Weimar Republic and the advent of Nazism that followed. With many of the world's democracies, including Iraq, under increasing duress, popularism and authoritarianism on the rise, the lessons learned during that period should be used elsewhere, more so by Iraqis.

Learning about the Weimar Republic not only helps us understand the society in which a dictatorship eventually emerged, but it also serves as a lesson in democracy's fragility. Democracy is a form of government based on the durability of its institutions and its citizens. Citizens who are critical consumers of information, particularly political misinformation, and active participants who speak up against injustice rather than quietly watching it control its government and society via unaccountable leaders. This paper will try to articulate the main pre-request for a healthy democracy. Reflecting on the Weimar Republic not only assists us, as Iraqis, in recognizing these basic aspects of democracy but also serves as a clear warning about how we should manage Iraq's fragile politics.

In the main body of this paper, the author employs the historical analogy method. The goal is to demonstrate the historical chapters of the Weimar Republic from its inception to its collapse and to connect and relate them to the political realities in Iraq that dominated its politics after the fall of the Ba'ath party regime (post-2003); to highlight the mistakes made in the period of the Weimar Republic and use them as a clear warning to Iraq's current political system and society. To achieve... to achieve the paper's objectives and

disseminate the material to the Iraqi audience, the author did not follow the chronological sequence in some places. The similarities in the dysfunctionality between the two systems are not few nor one can easily dismiss both examples are dissimilar or too unique.

When you think of the Weimar Republic, you likely envision a turbulent, divisive period in German history that exposed democracy's vulnerability to authoritarianism and gave rise to Adolf Hitler's Nazi Party. However, this paper will try to illustrate that the reality of the regime was far more complex, and no single factor determined the Weimar Republic's path ahead. Due to many similarities between the Weimar Republic and Iraq Post 2003 environment the primary objective of this paper is to emphasize key lessons and see how we can address fault lines that were missed by German society and its political establishment during the Weimar period.

The Weimar Republic was Germany's government from 1919 to 1933, i.e., the period after World War I until the rise of Nazi Germany to power. It was named after the town of Weimar where Germany's new government was formed by a national assembly after Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated. Although the country was usually simply called "Germany"; the term "Weimar Republic" did not become common in English literature until the 1930s¹.

From its uncertain beginnings to a brief season of success and then a devastating depression, the Weimar Republic experienced enough chaos to position Germany for the rise of Adolf Hitler and his Nazi Party. The story of the Weimar Republic is an intriguing one – not only because of its tragic ending and descent into Nazi

1. For more details, see E. Kolb 2004," *The Weimar Republic*", London-New York.

totalitarianism but also the lessons it offers to the modern world. The paper will cover the stages of the Republic, key factors which lead to its demise, and finally key comparison with Iraq post-2003 republic and many lessons to take away for us Iraqis and other Middle Eastern countries on the same trajectory.

Serving as the Iraqi Ambassador to Germany has allowed me to delve into the history of this rich nation and to talk to its historian, academia, and political sciences as to what are the key healthy characteristic for nations to be able to develop, prosper, secure in the aftermath of wars and destruction. In my professional diplomatic experience, serving in Germany, as in the United States and Japan before that, meant that few might get such exposure to how other nations address their deep-rooted challenges.

One cannot shy away from acknowledging how Iraq now faces so many social, political, environmental, demographic, and economic challenges. These challenges can only be tackled if we endeavour to learn from our mistakes and the mistakes of other nations before us. History does repeat itself when we ignore its lessons. Indeed, it accelerates in its repetition of these mistakes once we categorize ourselves as a too unique and distant nation.

The Weimar Republic – formation and historical background

The First World War (1914-1918) would eventually involve 30 nations and 65 million soldiers. It was a war with the incredible loss of human life on every battlefield and huge damage to the land wherever fighting occurred – a conflict marked by heavy casualties for all sides at frontline trenches, genocide, civil wars, famines, and revolutions. At the end of the war, more than nine million soldiers and more than five million civilians had been killed. As a result of

the war, three European empires fell (the German, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman), causing panic and displacement for millions of people. Historians think that the effect of the First World War on Germany and other key countries across the globe created conditions that helped give rise to the Nazis (also with fascism and nationalism) in the years that followed and eventually lead to the Second World War².

Doris Bergen wrote that while the First World War did not cause Nazism, its aftermath left in place fertile ground for the history that followed in at least three ways³:

1. The destruction and brutality of the First World War ‘seemed to many Europeans to prove that human life was cheap and expendable.’
2. The trauma of the First World War created in Europeans and their leaders a ‘deep fear of ever risking another war.’
3. The war’s resolution left in place across Europe lingering resentments about the war and the terms of the peace. These resentments would later prove useful to popular leaders such as Adolf Hitler who sought to create a politics of resentment that promoted a bitter sense of humiliation.

World War I left Germany a shattered nation with two million young men had been killed and a further 4.2 million had been wounded; in all, 19% of the male population were casualties of the war. Its civilian population suffered from malnutrition as a result of the Allied blockade, with starvation a serious and often fatal outcome. Workers went on strike in an attempt to gain better working conditions; in 1917 alone, there were 562 separate strikes. In short, Germany was coming apart. The government, centred on an ineffective Emperor, devolved into a military dictatorship incapable of reforming the system⁴.

4. For more details see, J. Hiden 2014, „The Weimar Republic”, London-New

Thus, in August 1918, after it became clear that Germany's last gasp military offensives had failed, Generals Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Friedrich Ludendorff passed control of the government to Chancellor Max von Baden, a moderate, to enact reforms. This transfer of power would have far-reaching effects. Those most responsible for the war itself and the accompanying human and economic disasters handed their debacle to a new civilian government which then became responsible for conducting peace negotiations with the Allied victors⁵.

In October 1918, the constitution of the German Empire was reformed to give more powers to the elected parliament. On 29 October, the rebellion broke out in the port of Kiel among sailors. There, sailors, soldiers, and workers began electing Workers' and Soldiers' Councils modelled after the Soviets of the Russian Revolution of 1917. The revolution spread throughout Germany, and participants seized military and civil powers in individual cities. The power takeover was achieved everywhere without loss of life⁶.

Germany didn't fare well after World War I, as it was thrown into troubling economic and social disorder. After a series of mutinies by German sailors and soldiers, Kaiser Wilhelm II lost the support of his military and people, and he was forced to abdicate on November 9, 1918. The following day, a provisional government was announced made up of members of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (USDP), hence shifting power from the military⁷.

York.

5. E. J. Feuchtwanger 1993 „From Weimar to Hitler/ Germany, 1918-33”, pp. 1-13, New York.

6. For more details see: E. Kennedy 2004 “Constitutional Failure, Carl Schmitt in Weimar”, Durham- London.

7. E. J. Feuchtwanger 1993 „From Weimar to Hitler/ Germany, 1918-33”, pp.

From November 1918 to January 1919, Germany was governed by the “Council of the People’s Deputies”, under the leadership of Friedrich Ebert and Hugo Haase. The Council issued a large number of decrees that radically shifted German policies. It introduced the eight-hour workday, domestic labour reform, works councils, agricultural labour reform, right of civil-service associations, local municipality social welfare relief (split between Reich and States) and national health insurance, reinstatement of demobilized workers, protection from arbitrary dismissal with appeal as a right, regulated wage agreement, and universal suffrage from 20 years of age in all types of elections—local and national. Ebert called for a «National Congress of Councils» (Reichsrätekongress), which took place from 16 to 20 December 1918, and in which the Majority Social Democratic Party of Germany (MSPD) had the majority. Thus, Ebert was able to institute elections for a provisional National Assembly that would be given the task of writing a democratic constitution for parliamentary government, marginalizing the movement that called for a socialist republic⁸.

In December 1918, elections were held for a National Assembly tasked with creating a new parliamentary constitution. On February 6, 1919, the National Assembly met in the town of Weimar (280 km from Berlin) and formed the Weimar Coalition. They also elected SDP leader Friedrich Ebert as the first President of the Weimar Republic. During the debates in Weimar, fighting continued. A Soviet republic was declared in Munich but was quickly put down by Freikorps (Volunteer Corps) and remnants of the regular

21-32, New York.

8. See more, W. Mühlhausen 2006 „Friedrich Ebert 1871-1925/ Reichspräsident der Weimarer Republik”, Dietz.

army. The fall of the Munich Soviet Republic to these units, many of which were situated on the extreme right, resulted in the growth of far-right movements and organizations in Bavaria, including the Organisation Consul, the Nazi Party, and societies of exiled Russian Monarchists. Sporadic fighting continued to flare up around the country. In eastern provinces, forces loyal to Germany's fallen Monarchy fought the republic, while militias of Polish nationalists fought for independence: Great Poland Uprising in Provinz Posen and three Silesian uprisings in Upper Silesia⁹.

The National Assembly elections took place on 19 January 1919. (It was the first-time women were allowed to vote.) At this time, the radical left-wing parties, including the USPD and KPD, were barely able to get themselves organized, leading to a solid majority of seats for the MSPD moderate forces. To avoid the ongoing fights in Berlin, the National Assembly convened in the city of Weimar, giving the future Republic its unofficial name. The Weimar Constitution created a republic under a parliamentary republic system with the Reichstag elected by proportional representation. The Democratic Party obtained a solid 80% of The vote..¹⁰.

Even before the armistice was signed with the Allied-on November 11th, 2018, SPD party leader Kurt Eisner and his followers seized control of Munich and declared it the Bavarian Republic. Just as Friedrich Ebert of the “moderate” Social Democrat Party was declaring a new democratic republic on November 9, 1918, Karl Liebknecht of the Independent Socialists (USPD) was poised to declare the

9. R. Blanke 2021 “Orphans of Versailles, The Germans in Western Poland”, University Press of Kentucky.

10. G. Smith 1985 “Democracy in Western Germany Parties and Politics in the Federal Republic”, Gower.

establishment of a new socialist republic with support from the revolutionary masses. Ebert knew that he needed the support of at least a small number of Independent Socialists to head off Liebknecht's push for a socialist republic. He got the support he needed with the formation of a Council of People's Commissars consisting of three USPD leaders and three from the SPD. Hence Liebknecht's efforts were blocked and failed.

Later that day, Ebert received a call from General Groener at army headquarters in Spa (German Military Headquarters). It was then that Groener told Ebert that the Kaiser had left Germany for Holland and that he wished that the new government would lend support to the officer corps, and the Prussian military tradition, as it maintained order in the ranks. Groener also offered Ebert the support of the army if Ebert would help resist Bolshevism by quelling the activities of some of the more radical soldiers' and workers' councils. Ebert hated Bolshevism as much as Groener; he preferred a constitutional monarchy, and in the end, he pledged the new government's support in exchange for the army's assistance in combating the Bolshevik challenge.

A Republic was quickly declared, but its form was completely unknown at the time. In any case, the new "Republic" had to quickly deal with a host of problems including signing an armistice, demobilizing an army, and gaining control of a growing revolution. The Kaiser's abdication forced other German crowned heads to do the same. But unlike the Russian Revolution next door, where the communists spilt the blood of royalty and delightfully shot Tsarist army officers, this German revolution maintained the strange sense of decorum that characterized the unit mutinies a month earlier. They would not repeat the brutality that the Bolsheviks had visited upon the Tsar and his family. These revolutionaries displayed their anger

by merely cutting off officer rank insignia rather than resorting to lynching, as was the fashion in Bolsheviks Russia. Unnerved by an orderly crowd, an old Berliner was heard to remark, “I don’t like these peaceful revolutions at all. We shall have to pay for it someday”¹¹.

Workers’ demonstrations and small-scale disturbances continued, but the army and the Freikorps (mercenaries or private army) ensured that the new Republic would not veer sharply left. The National Assembly elections on January 19, 1919, enjoyed an 83% turnout that included, for the first time, women over 20 years of age. Ebert’s SPD party secured 38% of the vote, with the Catholic Centre Party getting almost 20%. Nationalist and monarchist parties secured less than 15% of votes cast.

Due to continuing disturbances in Berlin in February 1919, delegates elected Ebert as the first president of the Republic in the town of Weimar, from whence the new government and republic system took its name¹². Ironically between 1919 and 1933, no single name for the new state gained widespread acceptance, thus the old name *Deutsches Reich* was officially retained, although hardly anyone used it during the Weimar period to the right of the spectrum, the politically engaged rejected the new democratic model and were appalled to see the honour of the traditional word *Reich* associated with it. *Zentrum*, the Catholic Centre Party, favoured the term *Deutscher Volksstaat* (German People’s State), while on the moderate left Chancellor Friedrich Ebert’s Social Democratic Party of Germany preferred *Deutsche Republik* (German

11. M.E. Telzrow 2009 “Lessons of the Weimar Republic” [Enter date 11/2/2022], <https://thenewamerican.com/lessons-of-the-weimar-republic/>

12. L.E. Jones, 2020 “The German Right, 1918-1930 Political Parties, Organized Interests, and Patriotic Associations in the Struggle against Weimar Democracy”, Cambridge University Press.

Republic). By the mid-1920s, Deutsche Republik was used by most Germans, but for the anti-democratic right, the word Republik was a painful reminder of a government structure that they believed had been imposed by foreign statesmen, along with the relocation of the seat of power to Weimar and the expulsion of Kaiser Wilhelm in the wake of massive national humiliation.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that although we had a new republic in Germany many of the old conservative elite who had held key positions of power under the monarchy had continued in similar roles within this new Weimar Republic. Whilst this was an attempt to maintain stability in government as the new republic settled, it meant that these civil servants and military leaders still had enormous influence and power. The power and influence of the conservative elite would later be crucial in appointing Hitler as chancellor.

Weimar Republic – Early and Golden Age

The new leaders of the Weimar Republic faced daunting challenges, mainly of the economic variety, particularly the burden placed upon them by the outgoing leadership of the Kaiser and the generals. This took several forms. The first was the immense cost of the war itself and the damage it had done its damage to Germany's civilian economy. The second was the Versailles Treaty of 1919. The Allies charged the Germans with paying staggering reparations for the cost of the war while simultaneously occupying some of the most productive regions of western Germany. For example, Germany lost 13% of its territory including areas accounting for 16% of coal and 48% of iron ore production¹³.

13. F. Taylor 2014, "The Downfall of Money Germany's Hyperinflation and the Destruction of the Middle Class", Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

The high reparations payments and costs of war had devastating consequences. The cost of living in Germany rose twelve times between 1914 and 1922. When the government sought to pay reparations simply by printing more money, the value of the German currency rapidly declined, leading to hyperinflation. In January 1920, the exchange rate was 64.8 Marks to one Dollar; in November 1923, it was 4,200,000,000,000 to one. This economic disaster had social consequences as well. Many Germans who considered themselves middle class found themselves now being destitute¹⁴.

Some of the former World War I Allies didn't buy Germany's claim that it couldn't afford to pay. In a blatant League of Nations breach, French and Belgian troops occupied (between Jan 11, 1923 – Aug 25, 1925) Germany's main industrial area, the Ruhr, determined to get their reparation payments.

From their side in the wake of four years of brutal warfare that had destroyed large areas of France and Belgium and resulted in the loss of millions of lives, the Allies were in no mood to proffer lenient terms. Germany would lose huge areas of land, including Alsace-Lorraine to France, and most of West Prussia, Upper Silesia, and Pozen to the newly formed Poland. Danzig would become a "free city" under the newly created League of Nations, and Germany was to lose all of its overseas colonies. The infamous 231 "war guilt clause" shifted the blame for the war entirely to Germany, and Germany's army was reduced to 100,000 volunteers. Its navy was to be limited, and entry into the League of Nations was forbidden¹⁵.

More devastating, particularly for a country emerging from a costly

14. A. Fergusson 2010, "When Money Dies the Nightmare of Deficit Spending, Devaluation, and Hyperinflation in Weimar Germany", Public Affairs.

15. Ibid.

war, were the unspecified reparations forced upon Germany. By May 1921, Germany was required to make a payment of 20 billion gold marks as an interim payment. On May 12, SPD chancellor Philip Scheidemann declared, “What hand must not wither which places these fetters on itself and on us?” But for the Allies, these terms seemed just. Anti-German feelings ran extremely high, particularly in the European countries that had suffered at the hands of the Hun. It was time to make them pay, and that feeling dominated the political scene for years after the war, particularly among the French, who no doubt had had enough of German militarism.

In reflection had the Allies not taken this approach, and instead had looked to ways to support an evolving German political institution, Hitler might never have come to power. Defeat, coupled with the harsh reality of the Versailles treaty, was a traumatic experience for Germany. It reinforced the sense of betrayal — “the stab in the back” allegedly perpetrated by Jews and socialists that had ultimately defeated the supposedly unbeaten German army, and the reparations issue became a rallying point for nationalists¹⁶. Another key element which fuelled the betrayal narrative was that Germany did win the war on the Eastern front, in March 1918 (via the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk) while it lost the war on the Western front, which itself invalidated the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and made Germany be considered as a loser on both sides.

Following the war and the formation of this new Republic, Germans faced harsh times for a few years. In 1922, now three years after the German signing of the Treaty of Versailles, meat consumption in the country had not increased since the war era. 22 kg per person per year was still less than half of the 52 kg statistic in 1913, before the

16. R. Blanke 2021 “Orphans of Versailles, The Germans in Western Poland”, University Press of Kentucky.

onset of the war. German citizens felt the food shortages even deeper than during the war because the reality of the nation contrasted so starkly with their expectations. The burdens of the First World War lightened little in the immediate years following, and with the onset of the Treaty of Versailles, coupled with mass inflation, Germany “still” incongruent word in context. remained in a crisis. The continuity of pain showed the Weimar authority in a negative light, and public opinion was one of the main sources behind its failure.

The Treaty of Versailles was signed on 28 June 1919 and divided into four categories: territorial issues, disarmament demands, reparations, and assignment of guilt. The German colonial empire was stripped and given over to Allied forces. The greater blow to Germans however was that they were forced to give up the territory of Alsace-Lorraine. Many German borderlands were demilitarised and allowed to self-determine. The German military was forced to have no more than 100,000 men with only 4,000 officers. The main advantage of this limitation, however, was that the Reichswehr (“was” incongruent word in context. the official name of the German armed forces from 1919 to 1935) could afford to pick the best recruits for service. However, with inefficient armour and no air support, the Reichswehr would have had limited combat abilities. Privates were mainly recruited from the countryside, as it was believed that young men from cities were prone to socialist behaviour, which would fray the loyalty of the privates to their conservative officers. The new Reichswehr armed forces remained fully under the control of the German officer class, despite their nominal re-organization¹⁷.

Germany was forced to destroy all its fortifications in the

17. Schaefer K. 2020, “German Military and the Weimar Republic,” Pen & Sword Books Limited.

West and was prohibited from having an air force, tanks, poison gas, and heavy artillery. Many ships were scuttled, and submarines and dreadnoughts were prohibited. Germany was forced under Article 235 to pay 20 billion gold marks, about 4.5 billion dollars by 1921. Article 231 placed Germany and her allies with responsibility for causing all the loss and damage suffered by the Allies. While Article 235 angered many Germans, no part of the treaty was more fought over than Article 231.

As a result, the Republic leadership was soon under attack from both left and right-wing political parties. The radical left accused the ruling Social Democrats of having betrayed the ideals of the workers' movement by preventing a communist revolution and sought to overthrow the Republic and do so themselves. Various right-wing sources opposed any democratic system, preferring an authoritarian monarchy like the German Empire. To further undermine the Republic's credibility, some right-wingers (especially certain members of the former officer corps also blamed an alleged conspiracy of Socialists and Jews for Germany's defeat in the First World War¹⁸.

The political leadership of this new Republic inherited a nation exhausted, depleted, and starved by four years of total war. It was also divided and filled with a myriad of political groups, including revolutionaries on the extreme left and reactionaries on the far right. Germany was also at the mercy of foreign powers, who wanted to punish it for the war and prevent future threats by decimating the German economy. The humiliating terms of the Treaty of Versailles inflamed paranoid nationalists, who clung to the belief that the 1918 surrender was unwarranted, the work of socialists and Jewish conspirators. The men of Weimar crafted an ambitious model

18. Ibid.

for republican government – but uniting all or even most Germans behind this model proved almost impossible¹⁹.

In its early days, the most pressing and visible problems of Weimar Germany were political instability, violence, and economic suffering. These problems were particularly acute in the early 1920s. The government's ability to respond was constrained by the new political system. Rather than encouraging decisive leadership and facilitating action, the Reichstag became a swamp of small parties, conflicting ideas, and self-interest.

This outrageous burden of political infighting killed off any hope of post-war economic recovery. The already devastated German economy could not shoulder this burden and by 1922, Berlin was defaulting on its quarterly reparation's payments to the Allies.

In 1923 Germany elected Gustav Stresemann as their new chancellor. He ordered Ruhr workers back to the factories and replaced the Mark with a new currency, the American-backed Rentenmark. In late 1923, the League of Nations asked U.S. banker and Director of the Budget, Charles Dawes, to help tackle Germany's reparations and hyperinflation issues. He submitted the "Dawes Plan" which outlined a plan for Germany to pay more reasonable reparations on a sliding scale. Dawes was later awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts²⁰. The Dawes Plan and Stresemann's leadership helped stabilize the Weimar Republic and energize its economy. In addition,

19. M.P. Price 1999, "Dispatches from the Weimar Republic Versailles and German Fascism," Pluto Press.

20. S.A. Schuker 1976, "The End of French Predominance in Europe: The Financial Crisis of 1924 and the Adoption of the Dawes Plan", Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Germany repaired relations with France and Belgium and was finally allowed in 1926 into the League of Nations, which opened the door for international trade.

Under this plan, the reparations were reduced to 50 million marks a year for the next five years, and then 125 million marks a year following that. The plan also recommended that the German National Bank be reorganised and that Germany receive an international loan. This loan was for 800 million gold marks, financed primarily by America. As a result, these measures eased the economic pressure on Germany, and relations with other countries began to improve and then stabilise.

In general, life improved in the Weimar Republic. Eventually, the German currency was stabilized but at a great cost. Unemployment was rampant, wages dropped, and unaffordable prices dominated the market. But by 1924, it appeared that the problems of the early republic were over. Foreign Minister {from 1923 to 1929} Gustav Stresemann successfully regularized foreign relations with the Western Allies. In 1924, the Dawes Plan married American economic interests with Germany, and reparations arrangements became more manageable. In 1925, the hated French began leaving the Ruhr, and by 1927, the disarmament commission was withdrawn. By 1930, the Rhineland was to be cleared of any foreign occupation. Under Gustav Stresemann, Germany had made remarkable progress on the foreign-policy front, but there were other problems on the horizon for the new republic.

Recognizing that a bankrupt Germany would destabilize Europe and threaten its economy, the United States intervened, negotiating with a more conciliatory Weimar government. The United States' outlook to support Germany was in line with its own outlook to start

heavy overseas investments. The Dawes Plan of 1924 reconfigured reparations payments and facilitated billions of dollars worth of foreign loans to kick-start the German economy. This injection of capital allowed German industrial and manufacturing sectors to quickly recover, leading to rapid improvements in employment, wages, and standards of living.

A spectre of national decline sapped the strength of the Republic. Fewer and fewer young people supported the Weimar system; they were often more concerned with drinking and dancing. Indeed, one of the unfortunate outcomes of the First World War was that many youths of 1920s Germany grew up without fathers. The traditional ties that tethered the young to their families and communities were torn asunder by the war and the post-war upheavals. Weimar Germany was a liberating experience for young Germans, but they increasingly began to see the government as dominated by pre-war political parties. The SPD and the Catholic Centre Party seemed stodgy and not capable of instituting the rapid social change that enamoured Germany's youth. By the late 1920s, most German youths were more likely to identify themselves with the Communists (KPD), or the Nazi Party. They were simply bored with what Goebbels described as an "old men's republic"²¹.

Constant concessions to the left by weak governments fuelled nationalist fervour. The hyperinflation debacle had also sapped much of the middle-class support for the Republic. At the time those people saw the value of their homes and savings decline while debtors seemed to benefit from the easy-money policies of the Weimar Republic. Leftists, too, had much to complain about. For them, the Republic had betrayed its socialist roots.

Despite seeming stabilization, the social, political, and economic
21. R. Henig 1998, „ The Weimar Republic 1919-1933”, London-New York, pp. 5.

problems that plagued the new republic never disappeared. Much of it was self-inflicted — the devaluation of its currency to punish the French, for its occupation of Ruhr, costly welfare schemes included in the state constitution, ineffective coalition governments, and an ongoing yearning for the old days of imperial Germany combined to set the stage for its failure. Finally, a worldwide depression and the rise of a charismatic leader put an end to the ill-fated Republic.

Germany was eventually raised from this swamp by the pragmatism of Gustav Stresemann, the restoration of foreign relations and American financial assistance. The period 1924-29 is consequently referred to as the ‘Golden Age of Weimar ‘. It was a time of the progress of improved living standards, bourgeois values and surges in art, film, and popular culture²².

Meanwhile, the government worked on re-establishing diplomatic relations with the new Soviet Union. Under the Treaty of Rapallo {1922}, Germany accorded it formal (de jure) recognition and the two mutually cancelled all pre-war debts and renounced war claims. In October 1925, the Treaty of Locarno was signed by Germany, France, Belgium, Britain, and Italy; it recognised Germany’s borders with France and Belgium. Moreover, Britain, Italy and Belgium undertook to assist France in the case German troops marched into the demilitarized Rhineland. Locarno paved the way for Germany’s admission to the League of Nations in 1926. Germany signed arbitration conventions with France and Belgium and arbitration treaties with Poland and Czechoslovakia, undertaking to refer any future disputes to an arbitration tribunal or the Permanent Court of International Justice²³. Another foreign achievement was the

22. Ibid., pp. 39-58.

23. L. Kochan. «The Russian Road to Rapallo». Soviet Studies, Vol. 2, No. 2

evacuation of foreign troops from the Ruhr in 1925. In 1926, Germany was admitted to the League of Nations as a permanent member, improving her international standing and giving her the right to vote on League matters.

Overall trade increased and unemployment fell. Stresemann's reforms did not relieve the underlying weaknesses of Weimar but gave the appearance of a stable democracy. Even Stresemann's 'German People's party' failed to gain nationwide recognition, and instead featured in the 'flip-flop' coalitions. The grand coalition headed by Hermann Muller {1928} inspired some faith in the government, but that did not last. Governments frequently lasted only a year. The major weakness in constitutional terms was the inherent instability of the coalitions, which often fell before elections. The growing dependence on American finance was to prove fleeting, and Germany was one of the worst-hit nations in the Great Depression.

In the meantime, influenced by the brief cultural explosion in the Soviet Union, German literature, cinema, theatre, and musical works entered a phase of great creativity. Innovative street theatre brought plays to the public, and the cabaret scene and jazz bands became immensely popular. According to the cliché, modern young women were Americanized, wearing makeup, short hair, smoking and breaking with traditional mores. Art and a new type of architecture taught at "Bauhaus" schools reflected the innovative ideas of the time, with artists such as George Grosz being fined for defaming the military and for blasphemy²⁴.

(October 1950), pp. 109–122.

24. For more details see: E. Forgacs 1995 „The Bauhaus Idea and Bauhaus Politics”, Central European University Press.

The perils of the 1920s screamed for strong leadership but the Weimar system coughed up a series of weak coalition governments and no less than 15 different chancellors, most of them politically impotent. The Reichstag was divided, paralyzed and unable to implement necessary policies or reforms; running the state proved a difficult, if not impossible task²⁵.

What happened when the Weimar Republic put all its eggs in one basket?

On October 29, 1929, the U.S. stock market crashed, sending America into a devastating economic meltdown, and ushering in the Great Depression. The stock market crash had a global ripple effect. It was especially devastating for the newly recovered Weimar Republic. As the flow of American money dried up, Germany could no longer meet their financial responsibilities. Businesses failed, unemployment rates rose, and Germany faced another devastating economic crisis.

The onset of the Great Depression in the United States caused a major economic shock in Germany, which was compounded by bankruptcy. Traditional economic solutions failed to alleviate severe unemployment, and the number of unemployed increased drastically, reaching 4 million in 1930. The global economic crisis brought on by America's Great Depression had disastrous consequences for the Weimar Republic. When Wall Street (the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE)) went into meltdown, the US government put pressure on its erstwhile allies, Britain, and France, to pay off their war debts. Due to a lack of funds, Britain and France put pressure on Germany to increase reparation payments, resulting in an economic downturn.

German citizens lost faith in the government and abandoned the

25. R. Henig 1998 „The Weimar Republic 1919-1933”, London-New York.

major political parties after unemployment and famine reappeared for the second time in a decade. Instead, they turned to fringe movements dedicated to subverting and demolishing democracy²⁶.

The German government faced the classic dilemma: cut government spending in an attempt to balance the budget or increase it in an attempt to jumpstart the economy. Heinrich Brüning, who became Chancellor in 1930, chose the deeply unpopular option of an austerity program that cut spending and those programs designed precisely to help those most in need²⁷.

Much of the Weimar Republic's recovery during its golden years was due to a steady flow of American dollars into its economy. But unbeknownst to Germany, America had positioned itself for an economic disaster of its own as it struggled with increased unemployment, low wages, declining stock values and massive, unliquidated bank loans²⁸.

Economic hardship combined with a general distrust of the Weimar system destabilized parliamentary politics. Majorities and even coalitions in the Reichstag were difficult to form among an increasingly considerable number of extremist parties, left and right. Elections were held increasingly frequently²⁹. One of these groups, the National Socialist German Workers' Party or NSDAP, had been

26. P.D. Stachura 1986 "Unemployment and the Great Depression in Weimar Germany", New York.

27. D. Abraham 1986 "The Collapse of the Weimar Republic, Political Economy and Crisis", Holmes & Meier.

28. P.D. Stachura 1986 "Unemployment and the Great Depression in Weimar Germany", New York.

29. D. Abraham 1986 "The Collapse of the Weimar Republic, Political Economy and Crisis", Holmes & Meier.

small and insignificant during the 1920s. As conditions in Germany deteriorated, however, the NSDAP's electoral fortunes improved and the ranting speeches of its leader, Adolf Hitler, began to strike a chord with the German people. Until then NSDAP was a minor far-right party, increased its votes to 19%, becoming Germany's second-largest party, while the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) also increased its votes; this made the unstable coalition system by which every chancellor had governed increasingly unworkable.

A Recipe for Creating a Dictator

The Weimar Constitution was born in opposition to two models: The German Empire's constitutional monarchy and post-revolutionary Russia's concept of a soviet republic. Although there was strong political support for each of the two concepts, with national conservatives (e.g., DNVP) on the one and socialists (e.g., USPD) on the other side, a large centrist majority (e.g., SPD, CVP, DDP) chose to abolish the monarchy and incorporate some of its key features at the same time³⁰.

One central flaw was the accumulation of powers granted to the President of the Weimar Republic, whose function was later referred to as that of a "Substitute Emperor." Nevertheless, it would be too easy to identify these extensive powers as the primary cause of the Republic's demise. The Weimar National Assembly intended to design a balanced system, with elaborate sets of competencies in mutual interconnectedness. The Parliament was able to dismiss the Government by a vote of no confidence (Article 54)³¹ and, with a two-

30. L.E. Jones, 2020 "The German Right, 1918-1930 Political Parties, Organized Interests, and Patriotic Associations in the Struggle against Weimar Democracy", Cambridge University Press.

31. R. Poll „The Weimar Constitution Germany's first Democratic Constitution,

thirds majority, even to initiate the President's removal by popular vote (Article 43 paragraph 2)³².

Despite these foundational arrangements, the constitutional reality did not live up to its democratic potential. The political parties of the Weimar Republic were shaped by their experience in the German Empire. Neither had they been responsible for appointing a government in the years from 1871 to 1919 nor were they able to do so in the new-born Weimar Republic. The Parliament could dismiss the government by a vote of no confidence (Article 54)³³ but relied on the President to appoint a new one (Article 53)³⁴. Additionally, the Parliament was highly fragmented by the electoral principle of proportional representation without an electoral threshold, which allowed for 10 to 15 parties to be elected to the same parliament. As a result, the system favoured the establishment of a weak minority or fragile majority governments.

It is true, in 1928; the Nazi party was a marginal, unimportant political group that had extraordinarily little resonance beyond some very distinctive places that were already in depression before the Great Depression -- agricultural areas in particular. But in many ways, the Republic was seriously undermined, and the political system was paralyzed before the Nazi seizure of power. In a depression especially, people look for solutions and the Republic was not offering any to the economic crisis. From 1930 onwards, Germany was governed under a presidential dictatorship because the political

its Collapse, and the Lessons for Today" May 2020, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, pp. 5.

32. Ibid. pp. 5.

33. "The Constitution of the German Reich" / August 11, 1919 / Translation of Document 2050-PS / Office of U.S. Chief of Counsel, pp. 11

34. Ibid. pp. 11.

system was so fragmented that the Reichstag could not assemble or function in a parliamentary majority. So, the chancellor from spring of 1930 onwards, Heinrich Brüning and his successors governed largely through emergency powers proclaimed by the president, Field Marshall Paul von Hindenburg.

Paul von Hindenburg himself became Reichspräsident (President) in 1925. As he was an old-style monarchist conservative, he had little love lost for the Republic, but for the most part, he formally acted within the bounds of the constitution; however, he ultimately—on the advice of his son and others close to him—appointed Hitler chancellor, thereby effectively ending the Republic. Additionally, Hindenburg's death in 1934 ended the last obstacle for Hitler to assume full power in the Weimar Republic³⁵.

It is useful to underscore the fact that the Nazis never received a majority vote in a popular, freely contested election. In the summer of 1932, they received 37.4 per cent of the vote -- the highest they would ever receive. It is a significant jump to be sure but that's not a majority and the popular phrase that one hears so often, "the German people elected Hitler to power or elected the Nazis to power" -- that's wrong, it's inaccurate and untrue. The Nazis were never elected to power. In the next election, in the fall of 1932, they already lost a significant percentage of the support they had gained in the summer. At the very end, they came to power because the establishment conservative elite, a coterie of powerful men around President Hindenburg, handed power over to the Nazis. That alliance is what ultimately killed the Weimar Republic.

From 1930 onwards, President Hindenburg used emergency powers to back Chancellors Heinrich Brüning (1930–32), Franz von Papen (1932) and General Kurt von Schleicher (1932–33). The Great

35. R.A. Beram 1987, "Paul von Hindenburg", Chelsea House.

Depression, exacerbated by Brüning's policy of deflation, led to a surge in unemployment. On 30 January 1933, Hindenburg appointed Hitler as Chancellor at the head of a coalition government. Hitler's Nazi Party held two out of ten cabinet seats. Von Papen as Vice-Chancellor was intended to be the "éminence grise" who would keep Hitler under control, using his close personal connection to Hindenburg. These intentions badly underestimated Hitler's political abilities.

Following the break-up of the last grand coalition in the summer of 1930, governments of the Reich were no longer formed by Parliament but were based on what was known as presidential cabinets. Without a parliamentary majority of their own, they essentially governed with the aid of the President of the Reich, who enacted decrees under the emergency powers granted him by Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution; this marked the start of a creeping process of constitutional change to the detriment of the Reichstag. While the first Chancellor of such a presidential cabinet, Heinrich Brüning of the Centre Party, who held office from 1930 to 1932, still felt committed to democracy, his non-attached successors, Franz von Papen, and Kurt von Schleicher, who took office in June 1932 and December 1932 respectively, openly pursued policies designed to put an end to the Weimar Republic³⁶.

It is widely believed that the 1919 constitution had several weaknesses, making the eventual establishment of a dictatorship likely, but it is unknown whether a different constitution could have prevented the rise of the Nazi party. However, it is worth mentioning that the 1949 West German constitution (the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany) is generally viewed as a strong response to

36. L.E. Jones 2016, "Hitler versus Hindenburg, the 1932 Presidential Elections and the End of the Weimar Republic" Cambridge University Press.

these flaws³⁷.

In a brief, the Weimar Constitution contained the following key points: (The most essential articles of this Constitution are listed in Appendix B.)

- The German Reich is a Republic.
- The government is made of a president, a chancellor, and a parliament (Reichstag).
- Representatives of the people must be elected equally every four years by all men and women over age 20.
- The term of the President is seven years.
- All orders of the President must be endorsed by the Chancellor or a Reich Minister.
- Article 48 allows the President to suspend civil rights and operate independently in an emergency.
- Two legislative bodies (the Reichstag and the Reichsrat) were formed to represent the German people.
- All Germans are equal and have the same civil rights and responsibilities.
- All Germans have the right to freedom of expression.
- All Germans have the right to peaceful assembly.
- All Germans have the right to freedom of religion; there is no state church.
- State-run, public education is free and mandatory for children.

37. R. Poll „The Weimar Constitution Germany’s first Democratic Constitution, its Collapse, and the Lessons for Today” May 2020, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, pp. 1.

- All Germans have the right to private property.
- All Germans have the right to equal opportunity and earnings in the workplace

The Nazi Party was formed during the Weimar era and rose to prominence in the Republic's final years. We need to understand that the Nazis' rise to power was not inevitable; it was, rather, the result of choices made by many individuals and groups within the context of a vibrant society characterised by both creativity and anxiety.

A combination of political and economic dissatisfaction, some of it dating back to the founding of the Republic, helped create the conditions for Hitler's rise to power. By drawing together the fringe nationalist parties into his Nazi Party, Adolf Hitler was able to gain a sufficient number of seats in the Reichstag to make him a political player. Eventually, conservatives, hoping to control him and capitalize on his popularity brought him into the government. However, Hitler used the weaknesses written into the Weimar Constitution (like Article 48) to subvert it and assume dictatorial power. The Weimar Republic ended with Hitler's appointment as Chancellor in 1933.

By the end of March 1933, the Reichstag Fire Decree and the Enabling Act of 1933 had used the perceived state of emergency to effectively grant the new Chancellor broad power to act outside parliamentary control. Hitler promptly used these powers to thwart constitutional governance and suspend civil liberties, which brought about the swift collapse of democracy at the federal and state level and the creation of a single-party dictatorship under Hitler³⁸.

The passage of the Enabling Act of 1933 is widely considered to mark the end of the Weimar Republic and the beginning of the Nazi

38. Ibid.

era. It empowered the cabinet to legislate without the approval of the Reichstag or the President and to enact laws that were contrary to the constitution. Before the March 1933 elections, Hitler had persuaded Hindenburg to promulgate the Reichstag Fire Decree using Article 48, which empowered the government to restrict “the rights of habeas corpus [...] freedom of the press, the freedom to organise and assemble, the privacy of postal, telegraphic, and telephonic communications” and legalised search warrants and confiscation “beyond legal limits otherwise prescribed”. This was intended to forestall any action against the government by the Communists.

Hitler used the provisions of the Enabling Act to pre-empt possible opposition to his dictatorship from other sources, in which he was mostly successful: in the months following the passage of the Enabling Act, all German parties aside from the NSDAP were banned or forced to disband themselves, all trade unions were dissolved and all media were brought under the control of the Reich Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda. The Reichstag was then dissolved by Hindenburg, and a snap one-party election was called in November 1933, giving the NSDAP full control of the chamber.

The constitution of 1919 was never formally repealed, but the Enabling Act meant that it was a dead letter. The Reichstag was effectively eliminated as an active player in German politics. It only met sporadically until the end of World War two, held no debates and enacted only a few laws; for all purposes, it was reduced to a mere stage for Hitler’s speeches. The other chamber of the German parliament (the Reichsrat) was officially abolished in February 1934; this decision was in clear violation of the Enabling Act, which stipulated that any laws passed under its authority could not affect the institutions of either chamber. By this time, however, the Nazis had become a law unto themselves, and these actions were never

challenged in court³⁹.

President Hindenburg, despite his misgivings about the Nazis' goals and about Hitler as a personality, reluctantly agreed to Papen's theory that, with Nazi popular support on the wane, Hitler could now be controlled as Chancellor. He was named Chancellor in January 1933. Within weeks, he invoked Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution to quash many civil rights and suppress members of the Communist party⁴⁰.

On 2 August 1934 Hindenburg died from lung cancer, thus eliminating any remaining obstacle to Nazi full dominance; the day after his death, the Hitler Cabinet passed a "Law Concerning the Highest State Office of the Reich", transferring the President's powers to the new post of "Führer and Reich chancellor", giving him complete power on all the Reich without any possibility of check and balance. Such a move was later ratified by a highly non-democratic referendum.

Meetings of the left-wing parties were banned and even some of the moderate parties found their members threatened and assaulted. Measures with an appearance of legality suppressed the Communist Party in mid-February and included the plainly illegal arrests of Reichstag deputies⁴¹.

In March 1933, Hitler introduced the Enabling Act to allow him to

39. L.E. Jones 2016, "Hitler versus Hindenburg, the 1932 Presidential Elections and the End of the Weimar Republic" Cambridge University Press.

40. E.Kennedy 2004 "Constitutional Failure, Carl Schmitt in Weimar", Durham-London.

41. E. J. Feuchtwanger 1993 „From Weimar to Hitler/ Germany, 1918-33", pp. 1-13, New York.

pass laws without the approval of Germany's Parliament or President. To make sure the Enabling Act was passed, Hitler forcibly prevented Communist Parliament members from voting. Once it became law, Hitler was free to legislate as he saw fit and establish his dictatorship without any checks and balances⁴².

One irony which is worth highlighting here is that only until 1932 Hitler was granted German citizenship. On February 25, 1932, the city of Braunschweig granted Adolf Hitler citizenship of Germany. Hitler, who was born in Austria in 1889, had immigrated to Germany in 1913, and renounced his Austrian citizenship in 1925 on the grounds that he had been living in Germany since 1912 and served in the German army in World War One. Austria agreed and Hitler was stateless until officially becoming German seven years later. This only came about when a fellow member of the Nazi Party appointed Hitler to a low-level government job that came with automatic citizenship. One year on Hitler became German chancellor⁴³.

Compare and Contrast Weimar vs Iraq post-2003

Now that we have studied and analyzed the Weimar republic and its history in detail and before we reflect on the key lessons for the Iraq post-2003 republic from the Weimar republic perspective, it is worth trying to compare and contrast both republics to explore similarities and differences. At first glance one might not see many similarities being 80 years apart plus events taking place across two different continents, however when one looks at the details of both republics, one cannot run away their its many similarities. Let us now look into them in detail:

42. Ibid.

43. I. Kershaw 2010, „Hitler: A Biography”, W. W. Norton.

- The Weimar republic was conceived while an ongoing transnational major revolution was taking place in its next-door large neighbor Russia. This situation is not that much different to the Iranian Islamic Republic revolution next door to Iraq. The fear and impact of the Bolsheviks on Germany following its new revolution created its own dynamic within Germany, likewise with international containment of that revolution and its impact on its geopolitics.
- The geopolitics of Germany and Iraq is one of a transit country and not an isolated island. Both countries are similar in size and have open borders toward their neighbors in all four directions. This similarity creates somewhat similar geopolitics attributes.
- Both countries have deep civilizational history and dimension yet their formation into a state was not that old. This created an important challenge in which people's relationship to the land is very old and entrenched, yet their association with the governing mechanism or state system is still not deeply rooted and sometimes fragile. In reflection, one can say that people's (German and Iraqi) association with the governing system is fragile, yet their association with their country's "land" is very deep. Not fulfilling this deep association meant that their pride is being challenged all the time and hence the frustration of society with its political class and a sense of helplessness.
- Although both countries dealt with the USA at a different juncture in US's lifecycle and historical transformation, one cannot escape from the fact of the over-dependency of both republics on the power and wealth of the USA. Hence political turbulence in USA did have a direct impact on both republics.
- Since governing the Weimar republic was difficult without its

executive order utilization of emergency decrees, one cannot escape from its comparison to the “by delegate/Wakala” decrees which the Iraqi government utilize to by-pass the dilemma of appointments of key positions without the ratification by parliament as it is constitutionally required.

- Both political systems encouraged and lead to the creation of many small political parties which lead to the near impossibility for the formation of governments or the ability to have a healthy party system in which ideology, policies or bipartisan prevail.
- Both republics were formed following the major military defeat and also following major international sanctions. This led to the need to address a complicated legacy from the old system of governing plus the obligation to comply with the wishes of the victorious countries upon them. This also leads to a deep feeling of victimization and/or betrayal by its leaders and neighbor countries.
- Likewise, one can make a clear comparison between the enforcement of the Treaty of Versailles vs the heavy constraints on Iraq from the many UNSC resolutions under chapter 7 and other chapters from 1990 onward. This restriction included the inability to develop its army, financial constrained plus isolationism from the international stage and hence loss of sovereignty.
- Both countries underwent major wars with major civilian and infrastructure casualties and damage. Militarization of society, underdevelopment of infrastructure, a high percentage of male orphanages...etc. are some common results for states who undergone wars and violence for generations.
- The resurrection of populist movements and political parties which

lead to the creation of iconic leaders and their inability to govern wisely or utilize the political base support to the better development of their societies. Instead, this popularism was utilized by infusion of hatred toward minorities or division of society into camps and trenches.

- The fragility of democracy for both Republics and its struggle to create a stable political class and hence a stable government system. This fragility was caused by internal and external factors. Democracy was new to these societies, self-governing was new too, the legacy of dictatorship was entrenched, international environment or players did not give space nor time to support these two new republics.
- The weakness of both constitutions to address key political challenges faced by these two new republics. Mainly the inability of the constitution to resolve these challenges meant that time was not a supporting factor. Issues got more complicated to address unless one utilizes governing by exception procedures. This means that exception became the norm and hence governing by agreement or consensus was a luxury.
- Although the Weimar republic was a new political concept at the time and was considered a pioneer in the development of democratic states, it was unable to unshackle itself from the old parties' establishment and its holds on power regardless of the political system being imperial or republic. In the Iraqi scenario, very few new political parties were formed and hence pre-2003 political parties (which were in exile) dominated the political landscape. While in the Weimar scenario German political parties were heavily influenced by the German Empire experience. This

lack of new organic political parties meant that old political cultures continued, and people's "new generations" aspiration was difficult to fulfil.

- Continuous change of leadership and more so at the PM/Chancellor level meant a lack of continuity of governing and an inability of the leadership to cement certain culture or leadership signature. This insatiability meant that necessary transitional reform and change were difficult to manage and implement efficiently.
- Overdependency of the economy on a single factor/commodity meant its economy is being hostage to a particular factor (loans from the USA in the Weimar case and petroleum in the Iraqi case). Likewise, because of this rentier approach both countries' heavy dependency, including loans, on the international community for their financial dealings and stability.
- Due to the large numbers of political parties associated with government formation, the establishment of a weak minority or fragile majority government was the norm. This led to the establishment of weak governments in which government policies are usually the product of the least common denominator and no major reforms are being able to be adopted.
- Both republics thought that their respective new constitutions were unique and pioneering. This might be the case; however, the constitution is only one key component, among many, which needs to be developed and stabilize to create a prosperous political climate.
- The failure of the Weimar republic to deliver prosperity and stability in the aftermath of long and bloody war meant that people sought alternative solutions via popularism and harsh political doctrine as was case with Naziism. In Iraq, we now see increasing

calls that the current republic is not delivering what it promised; hence democracy is not working and calls that dictatorship might be the right solution is becoming louder.

- The ability of popularism of politics to resurrect calls for the revitalization of the supreme character of Germans or Iraqis and that their civilizational destiny can only be achieved via a tough strong governing system which only dictatorship deliver.
- Both countries played a key role in the developments, and dominants, of their region, which has created a narrative that Germans and Iraqis cannot self-contain their dreams and aspiration to dominate their region and hence others need to conspire to kill any big aspiration Germans and Iraqis have. This meant that distrust (and cold war doctrine) is their normal mode of operation with its neighbours. Likewise, both countries should need to have a very limited role to play in their respective region.
- We can see clearly that cultural explosions took place across both republics. The new republics created an atmosphere of creativity and freedom. This in turn meant a new type of science, philosophy, art, and culture being created.
- Both republics faced a harsh question regarding how strong it was national discourses and their ability to push off their respective new global ideology of transnational Islamism (in the Iraq case) or communism (as in the case of the Weimar case).
- Comparing the geopolitical landscape of Germany, during its Weimar year's formation, with that of Iraq post-2003 republic, one cannot escape from the similarities of its external and internal dynamics, players, and environment. Neighboring countries being

hostile to the new republic or trying to shape the direction of this new change in its interests are only two examples. Fearful of what a new republic brings to their region, yet angry with its previous system of governing, due to its aggression and threats toward its neighboring, meant having a turbulent relationship with all (regional and international stakeholders) was the norm. This leads the people of these two republics to feel as though they are at the centre of a hostile regional and international environment. Hence distrust of others and constant fear of conspiracy became the prevailing narrative.

Since the core assumption of this paper is to highlight the concern regarding the rise of an Iraqi version of Naziism and its destructive aftermath, one might ask as who is or are the potential candidates for such an entity? my answer is that the conditions are similitar and as we explained in this paper the rise of Naziism did not take long and Hitler was not the main reason for this rise hence the risk for the rise of a nationalistic populist distractive entity within the Iraqi society and its hijacking of the political landscape is not fiction or impossible, in fact I can say that the current trajectory of political discourse of Iraq will lead to a similar end. This can only be stopped if we pause, reflect (strength, weakness, opportunities and threats), act and reform our Iraqi politics fundamentally.

Finally, one might observe that Germany society is not the same or similitar to the Iraqi society, in fact it is very dissimilar, since there are key cultural distinctions between the two; likewise, Germany governing system and society has quite few positive characteristics which is not present in the current Iraqi scenario. This relates to lack of corruption, functioning bureaucracy, perfectionist attitude, love of fatherland, hard work ethics, all citizens are equal and hence no

discrimination regarding ethnicity or ethnos-sectarianism. This is true and Iraqis themselves have their own unique characteristics, and hence the paper does not try to make both examples identical but articulate the similarities in which the political discourse might be hijacked by few evil entities due to the lack of focus on the big picture.

Lessons for Iraq:

In reflection on the formation and decline of the Weimar Republic, one cannot escape from the richness of possible lessons to be learned from this period. More so to us Iraqis who urgently need to rectify our fragile post-2003 democratic Republic. Some of these lessons relate to:

- A key lesson is that under extreme economic conditions, proportional representation (PR) can make matters worse. When a country's politics are fragmented, PR is more likely to deliver an incoherent electoral majority, usually comprising parties on the far left and the far right that want to reject "the system" but agree on little else.
- A constitution does not necessarily protect a system. The Weimar constitution, designed by some of the day's most insightful and ethical experts (including Max Weber), was near-perfect. But when unanticipated events – whether foreign-policy dramas or domestic unrest – are interpreted as emergencies requiring an extra-legal framework, constitutional protections can erode rapidly. And the enemies of democracy can foment such events.
- The adverse effect of the creation of a political culture in which leaders demonize their opponents erodes democracy. In the Weimar Republic, that pattern began before the Nazis became a

significant force.

- The president's family can be dangerous. In Weimar, the aged field marshal Paul von Hindenburg was elected president in 1925 and re-elected in 1932. But by the early 1930s, after several small strokes, he was suffering from dementia, and his weak and incapable son, Oskar, controlled all access to him. The result was that he ended up signing whatever agreements were presented to him.
- Referenda, in an unhealthy democratic environment, are dangerous, especially when they are rarely used, and the electorate has little experience with them. In the Weimar Republic, the National Socialists had virtually disappeared by 1929. But that year, the party was able to re-establish itself by campaigning in a fiercely fought referendum over post-World War I reparations.
- History does repeat itself if we don't reflect on rich experiences, such as the Weimar Republic, the likelihood of repeating key mistakes is much higher. The Weimar republic provides lots of rich examples for us to learn from. Countries might conspire to limit the development of new republics, more so if it is different and provides a new narrative such as democracy or self-governing, however, this conspiracy can be greatly halted if the internal political cohesion is strong.
- New republics are usually fragile at their conception stage; it needs to be nurtured by their neighbor and internal players.
- Cleansing one's society, more so from new republics, from the culture of violence and blame require a sophisticated approach that can only be generated by the continuity of its leadership and diversity of its founding fathers.

- Dictatorship may prevail if political constitutes lose sight of practicing democracy and focus instead on its short-termism, self-interest, and petty politics.
- For new republics creating consensus on national identity is a prerequisite for stability and prosperity.
- Inabilities of large mainstream political parties to address the core needs and aspirations of its people at difficult times means that people will turn to fringe groups and populist charismatic leaders instead.
- During difficult times, dissolution societies might find it easier to blame the minorities for their troubles. This is especially true if populist leaders encourage it without being challenged by mainstream parties.

Key Take-Away:

- As one can see from the comparison of both republics, Weimar Germany, and Iraq post-2003 republic, many similarities exist, and many lessons can be taken away. However, the overriding question (and fear) in my mind when I wrote this paper was “Is Iraq moving toward the same direction and fate of the Weimar republic? With dictatorship prevailing and the conversion of the whole society into a war machine a likely prospect?”
- True, each republic has its unique local, national, and international characteristics and environment, however human nature, individually and in society as a collective, at their core behave similarly when they confront similar forces and drivers. When nations come out of fog of war their orientation and moral compass might be disillusioned in itself which create an opportunity for

charismatic populist leaders to hijack and prevail with their self-centered narratives and interests. This was not unique to Weimar and possible for Iraq. Hitler and Naziism might be the product of their environment, and one might say a product of post-World War I galvanization and aftermath, however, this was not the destiny of Germany. Germany could have headed in so many other directions if its republic founding fathers and intelligentsia took a pause and reflected on their actions (or inaction) and direction.

- Iraqi society faces a similar question as to the direction of their path ahead. Is it one of peace and prosperity or one of violence, poverty, illiteracy, and health deterioration? The clock is ticking while the heavy legacy of issues is not being addressed by their successive ineffective governments which the people themselves have elected. Yet new major challenges are being added every day and society, more so its youth, feel they are being a hostage to an unfriendly environment and its dysfunctional political class.
- In facing such a challenge, they might think a quick solution might be in the return of dictatorship, however since they are aware of its destructiveness, this time they might be willing to deceive themselves and persuaded their subconscious that “a just” dictator is what Iraqi need. Hence all is required is for some charismatic populist leader to embrace such a narrative and ride on the anger of the people toward governing, under the banner of popular demand and end chaos.

Such a tragic outcome is not a piece of fiction nor is it fateful. Hence making a peaceful and prosperous future is in our hands if we learn from history and try to rectify our present correctly.

Conclusion

On 14 August 1919, Germany's first democratic constitution came into force. The Constitution of the German Reich, soon known as the Weimar Constitution marked the end of the German Empire and introduced a legal framework that was ambitious for its time - maybe too ambitious.

Only 14 years later, the Weimar Republic collapsed into Nazi Germany, an authoritarian state with its dictator as an untouchable centre of the law. The question of whether or not Hitler's rise to power had been predetermined by the flaws and weaknesses inherent to the Weimar Constitution was heavily discussed throughout the second half of the 20th century. The legacy of the 1919 constitution, however, reaches far beyond its failure: Germany's post-World War Two constitution, the Basic Law of 1949 was largely drafted in reflection of the Weimar Republic but also incorporated certain of its constitutional provisions, acknowledging their progressive design.

Today, the Weimar experience provides the potential of critical reflection for constitution-building in young democracies as well as for established democratic states, whose foundations are increasingly subject to illiberal and populist attacks. Even as the Weimar Republic was being dismantled by the Nazis, historians and political scientists sought to explain why democracy had failed in post-world war I Germany. They found no easy answers. The Weimar Republic died a death of a thousand cuts. It was weakened and undermined by a myriad of factors and forces.

We should not forget that few democracies have been founded in such difficult circumstances as the Weimar Republic. The Republic needed long breathing space, it needed a more expansive and forgiving

attitude on the part of the Western allies, it needed economic stability and progress -- all of that was in precious short supply in the post-World War One years.

A century after the original events, this debate continues among historians into the 21st century. The main outlines of the debate include: how much room to manoeuvre was available diplomatically and politically; the inevitable consequences of pre-war armament policies; the role of domestic policy and social and economic tensions in the foreign relations of the states involved; the role of public opinion and their experience of war in the face of organized propaganda and finally the role of economic interests and top military commanders in torpedoing de-escalation and peace negotiations.

The reasons for the Weimar Republic's collapse are the subject of continuing debate. It may have been doomed from the beginning since even moderates disliked it and extremists on both the left and right loathed it, a situation often referred to as a "democracy without democrats". Germany had limited democratic traditions, and Weimar democracy was widely seen as chaotic. Since Weimar politicians had been blamed for the Dolchstoß («stab-in-the-back»), a widely believed theory that Germany's surrender in the First World War had been the unnecessary act of traitors, the popular legitimacy of the government was on shaky ground. As normal parliamentary law-making broke down and was replaced around 1930 by a series of emergency decrees, the decreasing popular legitimacy of the government further drove voters to extremist parties.

More than one hundred years after the Weimar Constitution came into force and 89 years after the Nazi take-over, the world is facing a revival of illiberal nationalism. Both, young as well as

older, more established democracies are struggling with the rise of parties that promote isolationist agendas, social exclusion, and cultural homogeneity while claiming to be the only or the real voice representing the people. This populist claim to sole representation is threatening the very core of democratic participation and decision-making in the 21st century. It is also undermining the rule of law, by attacking the separation of powers and especially the independence and legitimacy of judicial institutions.

No single reason can explain the failure of the Weimar Republic. The most commonly asserted causes can be grouped into three categories: economic problems, institutional problems, and the roles of specific individuals. When created, the Weimar Republic was hailed as one of the most democratic governments in Europe, despite this, it lasted just under fifteen years.

The Weimar Republic was characterised by contrasts and conflicts. The new constitution granted significant new rights and freedoms to individuals and groups, beginning an era in which creativity and experimentation flourished. At the same time, the Republic struggled to convince many Germans, accustomed to monarchy, to accept and trust its authority. The people's confidence in the republic was especially damaged as the country faced economic crises as well as challenges from political parties that were hostile to democracy.

The Weimar Republic came to bear for many Germans the humiliation of World War I and the blame for all its accompanying hardships. In many ways, it never shook this association, particularly from the clauses of the Versailles Treaty that reduced the once-proud German military to practically nothing and placed all blame for the war on Germany.

The Republic had much democratic strength. It allowed individual freedoms for everyone. This granted the right to free speech, the right to equality and the right to religion to every German citizen. All adults over the age of twenty could vote. The voting system used was Proportional Representation, a fair system in which parties gain seats in proportion to the number of votes cast for them and this system was used to elect the president and the Reichstag. From 1924 onwards the republic also had a new currency, and following the implementation Dawes Plan, experienced a period of relative economic stability.

The reliance on foreign loans following the Dawes Plan led to severe economic depression following the Wall Street Crash. This ultimately led to further political instability, and eventually, contributed to the end of democratic government. From 1918 to 1923, the Weimar Republic suffered grave problems, such as hyperinflation, political extremism, including political murders and two attempted power seizures by contending paramilitaries, as well as contentious relationships with the victors of the First World War.

From 1924 to 1929, a great deal of monetary and political stability was restored, and the Republic enjoyed relative prosperity. Those years are sometimes called the Golden Twenties. But the global economic crisis, as of October 1929, hit Germany exceptionally hard. High unemployment led to the collapse of the coalition government and from March 1930 various chancellors ruled through emergency powers granted by President Paul von Hindenburg. This period ended with Adolf Hitler's appointment as chancellor on 30 January 1933.

Appendix A -Presidents and Chancellors of the Weimar Republic (1919–33)

- President Friedrich Ebert (1919)

- President Hans Luther (1925) Acting
- President Walter Simons (1925) Acting
- President General Feld marshal Paul von Hindenburg (1925)
- Chancellor Philipp Scheidemann (1919)
- Chancellor Gustav Bauer (1919–20)
- Chancellor Hermann Müller (1920; 1st time)
- Chancellor Konstantin Fehrenbach (1920–21)
- Chancellor Joseph Wirth (1921–22)
- Chancellor Wilhelm Cuno (1922–23)
- Chancellor Gustav Stresemann (1923)
- Chancellor Wilhelm Marx (1923–25; 1st time)
- Chancellor Hans Luther (1925–26)
- Chancellor Wilhelm Marx (1926–28; 2nd time)
- Chancellor Hermann Müller (1928–30; 2nd time)
- Chancellor Heinrich Brüning (1930–32)
- Chancellor Franz von Papen (1932) {22}
- Chancellor Kurt von Schleicher (1932–33n)
- Chancellor Adolf Hitler (1933–45)

Appendix B –Key Characteristics of the Weimar Constitution

On August 11, 1919, the Weimar Constitution was signed into law by President Ebert. The law faced venomous opposition from the

military and the radical left. The Constitution contained 181 articles and covered everything from the structure of the German state (Reich) and the rights of the German people to religious freedom and how laws should be enacted.

There were two parliamentary houses in the Republic, the Reichstag and the Reichsrat. The chancellor was the leader of the Reichstag. The chancellor held a similar position to the British Prime Minister and was appointed by the President. Typically, the chancellor would be the leader of the largest party, although this was not always the case.

The Weimar Republic was a federal system. It was split into eighteen different states called Länder, each of which had their own local government. The Länder could send representatives from their local government to the Reichsrat. Despite these changes, there were also many aspects of the government that many aspects of the government continued as before. To maintain stability in government, many of the old civil servants and military leaders stayed in similar positions of power, and therefore still had enormous influence.

Similar to the Constitution of the German Empire of 1871, the content of the Weimar Constitution can be structured into three structured into three part the competencies: the competences of the state, its internal organization and its relation to the people. One of the key features of the new constitution was the strong position of the President (“Reichspräsident”) whose most crucial competencies included the right to appoint and remove the Chancellor (Article 53), the right to dissolve the Parliament (“Reichstag”) (Article 25) and the power to take emergency measures as well as promulgate emergency decrees (Article 48)⁴⁴.

44. “The Constitution of the German Reich” / August 11, 1919 / Translation of

Other than through elections, people were able to influence the legislative process directly by referendum. The resulting triad of participatory rights was based on the intent to diversify channels of the people's will in order to enhance its display. Despite the intent, political reality did not meet the potential of this direct democratic element. Article 73 had set the quorums too high to allow a fruitful application. From the few referendums that reached the necessary quorum, not one was successful. Possibilities of top-down initiatives by the President were never explored, due to the clear advantages of the emergency powers granted by (Article 48)⁴⁵.

Article 48 of the constitution gave the president authority to rule by decree in the state of an emergency, bypassing the elected Reichstag. It did not, however, give a definition as to what constituted a 'state of emergency.' This article was repeatedly misused by President Hindenburg and eventually allowed Hitler to 'legally' take total control of Germany⁴⁶.

This openness of the Weimar Constitution, which was not only expressed by the agenda-setting in Chapter II, but also by the usage of vague terminologies, such as the conditions of the presidential emergency powers in Article 48 paragraph 2 ("If public safety and order be seriously disturbed or threatened [...]"), were where the root of the Weimar Republic's dynamic constitutional development. The Weimar Constitution framed the political order and opened it up for legislative appropriation and judicial interpretation, thus entrusted entrusting its own development to the source of its legitimacy: the

Document 2050-PS / Office of U.S. Chief of Counsel.

45. Ibid.

46. R.A. Beram 1987, "Paul von Hindenburg", Chelsea House..

sovereignty of the people (Art.1 paragraph 1)⁴⁷.

On the day of the constitution's adoption by the National Assembly, Eduard David, Minister of the Interior {1863 -1930}, called the new-born system the "most democratic democracy of the world." What turned out to be more than a slight misjudgement yet expressed the hopes that were attached to the new Weimar Republic, an era that was meant to be built on, what President Friedrich Ebert called "the change from Imperialism to Idealism, from world power to spiritual greatness."⁴⁸.

While Friedrich Ebert, the Republic's first President had promulgated 136 emergency decrees during the crisis-ridden period of 1919 – 1925, he was aware of the problematic implications and therefore tried to develop the parliament's ability to meet its democratic responsibilities. His successor Paul von Hindenburg, however, stood for a strong presidential republic and opposed a strengthening of the Parliament. From 1930 to 1932, he issued 109 emergency decrees, which widened the scope of Article 48 paragraph 2 almost boundlessly and once and for all affirmed its status as "back-up constitution." With him, the general rule of Weimar's institutional framework had shifted to the permanent state of exception.

Considering the historical legacy of the German Empire, its lost war, the social and economic conditions, the political action, or the lack thereof and the spreading anti-democratic sentiment, the Weimar Constitution, its drafting and later application, have to be analysed

47. "The Constitution of the German Reich" / August 11, 1919 / Translation of Document 2050-PS / Office of U.S. Chief of Counsel.

48. 1947, "Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States", United States. Department of State, pp. 12.

within this complexity of interactive determination. In the words of historian Peter Gay: “The Republic was born in defeat, lived in turmoil, and died in the disaster.” Although the Weimar Constitution contained the opportunity for democratic development, it failed in securing it.

Abbreviation

SDP	Social Democratic Party
USDP	the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany
MSPD	Majority Social Democratic Party of Germany
Reichstag	The lower House of Parliament
Freikorps	Volunteer Corps
Kaiser	A German word for emperor

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