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# SOUNDSCAPES OF POWER: POLITICAL RECOMPOSITION OF IRAQI MUSIC BEFORE AND AFTER 2003

Israa Ghazi Ibrahim <sup>1</sup>, Roziyah Sidik <sup>2</sup>, Ermy Azziaty Rozali <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Institute of Islam Hadhari, National University of Malaysia, College of Fine Arts Music, University of Basra, Iraq*

<sup>2,3</sup>*Institute of Islam Hadhari, National University of Malaysia*

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Corresponding author: Israa Ghazi Ibrahim

([israa.ibrahim@uobasrah.edu.pk](mailto:israa.ibrahim@uobasrah.edu.pk))

## ABSTRACT

This study analysis the modifications within the Iraqi music purview to respond to the anarchy before and after the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq. The study was anchored by Antonio Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony which employs a historical-meta-analytic method. The study specifically examines how successive political governments used music to affirm the potency of their power, shape national mark and deal with dissent. The major sources of data in this study are secondary documents, which include critical discourse analysis, and archival items. The findings display a paradigmatic shift from the state-managed nationalist and militaristic music narratives under the leadership of Saddam Hussain to a more disorganized post-invasion scenario which was dominated by religious conservatism sectarian tendencies. The study clearly established the decline in the institutional motivation for the arts, the emergence of the digital opposition through music and the avoidance of secular music support. This article seeks to contribute to the discipline of political ethnomusicology through the contextualization of Iraqi music a s both a mechanism of ideological dominance and a channel of cultural resistance.

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**KEYWORDS:** Iraqi music, political ethnomusicology, cultural hegemony, authoritarian nationalism, post-2003 Iraq.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Music is not merely about entertainment, but also one of the important tools of expression of human culture, ideology and identity of a society. In a country like Iraq, music serves as a reflection of an ever-changing and fast-changing political landscape, more especially since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century to date. The cordial link between the political power and music has made a site of ideological fight which involves the individuals, society and the state. The post invasion of and the political set-up of a dictatorial government, especially the Islamist parties has reshaped the sort of music in a society like Iraq.

Since the era of Saddam Hussain's leadership, music has been strategically employed to instill nationalism, to support war and to glorify the country's system of leadership. The term music has been used to spread propaganda, to instigate a group of people and to make peace. The post-US invasion of Iraq in 2003 witnessed a drastic change in Iraqi politics that has completely changed the motivation of politics and musical culture in Iraq. The domination of conservative Islamic parties in the country led to the disintegration of artistic freedom and the discrimination of secular music. The unsteady post-war environment of Iraq, music has become the victim of the political and social dilemma which triggers an identity crisis in the Iraqi music world.

This study analyses how political power set-up in Iraq both before and after 2003 influenced the landscape in terms of direction, native and form of music. Applying the historical paradigm as well as the Antonio Gramsci's framework of the theory of cultural hegemony, this paper explains how political power not only applies coercion, but also changes cultural consensus through media, religion and education. The major enquiry in this study is how did political power set-up shape musical expression and the cultural identity in relation to Iraq before and after the Iraqi invasion of 2003? This study is important to both historical motivations and political ethnomusicology as well as the Middle Eastern cultural domains.

This article offers a unique contribution to the entity of political ethnomusicology by critically making a comparison of the two different hegemonic models that look authoritarian under Saddam Hussein and religious liberalism after 2003, and their potential impacts on the production of music, education and public inclusion in Iraq. The past studies in this field focused predominantly on the pre-invasion period of 2003

and they solely treated music as a cultural product, not process. This study positions the term music within the wider scope of political power dynamics that seeks to identify digital platforms as emerging portion of sonic resistance in a post-conflict community like. The study also sets out to advance the policy-oriented suggestions in order to rehabilitate the Iraqi musical arena, and to propose an inclusive national model that highlights Iraqi's ethnic and cultural diversity.

### 1.1 Theoretical Framework and Literature Highlights

This study focuses on an interdisciplinary approach between political ethnomusicology and the theory of cultural hegemony as proposed by Antonio Gramsci. Music in this context is not only understood as an artistic product, but as a social discourse that is influenced and shapes power relations in society. Gramsci introduced the concept of *hegemony* as a form of power that operates not solely through physical coercion (A. Gramsci 1990), but through the formation of cultural consensus accepted by society. In the context of Iraq, music was used as a tool to spread the values and ideology of the government, both through authoritarian nationalism during the Saddam Hussein regime and through post-2003 religious conservatism.

Ethnomusicology as a branch of social science functions to understand music within the cultural, social, political and historical framework of a society. John Blacking stated that music reflects value systems, social structures and collective identities (Blacking 1973). In the context of Iraq, various forms of music from war songs, patriotic songs, to religious music are reflections of profound political and cultural changes. Philip Bohlman also proposed that music is an "ideological site" (Bohlman 2002), where the struggle between national, ethnic and religious identities occurs in sometimes subtle but significant forms.

A review of the literature shows that there is a significant gap in academic studies that specifically examine the relationship between politics and music in the context of post-2003 Iraq. Relevant studies include Abdul Amir's work in *The Red Dress* (Abdul Amir 2017), which traces the history of Iraqi music as a propaganda field for the Saddam Hussein regime, and Al-Zahir's writing that highlights the influence of social change on popular songs of the 1970s and 1980s (Al-Zahir 2019). However, these studies focus more on the pre-invasion period, without providing in-depth analysis of the post-2003 changes involving Islamist

power and the significant impact on musicians, arts education institutions, and public perceptions of music.

This study also fills a gap in the literature by analyzing how the shift in political power has led to the transformation of Iraqi musical identity, from a symbol of nationalism to a religious instrument, and how the role of music as a channel of expression and resistance has also experienced a drastic decline. Through critical analysis of song discourse, music education policies, and artist testimonies, this article broadens the arguments in the field of cultural enquiry, music and political power in the present Arab peninsula.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative paradigm based on historical engagements and cultural discourse, with special emphasis on the transforming forms and meanings of music in the political domain of Iraq before and after 2003. This approach was selected because it allows researchers and scholars to analyse how modifications in the political structures may affect cultural display, in the sort of music, and the meaning that can be derived and manipulated by the powerful leaders.

### 2.1. Study Design

This study sets to adopt an exploratory qualitative approach that is descriptive and interpretively-based. The rationale is to find out the dominant patterns as well as narratives in the application of music by political powers and to determine the impact of political transformations on musical institutions and social reception of music.

### 2.2. Data Sources

The study combines both primary and secondary data sources. Some historical documents are the major constituents of data in this study which include song lyrics, speeches of some selected political leaders, media archives, interview transcripts, and some archival records such as the television footages, YouTube videos, and radio broadcasts. These materials will be supplemented by the secondary materials comprises of peer-reviewed journals, academic books, theses, NGO reports and the daily news coverage from some prominent media houses such as the Al-Jazeera, Elaph and Al-Arabia. Similarly, there are some remarkable scholarly materials that are in consonance with this topic like the works of Ali Abdul Amir and the writings of Fatima Al-Zahir, which scrutinize the socio-political effects on Iraqi

artistic production.

### 2.3. Analysis Methods

The analysis was conducted with the use of thematic content analysis and critical discourse analysis procedure, with special focus on numerous key extents. These may include the narratives obtained in song lyrics found during the Saddam Hussein leadership in connection with 2003 invasion. The study similarly, analysed the political influences that are shaped by the form and role of music. In addition, the study accorded special focus on performance style, the usage of visual symbolism and the modifying social spaces where music was produced and consumed by the public. The analysis later incorporated an analysis of political speeches, the function of the media channels, and the impact of arts education, policies in the construction of musical expression within the Iraq's socio-political model. Carried.

In addition, Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony is used as a theoretical lens to assess how political regimes shape and normalize values through musical expression. Understanding how music is used to gain social consent and how music acts as a form of silent resistance is also taken into account in this analysis.

It must be made clear that "talking about contemporary Iraqi songs has become a difficult and thorny subject due to the geographical and social changes brought about by industrial and political developments. Political songs also play a role in the lives of societies, even among the most warlike peoples. We must distinguish between political songs and patriotic songs (Mahdi 2015). because political songs are divided between committed songs, which are the songs of the cadres and the elite members of political organizations, and revolutionary songs, which are popular songs whose singers may not be members of a political organization. The difference is clear between bourgeois songs sung by bourgeois singers from the petty, middle, or upper-middle bourgeoisie, and popular songs listened to by the people of all social classes, especially workers, peasants, and intellectuals (Saad 2013). Here, we can give a vivid picture of the state of modern and contemporary Iraqi music and songs during and after wars.

### 2.4. Study Limitations

This study focuses specifically on Iraqi music during two main eras: before and after 2003. It does not focus on specific technical musical genres (such as maqam or Harmony), but rather emphasizes the sociopolitical and cultural dimensions of music.

Due to limited access to field data due to the security situation in Iraq, this study relies entirely on secondary data obtained from authentic and reliable sources.

#### ***2.4. Political Control and Iraqi Musical Identity Before 2003***

Musical identity has been important in the lives of peoples in the past to prove their existence and currently to prove their origin, because it meets at this point with most human identities across the world's geography, entering through several gates such as the gate of philosophy, history, human art, or social sciences. This expansion that musical identity has achieved is almost a horizontal expansion of the sense of human identity for the entire world, so combining authenticity and modernity in the nature of modern Iraqi song is an artistic necessity and a pressing civilizational need that preserves our character, identity, and position in the age of globalization and the mixing of cultures and arts (Al-Batiri 2018).

Culture is linked to civilization and inherited human heritage as the true measure of a people's authenticity and antiquity. As is well known, culture is a variable that changes in its composition and diversity in political, economic, or social situations, as well as the religious ideas and beliefs these peoples hold. It may be difficult to change or completely eliminate these traditions, even if they are negative customs and traditions. We note that there are many negative traditions that were and perhaps still are present among some peoples who embrace these traditions and represent a part of their culture and national or social identity. We find that some of these cultures have become intertwined with religion, making them an integral part of this religion. The identity of a people can also be revealed through the musical heritage of these peoples, in what language they sing, and the type of commercial activities that can reveal whether these peoples were poor or rich in livelihood and social ways of life or rich in knowledge and wisdom in their use of some of the vocabulary that appears on the horizon, how people sang, and whether there were nice and polite expressions in the songs, and to know the manifestations of moral sophistication of these peoples and tribes and to get to know their ethnicities and origins and to know the prevailing values in these peoples and societies, as we mentioned, through the prevailing songs in them as a rhythmic melody and a sung meaning. Likewise, the natures of these peoples and the ruling systems that dominated them in those times are discovered,

as well as the facts of wars and what happened in them and their circumstances and the joys of peace and security. However, Music in Iraqi society before 2003 was inseparable from the authoritarian political influence that gripped the country's social and cultural structure. The era of Saddam Hussein's rule, particularly from 1979 until his fall in 2003, showed how music was used as a tool of state propaganda and rebranded as part of a tightly controlled nationalist narrative by the government.

#### ***2.5. Music as an Instrument of National Ideology***

Studying the "History of Iraqi Art" is a study of the essence of its general history in society, politics and religion. If we consider art to be the national identity of its general history, then how can a specialist in the "History of Music" study it unless he studies the political, social and economic conditions in which that work of art was produced (Al-Hadith.Saadi 2016).

Throughout Saddam Hussein's reign, music and songs were initially dominated by popular, traditional and emotional styles, and spontaneous songs were sung for Iraq, the homeland, and then for the Iraqi army.

However, the matter did not continue for long in this way, rather the course of national songs changed to songs of glorification, and it began in the eighties during the beginning of the Iran-Iraq war, which lasted eight years. If we think carefully, we find that the First and Second World Wars did not last this long, and the spiritual and physical crescent continued. One is almost shocked when he learns that the Arabs spent in the last half century on buying deadly weapons at exorbitant prices, and how the war between Iran and Iraq lasted longer than the Second World War (Bunaman 2012). The previous war did not end until another war began, which lasted until 2003 AD, so that during these years there became a necessity to emphasize the glorification of the regime and its heroism as it saw it. Rather, the Iraqi song became recruited as the Iraqi army was recruited, and the matter became more complex and dangerous for every artist who does not obey the orders of the authorities, not to serve the country or anything else, but rather as a duty on Every artist and poet should write poetry, compose melodies, and singers should sing for Saddam alone, and no artist should be accepted without creating these musical works. The eighties song is a legitimate daughter of Saddam's war speech, which he used in his media machine.(Al-Zahir 2019)

the state used music to maintain power and

instill a doctrine of authoritarian nationalism. National anthems, praises to leaders, and war songs became major themes that dominated radio, television, and school curricula. Music was used to support the military agenda during the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988) and the Gulf War (1990–1991). In this context, music was no longer a space for free expression, but was fully politicized as a medium to reinforce Saddam Hussein's cult of personality (Al-Jumaili 2017). Not to mention what happened after the Gulf War, the economic blockade that began in 1991–2003 continued, as Iraqi society was cut off from the world and all standards of social, economic, educational and artistic life were destroyed and shattered (Abdul Amir 2017).

Poets, composers, and singers were required to produce works that glorified the regime. Those who did not comply with these orders faced the risk of surveillance, imprisonment, or political exile. As noted by Abdul Amir, around 2,000 songs were produced during this period that mentioned Saddam's name at least once, all of which were controlled by institutions such as the Directorate of Popular Songs (Abdul Amir 2017).

## 2.6. Control over Educational and Broadcasting Institutions

Educational institutions were not devoid of programming, training, and educating students according to a mobilization system based on political ideas under the pretext of patriotism. Music education in schools and universities was used as a platform for disseminating nationalist thought (Zamel 2010), with most of the songs being patriotic anthems that called for the promotion of war and fighting, and the glorification and loyalty of the leader (Abdul Amir 2017). Music and anthems were part of the curriculum in elementary schools since their inception, and they would chant what they had memorized in schoolyards, during marches, political celebrations, and various festivals. University cultural activities were focused on a single theme: poems or stories glorifying the war and its hero. Cultural circles were nonexistent, and if individual activities were organized, they were considered out of step and subject to questioning. (Al-Bayati 2016)

National and political songs became part of formal basic education, including in weekly celebrations such as flag-raising assemblies. National songs are considered a form of national identity formation, but in reality, they are a tool for forging absolute loyalty to the leader (Al-Jumaili 2017). On Iraqi satellite and radio channels, only songs approved by the government were allowed

to be broadcast. Stations such as Channel One and Al-Shabab (which was under the control of Uday Saddam Hussein) played a key role in ensuring control over music. Although Al-Shabab offered entertainment elements, its content remained tightly controlled and was only permitted if it was consistent with the state's ideology (Rashid 2024).

## 2.7. Repression and Migration of Artists

Musicians always resort to their free emotions in choosing what to compose and to whom to calm down, but we return to Iraq and say that the matter is completely different. The musicians were repressed as were the people. "It is rare to find an Iraqi singer, composer or poet inside the country who did not fall into the category of making songs khaki color."<sup>1</sup>

that suit the atmosphere of the trenches on the battlefield. There are intellectuals and artists who found themselves within a high wave that could not be stood in the face of, and there are those who seemed to be in intellectual and practical harmony with the intellectual and propaganda race in promoting the values of war, the culture of death and incitement against the enemy (Abdul Amir 2017), until Iraqi songs began to have a political character and singers sang about the leader Saddam Hussein under the cover of Iraqi national songs.

What is even more strange is that no artist or musician can be forgiven for refusing to participate in any way in any artistic work ordered to be executed, such as writing poems and singing for Saddam Hussein. For example, the great Iraqi poet and Iraqi song poet, Karim Al Iraqi, was forced to sign the (well-known) declaration of innocence<sup>2</sup> to guarantee his escape from the grip of imprisonment and persecution, which angered some of his friends, who reprimanded him severely, and even kept mentioning it to him throughout his life and even after his death (Mahmoud, Ali 2023). Rather, he was suppressed, imprisoned, and tortured in the event of disobeying the orders of the authorities. In the previous era, the artist had to fulfill his duty before the necessary leader<sup>3</sup>, by singing his glories, and continue with his life. (Al-Khayoun 2020)

The Iraqi artist has begun to produce what is not in his mind and feelings, as he feels, as he is within the borders of his rain, with a fence decorated from the outside and thorns from the inside, so he cannot cross or pass through unless he suffers or dies, not to mention that the Iraqi artist has been banned from attending any concert or participating in any other country except Jordan, as dealing with Iraqi art was prohibited in most Arab countries and

travel to them was prohibited except for Jordan (Mahmoud, Ali 2023). We note here that the freedom of the Iraqi musician is hostage to these political and authoritarian conflicts, and that the Iraqi people are hostage to the songs and music that are broadcast to them intentionally, whether by consent or by force, and they must listen and pay attention without complaint or objection.

Repression of artists is widespread. Those who refuse to comply with the state's demands are either banned, arrested, or forced to flee the country. Many prominent musicians, such as Talib Ghali and Raid George and others, have chosen to leave Iraq due to unbearable pressure. Some who remain have been forced to sign "declarations of allegiance" (Abdul Amir 2017) such as the case of the famous poet Karim Al-Iraqi, who was forced to declare allegiance to avoid arrest. (Mahmoud, Ali 2023)

### ***2.8. Rhetoric and Sentiment in Music***

The music of this era was colored by the rhetoric of war, sacrifice, national grandeur and the supremacy of leaders. Songs like (I'm here -Kazem El Saher) reflect the paradox where artistic values are used to convey harsh political ideologies. Even sentimental and love music is channeled within a rigid frame of patriotism. However, there are also a few musical works that attempt to convey the people's grievances implicitly. For example, the song Remember (1997), although presented in a patriotic form, contains a message of humanity and suffering due to economic sanctions. (Magazine, n.d.)

### ***2.9. Music Suppression and Post-2003 Cultural Change***

The result of the invasion of Iraq by the United States and its allies in 2003 had radical political consequences for the structure of government, national identity and culture of Iraqi society. The fall of Saddam Hussein's regime not only marked the beginning of a new political system based on a fragile democratic system, but also opened the way for the dominance of conservative Islamist groups in the administration of the state and society. The impact on musical culture was significant and dramatic: from music that had previously been an instrument of the state to music that was now seen as an "unlawful" element by some of the new authorities. (Ibrahim 2021)

Even songs supporting terrorism, murder, and threats have emerged, openly and widely, without oversight or accountability. Equally, there are some specific resistance songs that emerged, intertwined with popular songs to a situation where by

sentimental songs are mixed with certain lyrics about weapons, threats and bullets.

The result of this absolute control is the erosion of artistic freedom and the shrinking space for musical creativity. Iraqi musical identity, once diverse and rooted in maqam traditions and ethnic culture, has begun to shrink into a heterogeneous national narrative. Music no longer reflects the diversity of Iraqi culture; it has become a symbol of political power and an instrument of hegemony. It was marginalized during Saddam Hussein's time.

### ***2.10. Decline of Music Institutions and Spaces for Artistic Expression***

After 2003, many arts and music institutions were dissolved, lost funding, or no longer received government support. Political and security chaos made any form of artistic activity highly risky. Schools and universities reduced—or even stopped—music teaching. The music curriculum was stripped from the formal education system, while teachers no longer received professional training. In this situation, music became a marginalized field and increasingly disappeared from the public sphere. (Farid 2008)

Because the problems of changing music cannot be overcome, and because art and culture are important and influential pillars of this change, the absence of a sound artistic vision and the absence of few critical academic artists, as one of its repercussions, has increased the problems of music relapse and the severity of the unrest in Iraq. (Radhi 2008)

This requires taking some measures and laws to activate the role of Iraqi music and grant it independence and freedom. Even in the field of education, music has faded away and nothing remains of it except writing the name (art education lesson) in the lesson schedule without taking it seriously. The reality of the situation in Iraq is contrary to international or even regional education laws, as it is considered by the Ministry of Education and school administrations to be unimportant activities and a waste of time. (Israa 2022) This matter has made Iraqi music and songs tend towards negativity and ignorance of musical culture since childhood.

### ***2.11. Music in the Shadow of Religious Conservatism***

The emergence of conservative Islamic parties in the post-2003 government led to a harsher approach to music. Music began to be viewed as anti-Islamic by some militant groups and political preachers. Fatwas banning music, particularly love

songs or modern rhythms, began to spread. In many cases, musicians were physically targeted, including the destruction of musical instruments, death threats, and attacks on music venues. (Abdul Amir 2017)

Iraqi music and songs are on the brink of a fiery pit because of their ban and the emigration of musicians, which has led to the consumption of emotional songs at a fast pace because the poet's words have become useless, meaningless, and the vocabulary has become the property of the street. In order for the song to succeed, the poet no longer cares about the lyrics of the song more than he did in the past because his interest now has become for the purpose of fame and fortune. Therefore, he implements what the street demands in terms of a religious, political, or warlike character that distorts the standards of Iraqi music, until the country's arts and culture entered a new phase after the fall of the Iraqi regime, which was known for recruiting artists and musicians specifically in propaganda campaigns for its wars and policies. (Abdul Amir 2017)

However, their disappointment began to gradually replace hopes with the rise of conservative culture, which was established by the control of religious parties over the state and society, and with the beginning of a phase of "cultural cleansing" in the traditional areas of influence of those parties, where singing and music became taboos that must be firmly confronted.

Perceptions of musicians have also changed negatively. They are seen as "immoral", "irreligious" or "corrupting society" (Nation 2010). This social and political discrimination further narrows the space for expression, causing many musicians to choose to isolate themselves or emigrate abroad. As noted in various field reports, the number of Iraqi musicians leaving the country has increased drastically after 2003.

### **2.12. Transformation of Narrative and Musical Style**

The absence of a systematic cultural policy under the new regime has left a void of direction in the music world. In the space left by the national narrative of the Saddam era, post-2003 music has shifted to two main forms:

1. Religious music (mawlid<sup>4</sup>, qira'at<sup>5</sup>, qasida<sup>6</sup>, and hymns<sup>7</sup>).
2. Protest music that exists in underground or digital form (via social media), which attempts to express the anger, sadness and uncertainty of the people.

Conversely, this new assertion was not

organized. Music seems to be fragmented along sectarian queues, geography, and traditional interests. This has resulted to an unsteady musical domain, and the individuality of music became blurred.

### **2.13. Digital Media and New Spaces of Expression**

Ironically, there is a clear indication that the musical space has been suppressed, but the post-2003 digital entity has offered new opportunities for Iraqi singers and artists to display their talents. There are some form social media platforms such as YouTube, and Facebook that serve as alternatives for uploading performances, songs and musical documentations without any stern limitations or militant control. Equally, the some of the main challenges may be lack of a professional and institutional support structure to sieve, preserve and enhance musical heritage in a form of effective structure. The inundation of music without appealing guidance and cultural values led to most of the developing artistic works being considered less important, purely marketable and not reflecting the quality of Iraqi musical mark.

### **2.14. New Hegemony and the Absence of Cultural Strategy**

If the Saddam Hussein period of leadership was categorized by authoritarian hegemony through the strict control of the environment. The post conflict era recorded the emergence of a new shambolic form of hegemony. The political parties that have control of certain settlements promoted their cultural values without a specific plan for national development. Consequently, there was no plan to include a national music strategic plan. Hence, the musical identity that was once seen as Iraq's history and ethnic diversity is now deluged in political confusion, sectarian fight and social uncertainty.

## **3. DISCUSSION**

This very study displays that music in Iraqi society serves different purposes such as artistic expression, power for struggle ideological reinforcement and display of collective identity. In all phases, before and after the invasion, it serves as the mirror of power structures that can dominate societies to assert either secular or religious conservatism.

### **3.1. Hegemony and the Upheaval of Cultural Identity**

The investigation shows that Saddam Hussein's

era tempered with musical tendencies to construct and develop national narrative that revolves around the leader. This is consistent with the proposed theory of Gramsci's of hegemony which stresses that power can operate within the purview of physical coercion as well as the control of meaning in cultural discourse. So, music can be used to entertain, educate and instill values of nationalism and discipline.

There is an emergence of a highly fragmented form of hegemony in the post invasion period. The lack of a detailed cultural policy, in connection with the influence of Islamist parties led to an informal and effective form of cultural suppression, where secular music and free artistic voice were taken over by the labels.

### 3.2. *Music as a Space for Struggle and Resistance*

Despite political and social pressures, music remains an alternative space to voice the grievances, collective memories and hopes of the Iraqi people. During the Saddam era, several patriotic songs such as *Remember* managed to implicitly insert humanitarian messages. Post-2003, although the space for expression is limited in the real world, digital platforms have reopened opportunities for artists to build expressive communities in virtual space. This reflects the potential of music as a medium of silent resistance to the dominance of power.

Music in these recent years we notice that Iraqi music has very clear features. It is a music without limits, criticism, or culture, and it is not governed by knowledge and is restricted by the burdens of ignorance and backwardness. It is abandoned and loose, and it does not know its goal, meaning, or knowledge. Iraqi music has turned into a problem that Iraqi intellectuals do not acknowledge its existence, because of the situations it causes that reflect the extent of the backwardness of the Iraqi people, whose behavior is shown through their music.

However, without strong institutional support and preservation policies, these efforts are isolated and difficult to develop. This situation raises an important question: what form of cultural policy can restore the role of music in rebuilding national identity and social cohesion in Iraq?

### 3.3. *Strategic Proposals*

Based on the result of the present study, several strategic suggestions are projected to enhance and protect Iraq's musical legacy. Firstly, the government needs to formulate an all-inclusive

national music cultural policy that embrace the countries' ethnic and sectarian diversity whereas affirming artistic freedom and cultural pluralism. Secondly, the music endeavor should be reinstated in school and the universities should also adopt such musical heritages and for funds through affirmed funding mechanisms for autonomous music groups. These potential institutions should be contributing to the academic revival of traditional civilization and folk music. Finally, active engagement of civil societies and the Iraqi abroad is essential in an effort to record and digitize both the contemporary and traditional musical world to ensure preservation of music to affirm broader access to upcoming generations.

## 4. CONCLUSION

This research covers two distinct historical periods: the authoritarian patriotism of Saddam Hussein before the 2003, and the composition of Islamic parties that governed Iraq after 2003 invasion. In these recognised periods, Iraqi music displays a tricky interplay between identity and freedom of opinion. It also analyses how music in the country was exploited to lead propaganda and to repressed Iraqi people who often woke up and slept to the music of the war. It also scrutinizes how Iraqi musicians were imperilled to pressure and the demand to work with this music or exiled. In the second period, the period of Islamic rule, Iraqi musicians and music were completely marginalized, and music was only dealt with in accordance with the policies of these parties that claimed to be Islamic

The erosion of institutional support and the absence of a coherent national cultural policy have contributed to the fragmentation of Iraqi musical identity. Nonetheless, digital platforms now offer alternative spaces for creative expression, albeit with limited structural support.

By situating Iraqi music within the framework of cultural hegemony, this article expands the discourse in political ethnomusicology and Middle Eastern cultural studies. The findings underscore the need for a national cultural strategy that protects artistic freedoms and recognizes the pluralistic heritage of Iraqi music as a vehicle for social cohesion and historical continuity.

## 5. NOTES

1. It is meant to be loyal to the Baath Party, the only party in power in Iraq, headed by Saddam Hussein.
2. He had to write a written pledge stating that he would join the Baath Party and would be under

- the command and obedience of the leader, as he was a member of the Communist Party.
3. One of the descriptions given to the late Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in the nineties.
  4. A type of joyful poems dedicated to the birth of prominent Islamic figures.
  5. It is a type of sad poem recited with a special rhythm, which represents blows to the chest, head or thighs as a sign of extreme sadness.
  6. The special poem written for the family of the Messenger of God.
  7. is dominant in both Shiite and Sunni sects.

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