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Filling Political Spaces: Iraqi, Humanitarian-Oriented NGOs in the Context of American Military Occupation

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Filling Political Spaces: Iraqi, Humanitarian-Oriented NGOs in the Context of American Military Occupation

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Acknowledgements

This project is dedicated to the Iraqi humanitarian workers, past and present, who work tirelessly and courageously for the betterment of their society.

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

When examining Iraq's current condition, one punctured by political chaos, a severely destabilized economy, and increased sectarian violence, it is difficult to understand which factors have most prominently contributed to Iraq's devolvement. Many of the academics who study the modern political history of Iraq argue that the country is structured in such a way that fosters political instability. In his extensive study on Iraq's political history, Gareth Stansfield identifies four broad themes that have negatively shaped the country on a national, regional and international level: the "artificiality debate" argues that Iraq, initially a monarchy legitimized by decree of the League of Nations in 1921, was inherently predisposed to political unrest due to colonial border drawing around vastly different communal groups; the "identity debate" suggests the concept of Iraqi nationalism has been

consistently trumped by religious and regional identifications; the "dictator debate" reflects the idea that much of Iraq's modern history has witnessed authoritarian rule and a highly militarized state; and, lastly, the "democratization debate" considers the ways in which Iraq has grappled with the previous three debates to form a democratic government and come to terms with its authoritarian past (3-4). While I will not rely exclusively on the four aforementioned themes, these debates are certainly useful when examining Iraq's present unrest and the humanitarian crises enveloping the country, particularly because many of the debates framing these issues call upon Iraq's unique colonial, sectarian, and authoritarian histories. These issues figured perhaps most prominently before, during, and after the United States military invasion of 2003 and the subsequent occupation that officially lasted until December of 2011.

Under the pretense of President Saddam Hussein's possession of "weapons of mass destruction" that violated the United Nations Resolution 687, President George W. Bush initiated an extensive military occupation of Iraq that swiftly ousted Hussein and his Ba'th regime. Two months before the invasion, the Office of Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance (ORHA), led by the retired US Army Lieutenant Jay Garner, was created to serve as an interim administration to oversee the establishment of an Iraqi democratic government. ORHA was quickly replaced by the American-led interim government, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), which served as a faction of the US Department of Defense and provided the majority of funding to erect a

democratic government in Iraq. In accordance with the mass arrival of international

non-governmental organizations (NGOs), much of the reconstruction period was

focused around building a newly conceived Iraqi civil society, one that would foster

democratic values and address the pressing humanitarian needs of Iraqi civilians. The

American military invasion successfully eliminated a crippling authoritarian regime,

yet the subsequent military occupation also catalyzed drastic political violence, quickly

devolving the country into a state of chaos and beckoning the emergence of a failed

Iraqi state. The introduction of a foreign military occupation in Iraq, while successful in

eradicating a highly repressive regime, catalyzed a violent insurgent reaction on the

ground, which was largely sectarian in nature. The hostility geared towards the

American presence, coupled with devastatingly poor planning methods for the post-

invasion period by the US Department of Defense, contributed to the emergence of an

environment ill-equipped to address the humanitarian crises that arose following the

collapse of Hussein's government. Interestingly, however, the occupation period

witnessed the creation of an unprecedented number of humanitarian-oriented, nation-

based NGOs, which quickly became one of the most significant aspects of a newly

configured Iraqi civil society. Many of these organizations emerged because of the

invasion, largely necessitated by the grave humanitarian crisis threatening the entirety

of the country, but simultaneously suffered deeply throughout the invasion given Iraq's

ubiquitous and violent security situation.

This study thus examines the evolution of Iraqi humanitarian-oriented NGOs within the context of American military occupation from 2003-2011. Through interviews with former American military and CPA personnel, international humanitarian workers, academics, and, crucially, Iraqi humanitarian workers, as well as extensive review of academic and NGO literature, the study will explore the factors, both positive and negative, that contributed to Iraq's humanitarian sector during American military occupation and the ways in which these organizations operated within broader Iraqi civil society. Relying on Larry Diamond's definition of civil society as "an intermediary entity standing between the private sphere and the state", I argue that three main variables stemming from the onset of military invasion have significantly contributed to both the formation and livelihood of Iraqi NGOs: the influence of international NGOs, the devolved security situation characterized most prominently by insurgent and counterinsurgent groups, and the structural forces imposed on Iraqi NGOs by both Iraqi and international actors. Both in spite of and because of these three variables, I ultimately claim that while these Iraqi-based, humanitarian-oriented NGOs are crucial forces within broader Iraqi civil society, the persistent context of military occupation ultimately compromised their ability to function optimally.

Relevant Academic Literature

Academic literature that relates to this study, namely Thomas Weiss' and Chris

Seiple's work, explores the relationship between humanitarian and military forces, and

the ways in which these distinctions have been recently blurred in war

contexts. Anthropologist Nadya al-Ali's work on Iraqi women has also been crucial for

understanding the historical presence of female involvement in humanitarian work in

Iraq, particularly her research on women's organizations from the early twentieth

century until present day. Political scientists Larry Diamond and Sultan Barakat's work

on post-Saddam Iraq has also been heavily used for this study. Very little academic

literature, however, focuses on the Iraqi NGO sector. One important exception is Cecile

Genot's extensive study on international NGOs' role during the American military

occupation, specifically the relationship with their Iraqi counterparts.

Historical Context

The concept of civil society in public discourse regarding the modern state of

Iraq shifted rather dramatically with the American military removal of President

Saddam Hussein and the broader Ba'ath political regime in April of 2003. Until that

point, the international community had associated Hussein and the Ba'ath political

party as highly totalitarian, systematically suppressive of political dissent, and capable

of eliminating those who did not align with the regime's political and societal

agenda. It would be problematic to underestimate the magnitude of Hussein's power

as both a political and national figure, particularly in relation to the ways in which he

effectively silenced political opposition and crafted a state apparatus that would not

allow for a thriving civil society, at least a type of civil society that has been delineated

above. In his article "Civil Society in the Arab Region", Ziad Abdel Samad argues that

much of the Arab world has not witnessed a flourishing civil society, largely

characterized by a variety of civil society organizations, due to an ineffective legal

framework, lack of democracy, and a severely centralized regime (5). These factors

certainly apply to Iraq under the Ba'ath regime and specifically to Hussein's rule for

largely two main reasons. The first is that the state of Iraq under Saddam Hussein's

control implemented a variety of social welfare practices, so that for much of the

seventies and eighties, Iraqi citizens enjoyed state-subsidized education, health care,

child care, and a variety of other social services. Within this governmental framework,

humanitarian and service-oriented NGOs, while not rendered entirely unnecessary,

were certainly perceived as redundant within certain contexts, as the Ba'ath regime

strategically aimed to foster a citizen dependence upon the Iraqi state through a vast

network of subsidized social services, while also attempting to prevent any political

dissent that could potentially arise within non-governmental associations. The second

reason surrounding the essential absence of a strong Iraqi civil society is that Hussein's

government so rigidly manipulated and controlled all factions of the Iraqi public sphere

that opportunities for non-governmental associations, particularly those that would

provide lacking social services or advocate for specific humanitarian causes, were

strikingly absent. Further, no legal framework existed at the time to demarcate a

political space for these non-governmental organizations to exist. However,

associations did operate similarly to the present day conception of non-governmental

organizations, although these were predominantly government-controlled. One of the

more prominent organizations was the Red Crescent Society (RCS), similar in structure

to the Western-operated Red Cross, which stemmed from the Iraqi Ministry of

Health. Founded in 1932 and headquartered in Iraq's capital, Baghdad, the RCS serves

as a charity organization that assists those in need with health, shelter, and disaster

management services, among others. The other notable state-controlled association

operating under the Hussein government was the Women's Union, which consisted of

predominantly upper-middle class Iraqi women, most of whom were wives of

prominent Ba'ath political party leaders, who conducted charity activities such as

literacy training and lifestyle education (al-Ali 85). In addition to the Women's Union,

several other organizations existed that operated mainly on a charity basis, focusing on

child care, welfare for the poor, and assistance for disaster relief, and possessed strong

ties to the ruling political elite, such as the Child Protection Society and the Houses of

the People Society (al-Ali 85-6).

While the above description constructs a rather bleak framework for Iraqi non-

governmental organizations prior to American military intervention in 2003, two

examples indicate that Iraqi civil society was not as lacking as some might suggest. The more amenable political dynamics in northern Iraqi Kurdistan stand as one example. Officially designated as an autonomous region of Iraq in 1991 and under international protection, the Kurdistan Regional Government proved significantly more accommodating to non-governmental organizations, particularly those that aimed to augment human rights. While there are no official records of formal non-governmental organizations that existed before American occupation in 2003, there were a total of 34 known NGOs in the northern Kurdish region compared to the eleven that existed in the rest of Iraq (al-Ali 206). Multiple organizations formed during the nineties, some of which still operate today and contain a similar structure to prominent international NGOs. The Iraqi al-Amal Association, perhaps one of the most pronounced of the Kurdistan organizations in terms of size and effectiveness, was established in 1992 amidst grave humanitarian crises following the second Gulf War. Equipped with a variety of services and oriented towards a multitude of factions within Iraqi society, al-Amal's primary concern is with cultivating a "culture of human rights, gender equality, tolerance, and social peace", specifically within the most marginalized communities (Iraqi al-Amal). Rather uncharacteristically of many Iraqi NGOs operating before the invasion, al-Amal directs itself with a strong legal purpose, pushing for legal reform and government accountability towards the populations they serve. Notably, following the 2003 American invasion that greatly destroyed Iraq's infrastructure and enveloped

the country in a grave humanitarian crisis, al-Amal spread its operations into the

broader Iraq region, specifically around Baghdad where the most intense violence

occurred. Its website states: "the law of al-Amal…confirmed its identity to work for

Iraqis without discrimination….Its founders and members of Board has reflected the

variety of ethnic, religious and gender balance [of the Iraqi people]" (Iraqi Al-Amal). As

will be argued later, the northern Kurdistan region, with a strong history of civic

involvement, stands as a starkly positive example compared to the rest of Iraq.

    Another phenomenon that challenges the dominant view of a severely crippled Iraqi

civil society before the 2003 US military occupation is the variety of women's

organizations, and the vibrant social movements they facilitated, that existed even

before the emergence of the Ba'ath party into power. Nadya al-Ali extensively explores

this subject in her book *Iraqi Women: Untold Stories from 1948 to the Present*, both within

Iraq and the variety of organizations formed by diasporic Iraqi women throughout the

world. She claims, "women were almost completely excluded from formal political

institutions and processes, but from the 1920s onwards established a growing number

of philanthropic, social and political organizations that were part of an emerging Iraqi

'civil order'". (al-Ali 12) Al-Ali goes on to claim that much of the mobilization that

fueled the emergence and success of so many women's organizations must be

contextualized by the broader Iraqi struggle against colonial and imperial forces

(85). For example, the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) reached its heyday following the

1958 coup and recruited thousands of Iraqi women to advocate for its political

cause. Various women and youth organizations were associated with the ICP, and it

was within this political context that many Iraqi women were the most mobilized and

organized for specific causes. The Iraqi Ba'ath party also attracted many women

supporters in the latter half of the twentieth century, which was situated amidst a

broader pan-Arab nationalist movement spearheaded by Egypt's charismatic leader,

Gamal Abdel Nasser. While ICP and Ba'ath party supporters were placed in rather

oppositional stances, these secular movements involved numerous political

organizations, particularly amongst women who had previously refrained from

political participation.

Contrary to the charitable organizations described above that were monopolized by

mainly upper-class women with strong ties to the ruling political elite, several political

movements, anchored and structured by a variety of women's non-governmental

organizations, emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century that encompassed a

more diverse segment of Iraqi women. The Iraqi Women's League stands as a notable

example, which carries a long history of serving as the locus for the cultivation of

political participation and activism amongst Iraqi women. Originally formed by Dr.

Naziha al-Dulaimi, a prominent Iraqi physician who is also distinguished as the first

female minister in Iraq and the first female cabinet member in the broader Arab world,

the organization initially operated as an underground movement following government

rejection for official recognition. Changing its name from 'Women's Liberation Society'

to 'League for Defending Iraqi Women's Rights', the organization emerged officially on

March 10, 1952 to struggle for national liberation from lingering British colonialist

influences, defend Iraqi women's rights, and to promote the protection of Iraqi

children. Dr. al-Dulaimi served as an effective leader for the organization, which

changed its name again to the Iraq Women's League, and helped augment the League's

membership to an astonishing 42,000 members by the mid-1950s. Following the 1958

revolution (also known as the 14 July Revolution), an enormous political mobilization

that established Iraq as a secular republic and ousted the tightly British-controlled

monarchy, the League emerged as a solidly established mass organization with

considerable influence on broader Iraqi society. In contrast to many of the Kurdish

NGOs that have a history of being strongly connected to either of the two main

Kurdistan political parties, the Iraqi Women's League consistently operated

independently of Iraqi political parties and weathered decades of unstable political and

governmental change. Also notable of the Iraqi Women's League was its ability to

establish connections across political and regional divides. An Iraqi woman involved

with the movement explains:

> Rabitat [Iraqi Women's League] became one of the strongest women's
> organizations. The Ba'athists and the Arab nationalists had a joint women's
> organization called *Nisa' alJumhurriya* (Women of the Republic). They had a
> voice, but not as strong as Rabitat….In the north, there was a Kurdish women's

organization. We had lots of contact with them and we organized events together (al-Ali 87)

Clearly, the League's status as the most preeminent and established women's

organization, and, arguably, one of the most effective organizations in Iraq before 2003

that was not directly associated with the Iraqi government, helped fuel mobilization

efforts that transcended highly divisive regional and sectarian lines. The Iraqi Women's

League continued its activism throughout the American military invasion in 2003, and

was amongst the most vocal critics of the war and its severe consequences on Iraqi

society. To indicate a benevolent incubation from harmful political forces for Iraqi

women involved with the League would be misleading, however. Several women

involved with the League throughout the twentieth century were executed, tortured,

and kidnapped by the Iraqi government, while countless others were raped and

imprisoned for any assumed connection to the organization.

In addition to the several Kurdish and women's organizations that existed prior

to the overthrow of the Hussein and Ba'ath regime, several art-related associations

organized, particularly in the 1950s before the Ba'ath regime increased its repressive

activities against non-government factions. Baghdad Association of the Friends of Art,

established in 1952, and the Baghdad Association for Modern Art, established in 1953,

are notable examples (al-Ali 68)

While examples of organizations not directly associated with the Iraqi government have been briefly outlined above, it must again be reiterated a culture of NGOs did not exist in Iraq while Saddam Hussein was in power as it did following US military invasion in 2003. While many of the organizations were certainly based on formerly existent networks-particularly tribal connections, which will be discussed more thoroughly in following chapters-, a culture of non-governmental associations did not exist prior to 2003, nor did the concept of Iraqi-based NGOs have legitimacy. Thus, the overthrow of the Ba'ath regime, and the subsequent establishment of an interim, American-operated government, the CPA, created an arena for an unprecedented amount of non-governmental organizations to emerge.

The International NGO Variable

As mentioned above, the Ba'ath, and more specifically the Hussein, regime repressed all facets of political dissent or opposition, which created a complicated, if not downright hostile, environment for international organizations to involve themselves. Very few international, humanitarian-oriented organizations garnered access to Iraq before 2003, one of the most notable being the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC). Establishing offices in 1980, the ICRC circumvented what was otherwise a largely antagonistic Iraqi state towards foreign involvement. By forging bonds both within the broader state apparatus, specifically governmental

armed and security forces, and on the ground through tribal, community, and religious

figures, the ICRC emerged as the preeminent international organization with

established ties to the Iraqi government and a consistent track record of implementing

beneficial humanitarian projects throughout the country ('The ICRC In Iraq'). The

outset of American military invasion, however, catalyzed an unprecedented influx of

international NGOs in Iraq. Between 2003 and 2004 witnessed large numbers of

international organizations, mainly European or American, establish offices in Iraq and

provide essential services to an Iraqi population entrenched in dire humanitarian

crises. Yet, rather quickly, two severe issues arose threatening both the state of

international NGOs operating in Iraq and their crucial partnerships formed with their

Iraqi, nation-based counterparts. Despite the rather positive expectations of the CPA

and broader US Department of Defense in regards to successfully implementing an

operative, functional Iraqi government equipped to handle the inevitable violence and

uncertainty once the Ba'ath regime was deposed, the overwhelmingly violent security

situation that quickly consumed Iraq shortly after invasion, characterized most

prominently by insurgent armed groups and a subsequent counterinsurgency, emerged

as a severe threat to both international and nation-based NGOs. In fact, between the

summer and autumn months of 2004, all international NGOs evacuated their non-Iraqi

employees from Iraq due to security concerns (Genot 17). Even the long established

ICRC evacuated its staff, which signaled a particularly alarming message to the broader

international humanitarian community. Establishing offices in mainly nearby Jordan or

Kuwait, many of these international NGOs would operate long-distance with Iraqi

employees still on the ground, or form partnerships with nation-based NGOs that

would subsequently implement the international NGOs' projects. While several of

these organizations would ultimately return several years following 2004, security

continued to prove a persistent issue, in turn creating a necessity for international

NGOs to rely on contracting private security companies to protect them, a service both

extremely costly and difficult for organizations to navigate. From this conundrum

arose another pressing issue: the blurring of humanitarian and military lines. As Genot

argues, Iraqi insurgent groups and the broader Iraqi population perceived many foreign

humanitarian actors were either associated or aligned with American military forces, in

turn situating "international NGOs as prisoners of the American will of subordination

and control" (16). In my interview with Professor Thomas Weiss of the Graduate

Center at the City University of New York, a scholar who has extensively studied the

concept of humanitarian and military relationships, he argued that during the Iraq War,

humanitarian actors from international NGOs were widely perceived as extensions of

the American military, which consequently compromised much of their intended

actions and situated them in precarious positions in regards to security (Weiss,

November 3rd). Further, a disconnect arose between how the foreign humanitarian

actors perceived themselves, presumably as benevolent actors who were largely critical

of the CPA's handling of the humanitarian crises unfolding in Iraq, and how they were

perceived by Iraqi civilians, many of whom believed foreign humanitarian workers to

be highly partial to American and Western interests (Weiss). These complicated

concepts, the necessity for international NGOs during the Iraq War to rely on private

security companies for protection, commonly termed "the armed humanitarian", as

well as the blurring of lines between humanitarian and military forces, consequently

created an inhospitable atmosphere for foreign humanitarian organizations to operate

in, which, as I will argue, allowed for nation-based, Iraqi organizations to emerge as

crucial actors in a newly formed civil society.

The Security Variable

The severe security crisis that arose in Iraq during the American military

occupation is an additional variable of crucial importance when conceptualizing both

the successes and failures of the Iraqi NGO sector. As will be more thoroughly argued

in the security chapter, the policies implemented by both ORHA (Office of

Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance) and the later established CPA (Coalition

Provisional Authority) were structured in such a way that unleashed unprecedented

violence within the country, in turn exacerbating already existing tensions amongst

Iraqi society and contributing significantly to sectarian violence. From this, three

aspects of the devolved security situation throughout American military occupation can

be extrapolated as profound influences on the Iraqi NGO sector: American-contracted

private security companies, insurgent groups, and the counterinsurgent policies

employed by the foreign coalition. All of these forces interacted in multiple ways to

hinder the collective progress of the nation-based sector, while simultaneously situating

said sector at a particular importance given the broader Iraqi and coalition

governments' inability to address the increasing number of humanitarian crises that

mounted throughout the occupation period.

Structural Forces on the Iraqi NGO Sector

Almost immediately after American military forces entered Iraq in 2003, the

eradication of Hussein created a space more welcoming for international NGOS to

operate within, as well as for several thousand newly formed Iraqi-NGOs to emerge.

Within the first three years of American military occupation in Iraq, 2003-2006, over ten

thousand nation-based NGOs were either registered or awaiting registration. (Genot

12) One of the main contributing factors to the dramatic emergence of nation-based

NGOs was the the large amount of funding, mainly from American and Western

sources, provided for the building of an Iraqi civil society. In fact, the US Congress

allocated approximately three billion dollars for "development" at the beginning of the

reconstruction period, while several million dollars in alternate funding stemmed from

other coalition governments, namely the United Kingdom, other European Union

countries, and Japan. (Genot 18) This three billion dollars from US government sources

was but a small sliver of a much grander $50 billion allocated by the United States

Congress, which was ultimately packaged as the Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund.

(IRRF) As will be argued in later chapters, the purpose of much of this funding towards

the construction of an Iraqi civil society was enveloped within an idea of strategic

foreign policy interest. Genot claims: "donors' interest was that financing the

emergence of a civil society in Iraq would act as a medication for regional issues"

(20). With the ability to craft not only a new Iraqi government but a civil society

modeled after and positioned in favor towards US and broader Western interests,

copious funding was fueled towards a reconstruction project geared for presumed

success. Yet, very quickly, both funding sources and the broader Iraqi reconstruction

project proved flimsy and unsustainable. Within the first several years of American

military occupation, the US Department of Defense, in its annual report released in

2010, claimed that it was "unable to properly account for $8.7 billion of the $9.1 billion it

received' to implement effective reconstruction projects in Iraq". (Genot 22) Much of

this inefficiency stemmed from a lack of accountability and follow-up. For example,

enormous amounts were given to certain Iraqi organizations for relatively inexpensive

events, such as conferences and training sessions, that ultimately proved ineffective in

terms of progress and equipping Iraqi humanitarian workers with necessary skills to

face the crises unfolding in the country. Hasham al-Assaf, the Iraqi Coordinator of the

NGOs Coordination Committee for Iraq, argues that the American-sponsored funding directed towards Iraqi-initiated reconstruction projects consequently "spoiled the Iraqi communities" by reflecting little interest in ensuring funding's proper implementation and monitoring the ways in which money was being used (al-Assaf interview). Thus, from the beginning of the CPA's reconstruction project, a poorly structured platform for effecting meaningful humanitarian change profoundly shaped newly-formed Iraqi NGOs ability to work legitimately in their communities.

Another issue related to funding that emerged rather quickly during the reconstruction period was the sense of dependency many Iraqi NGOs developed upon funding sources. Considerable academic literature explores this concept in a variety of contexts, specifically in developing countries where Iraqi-based NGOs face a variety of structural, political, and economic obstacles when trying to operate successfully. Ronelle Burger and Trudy Owens have argued that in certain African countries the amount of funding received stands as the most indicative factor of a non-governmental organization's success and sustainability (1284). Further, larger NGOs that have developed close, consistent relationships with prominent funding sources, such as governmental aid agencies and prominent international NGOs, not only possess a higher probability of survival, they are as more likely to receive funding from said funding sources in the future, even if they contain a track-record of not implementing successful, efficient projects within their targeted communities (Burger and Owens

1292).   While it is certainly unsurprising that these organizations receive less funding

from governmental and foreign sources, they have a significantly lower likelihood of

obtaining any funding whatsoever, consequently situating them in a vicious cycle that

prevents them from obtaining adequate funding, which in turn perpetuates their

inability to perform intended projects and establish partnerships with larger

organizations with funding capabilities. As Genot explains, the international

community stands as the predominate source of funding in Iraq, despite the fact that

very few Iraqi NGOs actually receive financial support from these sources. (23) Thus,

in a context in which international humanitarian interest in Iraq is steadily decreasing -

for a variety of reasons but primarily given the complicated security situation and the

official removal of American military forces in late 2011- the dependencies restricting

many Iraqi NGOs continues to harm and prevent progress. While I therefore argue the

American military invasion in 2003 and the subsequent eradication of the Hussein

regime catalyzed the formation of a newly conceived Iraqi NGO sector to emerge, much

of the implementation of the CPA-led reconstruction project, along with the presence of

a highly controversial US military presence, compromised the health and growth of

many Iraqi NGOs.

NGOs as an Indicator of Civil Society

On a broader level, this project aims to capture, however restrictively, the ability of Iraq's civil society to function both because of and in spite of a significant military occupation spanning almost a decade. Why have humanitarian-oriented, Iraqi NGOs been selected as an appropriate tool to gauge Iraq's larger civil society? Non-governmental organizations are quickly associated with the term civil society, almost blindly so. Because so much of Iraq's infrastructure was destroyed from the onset of military invasion, the rapid emergence of an Iraqi NGO sector was one of the few variables indicative of a civil society, in whatever capacity, functioning despite the omnipresent destruction throughout the country, specifically those with humanitarian focuses. Further, many policy makers and academics assess the health of a country's civil society by measuring the number of functional NGOs within a specific area. Humanitarian-oriented NGOs, rather than all non-profit organization, as the focus of this study serves to concentrate what is otherwise a varied, diverse Iraqi NGO sector encompassing a range of organizations. By examining humanitarian-oriented, nation-based NGOs this study can more accurately assess the larger picture of Iraq's civil society during the military occupation period.

Ultimately, this study aims to categorize Iraqi humanitarian-oriented NGOs as highly pivotal forces for the well-being of Iraq's political and humanitarian needs. This introduction has briefly outlined the modern history of civil society organizations in Iraq, as well as introduced several variables that influenced the formation and operation

of humanitarian-oriented, Iraqi NGOs during American military occupation. The

following chapters will more thoroughly examine the effects of international NGOs, the

security crisis, and Iraqi NGO structure on the Iraqi NGO sector during US military

occupation between 2003 and 2011.

CHAPTER TWO: Relationships with International NGOs

Before delving into the specific context of Iraqi humanitarian-oriented, non-

governmental organizations during the 2003-2011 American military occupation, a

foundation that explores the broad themes of international non-governmental

organizations must be established. This will more fully grasp the crucial relationships

forged between nation-based and larger foreign NGOs during the occupation in

Iraq. These relationships, as mentioned briefly in the introduction, developed quickly

into a co-dependent symbiosis, so that most nation-based NGOs had not only formed

because of copious foreign monetary and logistical support, but the majority were

entirely dependent upon it for everyday survival. Further, due mainly to dwindling

security capacities of both the American military and international humanitarian actors,

the necessity of either hiring Iraqi nationals to carry out the work of international NGOs

on the ground or partnering with nation-based NGOs while operating from nearby

countries (predominately Jordan, Kuwait, and Turkey) emerged rather quickly. This

phenomenon, coupled with the already tense relationship between military and civilian

forces, consequently challenged many of the deeply entrenched principles of

humanitarianism, namely neutrality and impartiality, that guide international NGOs

within any context of operation. This chapter will accordingly provide a brief

background on the varying types of international NGOs, as well as the distinct

principles that shape them, and the new trends that emerged amongst these

organizations after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 and how they were

incorporated into a "Global War on Terror" context. Once this background has been

established, a case study in Afghanistan will be used to illuminate the similar, albeit

unique, situation of international NGOs operating in Iraq as they navigated a

particularly new set of trials and situations. And, lastly, the chapter will conclude with

the specific ways in which international NGOs guided the formation and effectiveness

of the Iraqi NGO sector.

 International NGO Background

        The Overseas Development Institute estimates there are between 3000 and 4000

Western non-governmental organizations that operate at an international level, most

constituting development organizations while others operate as "briefcase" NGOs, which fill specific technical niches and functions ("Humanitarian NGOs: Challenges and Trends" 1). While the number of Western, internationally operating NGOs is rather large and continues to increase, there are few who carry tremendous clout and influence at political, policy, and economic levels, such as CARE (American), *Medecins Sans Frontieres* (Doctors Without Borders, French), Oxfam (British), World Vision (American), and Save the Children (British). While these organizations have home bases in their respective founding countries, they operate internationally vis-à-vis a multitude of national offices across the globe. For example, Save the Children functions primarily from its London, UK office; however, thirty national Save the Children organizations serve as members of Save the Children International, a global network of NGOs that cooperate with over 120 governments where local partners operate ("Partnering with Save the Children"). Western humanitarians typically delineate humanitarianism into three dominate strands: religious, "Dunanist", and "Wilsonian" ("Humanitarian NGOs: Challenges and Trends" 1-2). The religious strand, the oldest and most well- known, emerged from missionary work, although most religious NGOs today rarely proselytize and make a commitment to serving anyone despite their religious affiliation. Some, however, such as World Vision, will only hire employees that identify with the organization's religious principles. The second strand, the Dunanist vision, receives its name from Red Cross founder Henry

Dunant. Organizations that fall within this category, notably Save the Children and

Oxfam, seek to situate themselves outside the purview of state interests ("Humanitarian

NGOs: Challenges and Trends" 2). The third strand of Western humanitarian action is

Wilsonian, named after American president Woodrow Wilson, who believed American

ideals could serve as a positive influence on a global level. As the Humanitarian Policy

Group describes, "the Wilsonian tradition sees a basic compatibility with humanitarian

aims and US foreign policy objectives" (HPG 2). An example of a Wilsonian non-

governmental organization is the American-based CARE, which originated as part of

the Marshall Plan following the end of World War II to deliver assistance packages to

Europeans negatively affected by the war. From such a wide variety of humanitarian

traditions emerges an even more acute separation amongst internationally operating

NGOs, which are largely philosophical and logistical distinctions found between

American and European organizations. While many European organizations tend to

receive less government funding, in turn allowing for more operational autonomy,

American organizations are more deeply embedded within American policy and

governmental circles. Further, European NGOs engage more directly and openly in

advocacy, while American organizations, generally, tend to adhere to a more 'behind-

the-scenes' approach when trying to influence policy decisions in the United States

("Humanitarian: Challenges and Trends" 2). As will be seen later, the intersection of

policy and international NGO operations functioned significantly during American

military occupation in Iraq.

Perhaps one of the most important concepts in understanding international

NGOs as they navigated through the chaotic maze that was the humanitarian

operational front during the American military occupation in Iraq is the fundamental

shift in humanitarianism following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. On a

funding level, American NGOs in particular were financially harmed after the attacks,

as funding from private donors drastically decreased and were subsequently targeted

towards organizations focusing on the domestic victims of the attack. While private

donations decreased, however, government funding towards humanitarian-oriented

NGOs has been steadily increasing since the 1990s, but ultimately sky-rocketed after the

September 11, 2001 attacks, a signifier of the increased relevance of NGOs as one of the

most prominent humanitarian actors. Yet, as mentioned above, American NGOs tend

to have more of a dependence on government funding as opposed to their European

counterparts, so within the post-9/11 context, an increased financial dependence led to a

complicated situation for many American organizations as the US government initiated

controversial wars in Afghanistan and Iraq in the early 2000s. On the one hand, these

wars necessitated the presence of humanitarian actors as Afghani and Iraqi

infrastructures subsequently plummeted, while on the other hand they situated some of

these organizations in uncomfortable positions as accepting government funding to

operate in an internationally contested war became increasingly awkward and compromising. Save the Children US, along with several other notable American NGOs, however, resisted this prescription and announced that they would not receive funding from the US government for programs that arose in Iraq and the surrounding region after the 2003 American military invasion ("Humanitarian NGOs: Challenges and Trends" 3). Another important emergence after the September 11, 2001 attacks for humanitarian actors, particularly within the Iraqi context, were the implications for religious organizations operating in distinctly religiopolitical environments. For example, during the American military occupation in Iraq, Muslim humanitarian NGOs tended to face less of a security crisis as opposed to their non-religious and Christian counterparts, namely because they were not as rigidly associated with the foreign occupying powers.

Apart from new trends within the humanitarian sector post-September 11th as delineated above, more significant trends that deeply challenge the neutrality of humanitarian organizations have emerged since, arguably, the late 1980s and early 1990s when American military and international civilian actors began to interact more closely in various humanitarian crises across the globe, notably Operation Support Hope in Rwanda (1992), Operation Provide Comfort in Iraqi Kurdistan (1991), and Operation Restore Hope in Somalia (1992). Perhaps the most notable and prominent theme humanitarian actors have struggled with is the so-called "blurring of the lines"

between civilian and military actors during humanitarian crises. Thomas Weiss has

explored this topic extensively, particularly in his book *Military-Civilian Interactions:*

Intervening in Humanitarian Crises, which argues that in addition to the already

fundamental differences between humanitarian and military philosophies,

humanitarian, specifically Western, personnel are increasingly associated with military

forces on the ground by nationals. This misrepresentation not only tarnishes many

NGOs' reputations in their communities of interest, but also creates a security hazard

for humanitarian aid workers as they are believed to be associated with the military by

insurgent groups in certain contexts (Ali and al-Juboori interviews). In my interview

with Professor Weiss, he discussed this phenomenon as it occurred overtime:

> In the aftermath of the Persian Gulf War, we witnessed an extension of the US
> military with, arguably, genuinely humanitarian justifications. During this time,
> the UN and NGOs were not seen as extensions of a lethal and unproductive US
> presence; they were welcomed. After the 2003 invasion there was a certain
> warmth in welcoming the Western-initiated overthrow of Saddam Hussein in
> Iraq. However, as time went on, the US occupation was perceived as anything
> but humanitarian, and humanitarian civilians were perceived as an extension of
> US military forces. Further, there was certainly a disconnect between how the
> humanitarians perceived themselves as civilian agents and how they were
> perceived on the ground.

Thus, international humanitarian agents operating in war zones are increasingly

associated with a foreign military presence, an association that creates turbulence

between an already tense military/civilian partnership and stresses the traditionally

neutral principles of humanitarians as they navigate the unabashedly political maze

that is cooperating with military forces, especially American ones. Weiss goes on to

claim in his interview that a ramification of this phenomenon is that humanitarian and

military actors will be involved in "nicer" war zones, in which not only will the lines

between both factions blur even further, but the very roles of both will witness a

merging, so that the military will increasingly involve itself in more humanitarian tasks

and humanitarian civilians will more commonly equip themselves with military

weaponry, also termed "the armed humanitarian" and believed by many humanitarians

to be a contradiction in terms (3 November 2014).

Another important phenomenon applicable in many geographical contexts but

especially relevant in Iraq during the American military occupation is the increasingly

politicized nature of humanitarianism, a philosophical shift that deeply challenges the

traditional hallmarks of humanitarian action: humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and

independence, as defined by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian

Affairs (UNOCHA 1). Many academics, policy makers, and aid workers have

expressed outrage at the increasingly political nature of providing aid during

humanitarian crises, beckoning a return to the simpler times of humanitarianism when

the sector was supposedly not as entangled in a complicated political matrix (de

Torrente). What most would consider traditional humanitarianism, as concentrated

most tellingly within such organizations as American CARE and British Oxfam, began

largely in response to human crises caused by war. Thus, humanitarian aid and

support from the early to mid-twentieth century sought not to take a definitive stance

on an inherent justification or opposition to war, but to rather remedy and alleviate the

suffering caused by it. This seemingly apolitical approach, or political agnosticism as

some critics have termed it, has ultimately been challenged as war zones within the past

several decades have presented governments and aid workers alike with a newly

constructed set of challenges in which the line separating apolitical humanitarianism

and strictly militaristic government interference has become blurred.

Some critics, however, argue that while the so-called politicization of

humanitarianism certainly carries with it negative consequences, the assumption that

humanitarianism is inherently apolitical is not only flawed but simply untrue and

unrealistic (obvious examples of this would be the United States Department of Defense

co-opting the humanitarian effort during the Iraq War through the construction of

ORHA or the American military's deliverance of assistance supplies during the war in

Afghanistan on the condition that Afghani civilians provide American military officials

with intelligence information). In his article "Politicized Humanitarianism", CARE

advocacy coordinator Paul O'Brien challenges these traditional notions of

humanitarianism, mainly neutrality and impartiality, and urges humanitarian

organizations to fulfill a more political role in the aftermath of the wars in Afghanistan

and Iraq. In response to many international NGOs in Afghanistan refusing to cooperate

with the National Solidarity Program (NSP) because the program was believed to

legitimize the central Afghani government, O'Brien argues: "NGOs that participate in such work cannot claim to be apolitical. Rather, they need to understand and articulate how their political solidarity with the people they serve trumps any political obligations they may have to their donors or to the sovereign governments where they work".

(33) Another crucial aspect of O'Brien's argument is the connection he draws between the dwindling security situation for humanitarian workers, particularly in the Afghani and Iraqi contexts in which an unprecedented amount of foreign aid workers have lost their lives in the past decade, and the necessity of international NGOs to voice their opinion on the need of an increased security apparatus for all actors proving aid in war zone areas, an opinion that is inherently political and influential: 'NGOs have been instrumental in keeping discussions alive on the need for greater international investment in security in Afghanistan….classic humanitarians should at least ask themselves whether their struggle to remain beyond politics shuts the door after the horse has bolted, leaving the barn inside burning' (36). O'Brien's analysis meaningfully reflects the shifting nature of humanitarianism, a sector that, while originating and guided by principles that are pure at best and unrealistic at worst, operates increasingly in highly politicized and muddled environments, ultimately presenting humanitarian workers with situations that resist previously cemented notions of impartiality and neutrality and require new conceptualizations of navigating humanitarian challenges and the distinctly political aspects shaping them.

A Case Study: The War in Afghanistan

A case-study approach to the challenges obstacles faced by international NGOs

operating in Afghanistan during American military occupation from 2001 to 2014 will

illuminate the similar yet unique trials international NGOs experienced in Iraq,

ultimately establishing a comparative basis to conceptualize international NGO

relationships with both their nation-based counterparts and military forces on a broader

level. Contrary to the Iraq War, the War in Afghanistan was initiated soon after the

terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the American military invaded the country in an

effort to remove al-Qaeda forces, the terrorist group assumed responsible for the attacks

and extinguish the Taliban from political power. Officially launched under Operation

Enduring Freedom alongside the United Kingdom military, and later joined by

alternate forces from the Northern Alliance, the United States and its allies successfully

removed the Taliban from power and established a military presence throughout

Afghanistan; however, few al-Qaeda and Taliban members were effectively detained,

while most suspected members escaped to Pakistan or desolate mountain regions.

Similarly to the Iraq War, the international public opinion of the War in

Afghanistan was largely negative, particularly as time went on and a definitive end to

NATO military occupation of the country seemed less and less certain. A 24-country

PEW Global Attitudes survey in 2008 claimed that majority populations of 21 countries

desired NATO troops to leave Afghanistan immediately, while only three countries (the

United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia) favored troops remaining in the

country until the political and security situations had stabilized ("Views of the US"). By

2013, tens of thousands had lost their lives in the conflict. Near to a thousand foreign

soldiers and contractors (most of whom were predominately working for privatized

security companies) were killed, while over ten thousand Afghan National Security

Forces perished, as well as other several thousand Afghan civilian casualties.

   Also in congruence to the situation in Iraq, the American and allied military

invasion of Afghanistan catalyzed a severe humanitarian crisis, presenting foreign and

nation-based aid workers with an unprecedented set of challenges that tenuously

aligned with a poorly constructed military occupation, an environment that enabled the

already shaky security situation to deteriorate and subsequently threaten the

implementation of humanitarian aid throughout the country. While there were more

functional humanitarian-oriented, non-governmental organizations in Afghanistan than

in Iraq during the countries' respective American military occupations, Afghanistan

currently stands as the most dangerous country in the world for aid agencies, both

nation-based and international, to operate: attacks against non-governmental

organizations and their workers have increased by 1300% since the early 1990s to 2005

(Glacius, Kaldor, Anheier 432). Most of the aid workers killed in these attacks were

Afghanis, which challenges the common assumption within the humanitarian sector

that the aid workers more at risk are foreigners, not the nationals normally hired to

carry out an international NGO's efforts on the ground (due to the assumption that they

are less of a target than foreigners, who are easily associated with occupying powers by

militia and insurgent groups). Two major problems international humanitarian aid

workers faced during American military occupation in Afghanistan were, similarly to

the issues outlined previously in regards to the NGO sector in Iraq, were the conflation

between military and humanitarian forces on the ground and a reconceptualization of

the notion of "impartiality" as an infallible pillar of international humanitarian aid

organizations operating within a highly contested military occupation.

As explained above, the so-called "blurring of the lines" phenomenon between

military and civilian forces has occurred repeatedly in humanitarian crises on a global

scale, beginning arguably in the late 1980s and more consistently throughout the 1990s.

While there are a variety of explanations for this merging of actors, a driving force

catalyzing an increased 'humanitarian' edge to military, specifically American military,

agendas is fundamentally of a strategic nature. Laura Olson, in her article on

humanitarian spaces in Afghanistan, explains: "humanitarian assistance to win 'hearts

and minds' is provided directly by military forces, as in other conflict settings, primarily

for instrumental reasons- force protection, enabling intelligence gathering, and helping

ease acceptance of troops"(4). Further, while the pivotal role of the United Nations in

implementing projects to ease the formation of new political institutions and guiding

nascent development processes successfully should not be minimized, the colossal

presence of the United States in foreign aid and humanitarian assistance must be

stressed. For example, the perceived cooptation of the humanitarian sphere by

American military forces was further exacerbated by the dominance of monetary aid

from the United States. International donors pledged approximately $20.5 billion in

aid, with the United States considerably the largest donor, followed by the World Bank,

the Asian Development Bank, and the European Commission (Olson 5). While

significant in quantity, the subject of the implementation of foreign aid in Afghanistan

was highly contested and controversial, spurring numerous reports throughout the

Afghan government that aid was being squandered by foreign agencies, in addition to

the most qualified and desirable Afghan employees being lured to work for said

agencies because of lucrative salaries while crucial job positions in the newly formed

Afghan government were left unfilled (Olson 19). These aforementioned factors, in

addition to many Afghani civilians receiving aid- even aid from the largely criticized,

American military-operated PRTs (Provincial Reconstruction Teams)- contributed to a

growing sense amongst international NGOs operating in the war-torn country that their

humanitarian efforts were being compromised by similar, albeit highly motivated,

humanitarian acts by the United States military.

     Another negative element of the experience of many international NGOs

operating in Afghanistan during American military occupation was the growing

realization that the traditionally lauded principles of humanitarianism, namely

neutrality and impartiality, were being challenged, if not blatantly confronted. Olson

clams, "Anyone on the side of stability and recovery is seen as a political ally of the

government and its foreign partners….NGOs argue that OEF's and ISAF's use of aid

and role of reconstruction has eroded the neutral 'humanitarian space' necessary to

effectively meet civilian needs and suffering in this situation" (24). Consistent with the

"blurring of the lines" phenomenon outlined above for both Afghani and Iraqi contexts,

the cooptation of reconstruction and development during an occupation period by

foreign military forces draws all foreign actors-importantly foreign humanitarian

actors- into a political realm in which the ability of neutral humanitarianism to function

is severely compromised.

The International and Iraqi NGO Relationship

The final section of this chapter examines the general experiences of

international, largely Western, NGOs that operated in Iraq during American military

occupation from 2003-2011. Extrapolated from these general experiences are three

broad themes that resonate widely across the NGO sector active in Iraq during the

aforementioned timeframe and indicate a drastically altered humanitarian sphere for

aid workers to work within: the compromising of humanitarian goals by American

military strategy and policy, a deteriorating security situation that cultivated numerous

obstacles for international NGOs, and a new space for nation-based and Iraqi partner

NGOs to thrive due to international NGOs operating from neighboring countries.

These three variables interacted in such a way that the newly formed Iraqi NGO sector

was compromised in its functionality due to a deplorable security and policy context,

but also situated the sector at a paramount importance as international NGOs and the

interim Iraqi government proved inept at addressing the country's humanitarian crisis.

Similarly to the "blurring of the lines" phenomenon described above in both the

Afghani and more international context, international NGOs newly settled in Iraq

during American military occupation were forced to grapple with a conflation of their

identities and purposes with those of the United States military forces working beside

them. This assimilation stemmed from several reasons, one being that the American

military initiated several humanitarian-oriented projects, oftentimes coopting the

personnel and resources of international NGOs to assist them. (Genot 16) Further, due

to a severely devolved security situation, many international NGOs were essentially

forced to work with military and coalition actors, to some extent, to effectively carry out

their humanitarian tasks. While many international NGOs, particularly European ones,

insisted on maintaining a sense of independence separate from the American military

and private security forces that encouraged cooperation, several American NGOs

developed close working relationships with American military, CPA, and private

security company forces to facilitate a supposedly safer working environment, as well

as better implement project tasks. For example, some international NGOs would use military escorts to carry out projects in remote or unfamiliar areas. (Genot 16) These close relationships, while certainly seen as necessary for some international NGOs weary of hostile insurgent forces, fostered a conflation of military and civilian forces on the ground in the eyes of Iraqis, so that the entirety of foreign forces oftentimes belonged to a conglomerate of suspect occupiers, subsequently tarnishing the reputation of many international NGOs and endangering Western organizations as they were seen as "appropriate targets" by armed groups fighting foreign occupation. (Genot 16)

Another important element that greatly influenced the operation level of international NGOs and the subsequent shift in their relationship with their nation-based, Iraqi counterparts was an increasingly devolved security situation, which prompted most foreign organizations to evacuate Iraq and operate from neighboring countries, largely Jordan and Kuwait. This exodus was especially pronounced between late 2003 and 2004 in which all but a select few international NGOs evacuated Iraq. By 2005, only sixty international NGOs had returned and continued operation, despite a worsening security context and decreased funding and international attention towards Iraq. This movement had a profound impact on the status of Iraqi NGOs, as the absence of foreign humanitarian organizations within the country crafted an unprecedented space for a relatively newly formed Iraqi NGO sector to operate without a direct

Western NGO presence. Further, many Western NGOs operating from nearby countries relied heavily upon Iraqi NGOs to carry out projects on the ground in Iraq; these partnerships facilitated a sense of cooperation necessary to address humanitarian concerns, effectively combining the local knowledge of Iraqi NGOs with the more experienced resources and technical skills of their Western counterparts.

This so-called "remote management", in which Western NGOs focusing their humanitarian efforts on Iraqi populations were located in separate countries, relied upon a variety of factors and existed in multiple variations. As Genot argues, two crucial elements of the relationships forged between international and nation-based NGOs was "the distance of decision makers from the field and the channeling of responsibilities to local actors", yet these elements were situated within a wide spectrum of relationships, so that some international NGOs established significant and solidified partnerships with Iraqi NGOs while others relied on sub-contracting with either a nation-based organization or local actors employed by the international organization (32). What remains paramount in regards to these complicated relationships, however, is the increased significance of local Iraqi actors in the humanitarian cause afflicting the country during American military occupation. A decreased collection of foreign funding coupled with a progressively frightening security situation catalyzed a mass exodus of international NGOs from Iraq, in turn catapulting newly formed Iraqi NGOs into a prominent yet overwhelming position.

CHAPTER THREE: The Security Crisis

The severe security crisis that arose in Iraq during the American military

occupation created a paradoxical environment for Iraqi humanitarian-oriented, non-

governmental organizations in which their effectiveness was negatively impacted while

the very presence of an Iraqi NGO sector, unprecedented in its size and capacity, was

situated at a new importance. This security crisis was in part catalyzed by the highly

contested and controversial foreign occupiers that included not only Western military

actors, but also private security companies contracted to carry out a variety of tasks on

the ground, personnel from the United Nations, and, as mentioned in the previous

chapter, Western humanitarian aid workers who were oftentimes associated with the

occupying powers. ORHA (Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance) and

the later established CPA's (Coalition Provisional Authority) subsequent policies

implemented throughout Iraq that attempted to create a functional democratic

government from the ground exacerbated the dissatisfaction amongst Iraqi civilians, a dissatisfaction that steadily worsened as the American military occupation increasingly proved haphazard and ill-equipped to handle the political, economic, and societal destruction caused by its invasion. This sense of frustration pervasive throughout Iraqi society incited by American military occupation contributed to the growing unrest amongst Iraqi civilians, which ultimately manifested in heavily armed and retaliating insurgent groups.

Under President Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath regime, the Sunni minority monopolized the majority of powerful government positions, in turn largely rejecting the Shia majority from obtaining too much power within the Iraqi republic. Once Western military forces swiftly eradicated Hussein from his authoritarian position in 2003 and subsequently initiated a series of de-Ba'thification policies, purging significant portions of Iraqi government workers from their positions (despite the fact that all government workers under Hussein's rule were required to pledge allegiance to the Ba'ath party), intense pressure was placed on occupying powers and newly ordained Iraqi leaders to include an appropriate proportion of Shia representatives in the new Iraqi government, as well as members from the multitude of minorities in Iraq, notably the Kurds residing in the country's north. This conundrum of crafting a new government structure accommodating the diverse sects of populations throughout Iraq that had historically been expunged from wielding any sort of political power, coupled

with an unprecedented sense of anger and exasperation amongst Iraqis as their economic and societal infrastructure crumbled, contributed to growing numbers of insurgent groups that posed an unexpected threat for American military forces and, pertinent to this paper, the humanitarian sector operating in Iraq.

As the security situation worsened and international NGOs increasingly terminated their projects or flocked to neighboring countries, Iraqi humanitarian-oriented NGOs were left with a disheartening and puzzling maze to navigate. It is crucial to emphasize the relatively new presence of NGOs in Iraq post-2003. While a considerably prominent NGO culture existed in Iraqi Kurdistan in the north, the majority of nation-based NGOs that existed in the middle and southern regions of Iraq during American military occupation were created post-invasion, a phenomenon that will be explored more thoroughly in the following chapter. With decreasing funding and, for many organizations, poorly structured programs and rampant corruption, implementing useful and meaningful projects amidst a deplorable security environment became less and less accessible for nation-based NGOs. As discussed in the previous chapter, the security situation, which drove out significant numbers of international NGOs, elevated the significance of Iraqi humanitarian aid workers and the newly formed nation-based NGOs that were mainly concentrated in the Kurdish north but had meaningful presences throughout the country, ultimately establishing NGOs as forceful actors within Iraq's reconfigured civil society. Thus, this chapter focuses on the

effects of the security situation in Iraq, beginning with the American military invasion

on the occupied country's nascent NGO sector. Beginning with a brief historical

background that explores ORHA/CPA's policies and other factors that contributed to

the devolving security crisis on a regional basis, the chapter will consider the major

actors that influenced the effectiveness of Iraqi NGOs. By examining American-

contracted private security companies, insurgent groups, and the counterinsurgent

policies employed by the foreign coalition, the chapter frames these three variables as

crucial forces in shaping Iraq's humanitarian-oriented NGOs. While there are certainly

numerous other factors that contributed to the devolved security crisis present

throughout military occupation, many of which had combined effects on Iraqi society

and in turn present difficulties in extrapolating concise causal connections, the three

outlined factors had distinct impacts on the Iraqi NGO sector. Thus, the unique

position of private security companies and the combined effects of insurgent and

counterinsurgent groups reflect two common themes significant throughout this

project: while American-contracted private security companies aggravated the already

present 'blurring of the lines' phenomenon between military and civilian forces, the

highly pervasive insurgent violence-and the largely unsuccessful counterinsurgent

response-both incited and exacerbated sectarian tensions within Iraqi society, ultimately

hampering the ability of Iraqi NGOs to operate optimally.

Historical Background

The Pentagon established the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian

Assistance in January of 2003, a mere two months before the official entrance of military

boots, and was staffed by personnel from the US Departments of State, Defense, Justice,

Energy, Treasury and Agriculture, all whom reported to US Secretary of Defense

Donald Rumsfeld and saw Ret. Lt. General Jay Garner as director (Ehrenberg,

McSherry, Sanchez, Sayej 163). American government officials anticipated the

reconstruction period to be brief, successful, and warmly accepted by Iraqi society, yet

the unrealistic sense of optimism and severely lacking foresight fueled disastrous

consequences as ORHA began its work in 2003:

> The administration's failure to consider other possibilities stemmed from its conviction that overwhelming military power would allow it to unilaterally fight a preemptive war without negative consequences….The administration's ideological blinkers had convinced policymakers that *the United States was the only actor whose actions had to be considered* (Ehrenberg, McSherry, Sanchez, Sayej 164). [emphasis added]

The ideological principles masking the more complicated intentions of the Bush

administration in deciding to invade Iraq (a controversial topic not explored in this

paper but certainly important to consider throughout) constructed Iraq as a country

entrenched within an almost backwards political environment in need of dire saving

from the 'freedom-loving' United States. President George W. Bush proudly

proclaimed in a speech announcing the end of major combat operations in Iraq that,

> We have fought for the cause of liberty, and for the peace of the world….In the images of celebrating Iraqis, we have also seen the ageless appeal of human

freedom….Everywhere that freedom arrives, humanity rejoices; and everywhere that freedom stirs, let tyrants fear ('Major Combat Operations in Iraq Have Ended').

The alignment of these glowing principles with the subsequent policies of the CPA (the interim government that very quickly replaced ORHA in 2003) was unstable at best, as the timeline to implement intended reconstruction and humanitarian projects quickly extended to an unforeseeable termination point. In addition to the dramatic removal of Garner with L. Paul Bremer and the disastrous coordination with American-selected Ahmed Chalabi (an Iraqi exile, largely considered an opportunist, who was briefly considered by Washington to lead Iraq following American military removal), the CPA's most controversial and, arguably, most disastrous policy was de-Ba'athification. On April 16, 2003, Bremer announced the establishment of the policy, claiming: 'This order implements the declaration by eliminating the [Ba'ath] party's structures and removing its leadership from positions of authority and responsibility in Iraqi society' (CPA Order Number 1). While not all members of the Ba'ath party were eradicated from their government positions, the order demanded the immediate removal of all senior members, additionally preventing them from any future employment in the Iraqi government (Bremer 1). Further, government employees within the 'top three layers of management in every national government ministry, affiliated corporations and other government institutions' were interviewed in order to determine if they were 'full

members' of the Ba'ath party, and, if deemed to so, faced the same fate as their

counterparts residing at the highest government echelons (Bremer 1). Following this,

the so-called 'dissolution of entities' expunged most government ministries (notably the

entirety of the Iraqi army, Ministry of Defense, the Iraqi Intelligence Service, and

multiple organizations associated with the former Ba'ath party), effectively eliminating

innumerable swaths of Iraqi government workers, adding dramatic pressure to an

already catastrophic unemployment environment (CPA Order Number 2).

On a more general level, the effectiveness of the CPA and broader American

military occupation proved disastrously negative. As the director of policy planning for

the CPA, Andrew Rathmell argues, 'the CPA ended up creating nation-building

institutions on the run, governing Iraq at all levels, supporting a counterinsurgency

campaign [and] reforming and reconstructing Iraqi state institutions' with a lack of

thoroughness and foresight required of transforming Iraq into the 'model democracy'

envisioned by Washington (1014). Further, Bremer's striking policy decisions had a

profoundly negative impact amongst Iraqi civilians. As the CPA continued to prove

inept and slow at implementing its stated reconstruction policies, the growing sense of

frustration amongst Iraqis ultimately manifested most prominently in armed insurgent

groups, the most violent of which were located in the predominately Shi'a southern

region of Iraq. The counterinsurgency response of the American military served to

largely intensify this frustration, resulting in even more insurgent groups and more

violent displays of dissatisfaction against the occupying forces. Particularly after media leaks of the gruesome, dehumanizing treatment of detained Iraqi civilians at Abu Gharib prison by American soldiers, international horror and admonishment towards the military occupation of Iraq heightened. Progressively, the occupation seemed more and more complicit in violent atrocities committed by both foreign and Iraqi actors. In addition to the surge of murders, kidnappings, and physical and sexual abuse against Iraqis at the time, strikingly public terrorist attacks expressed a strongly rooted opposition against foreign occupation . One of the most prominent of these attacks was the August 19, 2003 bombing of the Canal Hotel where the United Nations headquarters were located, killing twenty-two people, including UN Special Representative Sergio Vieria de Mello, and wounding over a hundred others.

The security situation, while generally deplorable throughout the entirety of Iraq, was distinct in its severity depending on the region. The northern Kurdish region of Iraq, culturally and politically distinct from the rest of the country even before the removal of Saddam Hussein from power, retained its sense of autonomy and relative stability compared to its neighboring regions, even containing its own regional government that operated largely separately from the central Ba'ath party in Baghdad. Following the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Iraqi Kurdistan was protected by a no-fly zone following US-led Operation Provide Comfort, which protected and assisted fleeing Kurdistan civilians escaping Hussein's vengeance. Since then and throughout

the military occupation, Kurdistan and the United States remained allies, so when the

reconfiguring of Iraq's government began in 2003, the Kurds expected a generous

position in the newly formed political apparatus and favorable representation in the

parliament (Ehrenberg, McSherry, Sanchez, Sayej 324). By 2006, Kurds, despite their

minority status, proved one of the most vocal of the ethnic groups as the political

process slugged forward, ultimately establishing a unification agreement in January of

2006 proclaiming the 'basis of partnership, consensus and equity' between Kurdistan's

two major political parties, the KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party) and the PUK

(Patriotic Union for Kurdistan), which had historically been highly frictional with one

another (Kurdistan Regional Government Unification Agreement). While violence and

economic challenges persisted continuously throughout the occupation, the Kurdish

region enjoyed a sense of stability uncommon compared to the rest of the country. For

example, the middle region encompassing Iraq's capital Baghdad, which experienced

some of the most concentrated shocks of violence, faced starkly different circumstances

compared to its northern counterpart. Not under a mandated-no-fly zone and

containing the majority of foreign military forces, Iraq's capital and surrounding areas

experienced devastating destruction. From the outset of the military invasion in 2003,

Extensive US military bombing and the subsequent unraveling of Iraqi infrastructure

caused unprecedented levels of chaos and looting, as most former government

buildings, including government-administrated museums housing priceless artifacts

from historical Mesopotamia, were ransacked by angry civilians. As detailed by Anne

Garrels, a NPR foreign correspondent and one of the few international journalists

documenting the war in the early years of American military occupation, in her book

Naked in Baghdad, the enormity of destruction unleashed by American bombings and the

subsequent civilian chaos it catalyzed on the ground quickly revealed Iraq's longtime

cultural, political, and economic center was inching towards ruin:

> They [American occupying forces]…were afraid of the looting, which we all saw
> happen. They were afraid of a security vacuum, which we all saw happen. They
> were afraid that their society would fragment, which we have seen happen. They
> were afraid that the U.S. would not be able to control this beast that they knew
> very well — themselves (48).

Iraq's southern, predominately Shia, region, also experienced alarming levels of unrest

and destruction, although its unique position as the cradle of a strongly pro-Shia power

struggle exacerbated sectarian tensions that leveraged ethno-religious identities at an

increasingly alarming level as the occupation continued. As detailed in the 2006 Iraq

Study Group, a bipartisan cohort of American politicians mandated by Congress to

critically examine the devolving security situation in Iraq, four of Iraq's eighteen

provinces (Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala, and Salah ad Din) were deemed 'highly insecure'

and largely sectarian in nature: 'Iraq is in the grip of a deadly cycle…Sunni insurgent

attacks spark largescale Shia reprisals, and vice versa….In some parts of Iraq-notably

Baghdad-sectarian cleansing is taking place' (506). With the expulsion of Hussein and

the majority of his Ba'ath regime, which had tightly suppressed any sort of political

resistance, the ethnic mosaic of Iraq's population witnessed catastrophic internal

conflicts as each group leveraged its identity to express collective grievances from the

past and claim a stake in Iraq's political future. Thus, much of the security situation

encompassing Iraq's nascent yet crucial humanitarian sector was initiated by the

American military invasion, but ultimately propelled by the conflict's ethnically

sectarian qualities. As will be examined more thoroughly in the following pages, this

sectarianism fundamentally characteristic of the violence throughout the occupation

deeply challenged the principles of impartiality and neutrality newly formed Iraqi

NGOs were expected to embrace.

Now that a historical context has been established outlining major policies

implemented by both ORHA and CPA, which were predominately poorly planned and

negatively received by Iraqi civilians, the three variables stated in this chapter's

introduction-- American-contracted private security companies, insurgent groups, and

counterinsurgency-oriented military policies—can be explored as fundamental security

forces shaping Iraq's humanitarian sector. The first group of actors is the controversial

collection of private, mostly American, security companies contracted by the United

States to facilitate significant portions of the CPA's projects and goals. As will be

argued later, the privatization of considerable portions of the reconstruction in Iraq,

which ultimately created tension throughout the humanitarian sector operating in the

country, had negative consequences on the ability of Iraqi NGOs to effectively carry out

their missions and projects in their respective communities. The second group of actors

is the complex assortment of Iraqi insurgent groups that formed quickly after American

military invasion and constituted a wide spectrum of ideologies, levels and expressions

of violence, and ethno-religious make-up. While this paper is too brief to adequately

consider the complicated nature and breadth of these groups, they are crucial to the

understanding of Iraq's unique security environment, which very quickly became

characterized by inter-warring militant factions that threatened the stability of Iraq's

NGO sector. The final group of actors is the reactionary counterinsurgent groups, that

arguably failed to mitigate the political turmoil plaguing Iraq, instead exacerbating it.

While a multitude of other actors were crucial in shaping the security situation

surrounding Iraq's humanitarian sector during American military occupation, the

above three are most outstanding in their most immediate and lasting effects on said

sector's ability to operate.

The Employment of Private Security Companies

Much literature, both academic and policy-oriented in nature, has been produced

since the military invasion of Iraq criticizing the considerably privatized nature of Iraq's

occupation, encapsulated most prominently by American-owned private security

companies. For example, Spearin explores the unlikely interaction of NGO and private

actors in the Iraqi context, warning of the potentially disastrous outcomes of the two

fundamentally oppositional sectors operating in the same humanitarian crisis space

(24). In a similar vein, Bjork and Jones position themselves in a more overtly critical

stance, claiming the interactions between private security companies and humanitarian-

oriented NGOs oftentimes creates violence, consequently necessitating the

establishment of distinctly separate intentions between the two sectors in order for

humanitarians to avoid confusion amongst the communities they seek to help (777).

Despite the effects of the privatization of security in Iraq, the sheer numbers are

telling: by 2008, the US Department of Defense had contracted an astonishing 155, 826

contractors to facilitate and implement reconstruction activities on the ground,

surpassing the 152,725 American troops on the ground (Dunigan 1). While the use of

private security contractors is certainly not a new phenomenon in American wars

(Vietnam serving as a notable example), the quantity and range of responsibilities

allotted to these companies in the most recent war in Iraq stands as remarkably

unprecedented. The introduction of private security companies into the Iraqi

occupation created a variety of complications that transcended traditional conflicts

expected between foreign, occupying military powers and local civilians. For example,

the legal accountability of private contractors in the Iraqi context remained nebulous

and difficult to ascertain, specifically when violence erupted between foreign

contractors and Iraqis. Further, the limits of authority afforded to these companies,

which were frequently and questionably exaggerated, created considerable tensions

within the humanitarian organizations operating in Iraq and the Iraqi population on a much broader level. Perhaps the most notable example is the case of Blackwater Security Consulting, a private American military company. On September 16, 2007, several of its employees shot and killed seventeen Iraqi civilians suspected of ambushing a convoy, which consequently outraged large swaths of the Iraqi population and permanently tainted public perception of the privatization of the Iraq War.

These private companies also significantly shaped the ability of Iraqi NGOs to operate. One aspect of this negative consequence on nation-based NGOs in Iraq was the overwhelmingly poor perception of said companies on the ground, particularly in communities in which both nation-based and international NGOs were attempting to serve. As one outraged Baghdad resident expressed to the Associated Press in an interview on the private security companies working in Iraq, contracted employees 'do whatever they want in the streets. They beat citizens and scorn them' (Reid 2). More directly related to Iraqi NGOs, however, are the ways in which these private security companies interacted with Iraqi humanitarian aid workers. In one interview with an Iraqi NGO worker, the negative perception of these private security companies by Iraqi NGO workers is thoughtfully articulated:

> There was a strong juxtaposition between private security companies and the stated USAID mission. They put local staff in danger, were crazy drivers, and often told us to find families of the dead bodies they were responsible (Ahmed interview)

This sentiment expresses the centrality of humanitarian workers' perception of foreign occupying forces in a security context. The severely negative reputation of private security companies in Iraq directly impacted Iraqi civilians' opinion of broader foreign actors, which, in this specific context, encompassed newly formed Iraqi NGOs, as well.

The first chapter discussed a predominant theme in humanitarian literature that explores the 'blurring of the lines' phenomenon between military and civilian actors, which has persisted in modern wars and has come to encompass a wider range of actors (in this case private security companies on the military side and local humanitarian actors on the civilian side). As Bjork and Jones explain, 'NGOs…are a relatively new concept for the Iraqi population and the associated humanitarian imperatives….If, as is the case, the private sector and humanitarian NGOs are perceived as being part of the US-led reconstruction, the risk of being attacked increases' (788). Thus, humanitarian workers, regardless of nationality, became increasingly entrenched in a system of danger because of the violent and questionable tactics employed by American-contracted private security companies. Of further paramount importance, the variable of these privatized forces greatly influenced the construction of the Iraqi NGO sector in most of the country. While Iraqi Kurdistan possessed a strong history of NGO culture, largely cultivated and facilitated by local rather than foreign forces, much of Iraq experienced the emergence of a NGO sector that paralleled American military invasion

and occupation. Because private security companies were inseparable to this newly

conceived humanitarianism, their very existence constructed for Iraqi humanitarian

workers a sense of complicity in their actions, despite Iraqi NGOs' largely negative

view of said companies. What emerged, and ultimately threatened the effectiveness of

the Iraqi NGO sector during American military occupation, is the idea that the Iraqi

humanitarian sector was to some extent affiliated with the foreign occupation and,

more dangerously, the private security companies it heftily utilized.

Insurgencies

Perhaps the biggest nuisance for the aforementioned private security companies

were the violent and heavily armed Iraqi insurgent groups that quickly formed

throughout the country, overwhelmingly discontent with the American military

occupation. As Ehrenber, McSherry, and Sanchez argue, the insurgency during the

occupation was predominately homegrown, indicative of the fact that the insurgency

was not simply a function of historically warring Shia/Sunni factions without a

powerful leader to forcibly unite them, nor was it solely the result of an artificially

contrived Iraqi state drawn up of borders haphazardly encircling 'incompatible' ethnic

groups (248). While both of these arguments grasp the insurgent conflict to some

extent, the specific political context encompassing Iraq decidedly aggravated sectarian

tensions where they already existed, and in other cases created new ones. In an

interview with a Sunni insurgent group, *Jaish Muhammad* (Army of Mohammad), one of

its spokespersons expressed the discontent propelling violence on a much broader level

for many insurgent groups: 'Yes, the United States rid us of Saddam Hussein's regime.

But they did not do it for the sake of the people of Iraq. Rather, they did it for the sake

of Iraqi oil and to protect Israel's security' ("Islamists Pledge Continued War on

Coalition"). Further, despite the schisms separating Shia and Sunni groups fighting

both the occupation and with one another, the insurgent factions similarly employed

sophisticated internet and media tactics to spread their message, which universally

called for an end to foreign occupation (Ehrenberg, McSherry, Sanchez, Sayej 249). The

insurgent crisis that erupted throughout Iraq during occupation not only reflected a

deep-rooted discontent with a foreign military presence, but also exposed the country

to strongly sectarian overtones. More specifically, the violence created by insurgent

groups was largely dependent on the specific region in the country. According to

statistics collected and interpreted by academics Luke Condra and Jake Shapiro, civilian

casualties caused by insurgent attacks were largely dependent upon geographic and

ethnic factors (177). This sectarianism incited by insurgent groups throughout the

occupation ultimately unleashed negative consequences for Iraqi NGOs, as their

workers increasingly were confined to delivering humanitarian assistance to

communities that aligned with their own ethnic identities.

Counterinsurgent Tactics

The final set of actors crucial in conceptualizing the security context surrounding the Iraqi humanitarian sector are the counterinsurgent groups that were employed to address the rapid emergence of insurgent groups outlined above. Combined with the violence initiated by insurgent groups, counterinsurgent policies failed to quell the dire security situation enraging the country, consequently invigorating the sectarian tensions that had directly negative impacts on Iraqi NGOs. While an insurgent element was certainly expected by the US Department of Defense from the outset of military invasion in Iraq, the level and violence with which the insurgency executed confounded American forces, consequently urging them to reconsider methods of counterinsurgent attacks. The Pentagon drew upon past counterinsurgency methods, grappling with tactics employed in such war contexts as Vietnam and Latin America (Ehrenberg, McSherry, Sanchez, Sayej 226). Vice President Dick Cheney even advocated for the Phoenix Program, a popular counterinsurgency method utilized during the Vietnam War, to structure CIA operations in Iraq, a method Jane Mayer argues appealed to Cheney for its ability to circumvent legal accountability and remain 'below the radar for a really long time' (144). Despite the rather suspect nature of the Phoenix Program, however, the US Department of Defense expressed an ideology of minimal, rather than overt, counterinsurgent responses. In a 2006 counterinsurgency final draft, the department outlined the so-called 'paradoxes of counterinsurgency', which claimed 'the conduct of counterinsurgency is counterintuitive to the traditional American view of

war' ("Counterinsurgency Final Draft"). The document goes on to list such paradoxical

axioms to address insurgent forces: 'the more you protect your force, the less secure you

are', 'more force used, the less effective it is', 'sometimes doing nothing is the best

reaction', and the 'host nation doing something tolerably is sometimes better than us

doing it well' ("Counterinsurgency Final Draft"). Kalev Sepp also acknowledges the

military convergence towards a more pacified approach, a stark opposition to the

dramatic 'shock and awe' tactic utilized with the grand entry of coalition forces in 2003

that ousted the Ba'ath regime in mere days (218).

Yet such counterinsurgency approaches, however adapted and nuanced,

aggravated, rather than placated, sectarian divisions driving insurgent forces. As

Raymond Taras argues, the US military intervention and its subsequent

counterinsurgency policies created disastrous consequences for Iraqi society: 'Until the

US occupation, the Sunni-Shia divide was primarily a political and economic-not

religious-struggle over the distribution of wealth and political power….American

military rule fostered conditions for civil war' through radicalizing Sunni groups,

engaging in power plays with Shia groups, and attracting militant jihadists from

neighboring countries (53). Steven Simon also critiques US counterinsurgency methods,

claiming they contributed to ethnic-driven strife by 'stoking the revanchist fantasies of

Sunni Arab tribes…pitting them against the central government and one another' (58).

Thus, counterinsurgent forces, whether intentional or not, encouraged the ethnic divide

structuring and driving insurgent violence, a combined effect that precariously surrounded Iraq's NGO sector.

As civil war erupted between increasingly divisive factions throughout the country, Iraqi NGOs were compelled to adapt to a decidedly sectarian, chaotic environment. The violence initiated by insurgent groups impacted Iraqi NGOs in two distinct ways. Firstly, the strongly sectarian undertones propelling violence throughout the region created a sense of mistrust amongst Iraqi civilians, consequently increasing the level of danger and risk involved in participating in nation-based NGOs. As Iraqi-American anthropologist Nadje Sandig al-Ali notes in her comprehensive study of Iraqi women's political involvement, the increased violence catalyzed by foreign occupation but distinctly marred by sectarian factions significantly increased the number of kidnapping and killings of female, Iraqi NGO workers; as the occupation persisted, the notable risk of engaging in humanitarian-oriented work caused a decline, specifically amongst Iraqi women, in participating with nation-based NGO projects (241).

A second effect the largely sectarian insurgent crisis had on Iraqi NGOs relates to the ways in which the organizations were composed and structured, largely a function of the sense of mistrust permeating throughout Iraqi society. One Iraqi NGO worker explains:

> As the security crisis worsened, it became more and more common to not know what your neighbor did as a profession….people started to distrust one another

> because it was unclear who they were supporting or who they were working for. This is why many NGOs in Iraq have employees that are related to each other. It is much easier to work with your family; we feel safer working with people we can trust (Mahmood interview).

Transcending religious or political biases, which are also common amongst Western humanitarian-NGOs, the mistrust and tension manifested by a highly sectarian atmosphere facilitated a structuring of many Iraqi NGOs that relied heavily upon family lineage, raising pertinent questions regarding how such organizations were able to maintain, if at all, a sense of impartiality and neutrality. While there is not enough data currently to investigate how these family-composed organizations interacted with their local communities, Genot suggests there are 'some factors unique to Iraq's local and historical context' which prevent 'the ability of Iraqi NGOs to pursue the principles of independence and impartiality' (28). Thus, the military occupation of Iraq, specifically the security crisis it bred and its subsequent effects on Iraq's humanitarian organizations, challenges the presumably infallible pillars of neutrality and impartiality upholding most Western NGOs, in turn situating their Iraqi counterparts in compelling, albeit precarious, political arenas.

FOURTH CHAPTER: Structural Forces

The final chapter focuses on the structure of Iraqi NGOs that existed throughout the American military occupation from 2003 to 2011 and the variables that influenced either their successes or failures. As mentioned, the invasion and subsequent occupation initiated a rapid emergence of NGO formation; thousands of Iraqi-initiated organizations formed with the help of significant international funding and support, much of which were specifically humanitarian in focus. The sheer number of organizations seems to suggest a thriving Iraqi civil society better equipped to organize and address humanitarian issues plaguing Iraq following military invasion; however, the level at which these organizations were able to effect positive change in their respective communities demands closer attention. Accordingly, this chapter examines the types of structures shaping Iraqi, humanitarian-oriented NGOs that formed after 2003 in an effort to gauge how the context of military occupation affected their ability to operate successfully. Structure in this context refers to the ways in which newly conceived Iraqi NGOs were modeled. This chapter focuses on two structural forces: the first being the international community involved in the termed 'reconstruction' of Iraq and the second being the Iraqi people either directly or indirectly involved in the NGOs in their communities. The international community predominately encompasses the

foreign coalition government in Iraq, foreign governmental agencies, and international

NGOs dedicated, either monetarily or on a more logistical level, in the process of co-

forming or assisting Iraqi NGOs in their development. While the amount of funding

targeted towards the broader reconstruction of Iraq's infrastructure inched into the

billions, of which Iraqi NGOs received a considerable portion, the international

community's influence on and involvement in the nation-based NGOs can be termed

largely negative. The second structural force includes the wide variety of Iraqi

humanitarian workers drawn into the nascent Iraqi NGO sector and the Iraqi

government, a group of actors that prove more complicated in determining how they

specifically impacted said sector. As I will argue, these structural forces enacted both

positive and negative changes for Iraqi NGOs. This chapter will thus outline the two

structural forces delineated above, ultimately raising broader questions about Iraqi

NGOs' place within Iraq's civil society, and whether or not civil society can be

constructed from above by largely foreign, rather than nation-based, forces.

Conceptualizing Civil Society

Before examining the structural forces, a brief background on civil society, both

its history and geographic variations, is required, particularly since this chapter argues

Iraqi NGOs were conceived by both international and nation-based actors as a pivotal

portion of Iraq's broader civil society. This brief history will prove crucial when more

conceptual considerations are made about Iraq's NGO sector, particularly the ways in which international, largely Western, forces greatly shaped these NGOs despite possessing differing notions of civil society from many Iraqis.

The notion of civil society can be traced to the Scottish Enlightenment, where those such as Adam Smith, David Hume, and Adam Ferguson conceived the commercial sector as capable of fostering cohesive social values (Candland 140, 2001). Private property also factors significantly into many conceptualizations of civil society, as such theorists as Rousseau and Hegel stress the importance of the private market, along with its consumers and workers, to civil society. The current connection drawn between civil society and democratic environments largely factored into Alexis de Tocqueville's work, and was later developed in the twentieth century by such scholars as Sidney Verba and Gabriel Almond, both of whom expressed the necessity of a politically active civil society in democratic governments. American political scientist Robert Putnam additionally argues that non-political organizations, such as art or sports-focused groups, also facilitate a healthy civil society despite not being directly involved in politics. Common themes throughout many of these largely Western notions of civil society center on a sense of volunteerism and democratic order. The organizations that constitute significant portions of civil society are composed of people voluntarily involved, therefore not to make a profit or forced to do so by others. These

arguments also hint at the inherent link between democratic order and the health of civil society, presumably a directly proportional relationship.

Yet many theorists and critics have argued against these assumptions, raising pertinent questions about the ways in which civil society is shaped by cultural and political factors on the one hand, and structurally imbalanced globally. In his report on civil society in the "third world", Richard Pithouse argues there exists a distinct rift between the more privileged Northern NGOs and their Southern NGO counterparts, citing South Africa as an example: "South African sub-imperialism is not just about South African capital…but it is also about the fact that South Africa is a very, very important site for co-opted Northern NGOs to legitimate themselves" (5). Similarly, Jai Sen argues the recent academic focus on a 'global civil society' glosses over ramifications that exacerbate neocolonial relations. The supposed 'consolidation and cooperation' characteristic of this global civil society is also a consolidation, to some extent, of "historically unequal social and political relations and entrenched interests at local, national, regional, and global levels" (19). Within this framework, prominent global civil society actors, mainly stemming from the West, reinforce, rather than unravel, the rigidly cemented power structures situating the most regionally helpless in persistently subordinate positions. Further, the notion of globalization and its effects on civil society is also a subject of considerable debate amongst academics and policymakers. As Pawel Stefan Zaleski notes, the development of civil society on a

global level was part of a broader plan of spreading neo-liberal values and strategies following the fall of communism in Europe, encompassed most tellingly in the Washington Consensus ("Neoliberalism and Civil Society"). And because globalization includes transnational businesses and institutions that have funded, supported, or even created civil society organizations throughout the world, the intersection between the concepts of civil society and globalization oftentimes creates considerable confusion and controversy.

How do these formulations of civil society apply to the Iraqi humanitarian-oriented NGOs that emerged during American military occupation? In a positive sense, the NGOs formed by Iraqis during this period reflected organizational strategies that cultivated the types of "social virtues" Enlightenment thinkers conceived as necessary in a civil society. Further, the removal of a totalitarian regime allowed for organizations to direct themselves with political and advocacy purposes in a way that the former Ba'ath regime stifled. On the contrary, however, it is impossible to fully conceptualize these humanitarian NGOs without considering their presence as directly under a Western occupation. In this context, the cautionary arguments of Pithouse and Jai Sen demand a specific type of conceptualization when situating these NGOs as crucial actors within Iraq's reconstructed civil society.

With these historical and conceptual frameworks in mind, the development of

Iraq's civil society as part of a broader reconstruction plan initiated and overlooked by

an American-led coalition government is better situated for critical examination. One of

the fundamental issues central to the Iraqi context relates to the idea of top-down civil

society formation, as opposed to a civil society fostered and cultivated amongst

communities. As outlined in the introduction, a strong sense of civic and political

involvement existed during moments of the Ba'ath regime in Iraq, yet particularly

towards the end of President Saddam Hussein's presence in office, his Ba'ath

government stifled political expression and dissent in such a way that any political

organizations, besides those that existed in Iraqi Kurdistan, not directly associated with

the Iraqi government were drastically restricted, if not completely incapable of

operation. It was not until the American military invasion and the subsequent ousting

of Saddam Hussein that a newly conceived political space was created for civil society

organizations to form; however, to conclude the drastic introduction of supposedly

freeing, democratic forces cultivated a healthy Iraqi civil society is simply incorrect at

best and destructive at worst. Significant funding and logistical support swiftly enabled

the creation of a large, diverse Iraqi NGO sector, yet the structural forces constructing

these organizations ultimately set many of them up for failure, as will be discussed

more thoroughly in the bulk of this chapter. Thus, framing many of the strategies

employed by the structural forces mentioned previously as part of a broader top-down

approach is crucial when conceptualizing the ways in which Iraq's civil society was reconstructed during this period.

Iraqi Structural Forces

The Iraqi forces critical in forming the structures of humanitarian-oriented, nation-based organizations during military occupation consisted of Iraqi civilians, both within and outside of government, mostly concerned with addressing the grave humanitarian needs of the Iraqi population. Several thousand Iraqi non-governmental organizations formed rather quickly after the American invasion. What is perhaps indicative of the complexity inherent in the vast, bordering on turbulent, emergence of Iraqi NGOs during this period is the sheer diversity in their structures. According to the NGO Coordination Committee of Iraq, created in April of 2003 to increase the efficiency of coordination and communication amongst civil society organizations operating in Iraq, approximately ten thousand new NGOs in 2006 were either already registered or awaiting registration by the newly formed Iraqi government, an astonishingly high number that does not include unofficially recognized NGOs that either circumvented the registration process or were unable to achieve registration standards, usually due to a lack of funding or personnel (Genot 12).

Nevertheless, the ten thousand organizations adhering to official registration guidelines ran the gamut of structure from in terms of size, effectiveness, and character.

Contrary to established NGOs elsewhere in the world, many Iraqi NGOs during this

period consisted of only two or three persons, representing a variety of ethnic, religious,

and regional backgrounds. Some nation-based NGOs that emerged during this time

were simply hollow shells, or, as Genot terms them, 'ingenuous' organizations, that

acquired money from donor sources only to engage in alternate investments or simply

pocket the funding for personal gain (21). Further, many of these organizations were

actually created with the intended purpose of making a profit, basing their structures

off of business-like models (Genot 21). Yet it would be misleading to suggest that the

NGOs described above were neatly dichotomized, with the business-oriented, profit-

inclined organizations on one end and the purely benign, humanitarian-oriented

organizations gathered at the opposite end. Given the uncertain political and economic

contexts situating the majority of Iraqi civilians in precarious positions, selfish motives

for creating NGOs, even those with primarily humanitarian orientations, seemed

inevitable: "In a country which was destroyed, which was worn out economically-

speaking, it was normal that people stacked the deck in their favor" (al-Hassaf

interview). Thus, in contrast to the larger, more institutionalized foreign (mainly

Western) NGOs, many Iraqi NGOs occupied a rather complicated space within the

humanitarian arena in that they were incentivized by potential funding sources to fuel

not only the organization's livelihood, but also to economically support their employees

that desperately required an income, a concept that will be explored more thoroughly

when international structural forces are considered. This sort of diversity in turn complicated international NGOs' decisions when deciding which nation-based NGOs to partner with. For example, establishing partnerships became crucial during the period in which all international NGOs evacuated Iraq in 2004, as many would coordinate with nation-based, Iraqi organizations from neighboring Jordan or Kuwait, among other locations, in order to continue operations. Yet because a considerable amount of for-profit Iraqi NGOs existed, specifically those that garnered negative reputations for their questionable tactics when dealing with Iraqi civilians, a sense of caution prevailed amongst many international NGOs when considering establishing partnerships with their Iraqi counterparts.

Another element of the Iraqi structural forces shaping the emerging NGO was an association with one's religious identities, which was especially heightened during American occupation and manifested, to some degree, in the ways in which many Iraqi NGOs operated . Islamic movements in the broader Arab world have consistently reflected humanitarian tendencies, providing various forms of charity during times of crises. Several academics have examined this phenomenon such as Mona al-Ghobashy, who argues that in certain political contexts, Islamic organizations have arisen as more effective and responsive to civilian needs than the acting government, consequently augmenting said organizations' political clout on the ground (381). The Muslim Brotherhood's rapid and pervasive response to the 1992 earthquake in Egypt stands as a

notable example, which magnified the Islamic organization's political power to an

unprecedented level and created a widespread sense of credence amongst the Egyptian

population. Several charity-oriented principles also serve as crucial pillars of Islam,

particularly *zakat*, literally meaning 'that which purifies' in Arabic, and *sadaqah*,

'charity', both of which encompass the act of giving either monetarily or through other

means to those in need. Muslim organizations in Iraq, particularly the Red Crescent

Society, which is branched throughout the Muslim world in various countries, possess a

long history of conducting charity and other humanitarian-related activities. Another

principle of the Islam is the concept of *waqf*, literally meaning 'confinement' or

'detention', which is perhaps the most institutionalized of the charity-oriented Muslim

practices in terms of its presence in Islamic governments. According to the *Encyclopedia*

of Islam, *waqf* refers to 'the holding and preservation of a certain property for the

confined benefit of a certain philanthropy with the intention of prohibiting any use or

disposition of the property outside of that specific purpose' (Kahif). In its strictest

sense, *waqf* is a religious institution dedicated to serving the poor, but the Islamic

principle contains a multitude of political, economic, and social interpretations,

manifesting physically in government-sanctioned parks and buildings while also

playing a prominent role in navigating the direction of religiously funded charity

(Morgan 22). In Iraq, the Office of Shiite Waqf, the Office of Sunni Waqf, and the Office

of Non-Muslim Waqf were established by the Iraq Governing Council (IGC) in January

of 2004 (IGC Resolutions 17 and 18, 2004). Thus, during the American occupation,

religious organizations that already existed were heightened in relevance, while many

humanitarian-oriented organizations would structure themselves based on Islamic

principles (Genot 24). Many of these organizations already had highly developed

connections within the communities they were operating, which was leveraged during

the occupation and subsequently eased their ability to effectively actualize their projects

across broad spectrums of the population.

However, the strident religious sectarianism that fueled much of the violence

throughout the military occupation, namely between Shia and Sunnia factions,

complicated the religious structures and intentions navigating many Iraqi NGOs. On

the one hand, as particular regions throughout the country became increasingly

entrenched along sectarian lines, humanitarian-oriented Iraqi NGOs, specifically those

claiming Muslim identities, witnessed a narrowing sphere of operation; many regions

throughout the country, with the exception of Iraqi Kurdistan in the north, grew more

and more hostile to certain ethno-religious groups, consequently fostering a civil society

atmosphere for only certain factions of people depending on the geographic region.

Yet, on the other hand, Muslim organizations generally fared far better than their

foreign and secular counterparts (Iqbal al-Juboori interview). Both of because their

religious structures as well as their lack of perceived connection with foreign occupying

powers, Muslim organizations developed stronger ties within their respective

communities of operation, while secular NGOs had more difficulty in establishing their autonomy from occupying powers to other Iraqis. As insurgent and broader Iraqi civilian hostility towards foreign occupiers increased, which ultimately embraced all foreign actors in general whether or not a direct association with the American occupation existed, international NGOs found their communities of target increasingly suspicious of their presence.

The final Iraqi structural force crucial in shaping the Iraqi NGO sector during military occupation is the Iraqi government, which consisted of largely coalition appointed Iraqi civilians. Up until 2004, the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) served as an interim government, and was replaced by a permanent government in 2005 following the disbandment of the CPA. Yet it was the IGC that drafted several resolutions focusing specifically on both civil society in general and NGOs in particular, resolutions that would largely dictate future laws and actions by Iraqi governmental officials throughout the over decade long occupation. In his farewell address to the CPA, CPA head Paul Bremer charged the IGC and Iraqi society at large to develop a "democratic, accountable, and self-governing civil society", so that several portions of the IGC constitution outlined a governmental framework that would cultivate a civil society populated by efficient, impactful NGOs (Bremer 262). Defining non-governmental organizations as "any organization or foundation that is organized to undertake…humanitarian assistance and relief projects; human rights advocacy and

awareness; development of civil society…or any other non-profit activity that serves the

public interest", the IGC and the subsequent permanent government placed an

importance on NGOs, crafting a sphere for them to operate and function. Further, the

Iraqi government eventually established a streamlined process for NGO registration,

which allowed for a way of recording and monitoring civil society organizations that

had not existed under Hussein's rule. As most of the Iraqi NGO workers interviewed

noted, this institutionalized process of NGO creation under government control helped

curb the chaotic sprouting of organizations prominent in the beginning of the

occupation, ultimately weeding out the organizations claiming to adhere to

humanitarian purposes but in reality only hoping to receive funding for personal

reasons (al-Juboori, Ali interviews). The government structuring was not universally

favorable, however, as Iraqi NGO worker Iqbal al-Juboori explains:

> The creation of a government body to help NGOs become official and operable was necessary in theory, but in reality the civil society office has made it extremely hard for people to obtain licenses and become registered (31 December 2014).

Another Iraqi NGO worker, Rachid Mahmood, affirms the above opinion while also

touching upon the newly formed Iraqi government's detachment from the civil society

it purports to serve:

> There are constantly new requirements for NGOs to acquire certification and re-certification; we have to show them our bank accounts, too, which need a certain amount of money in them. The constant update of requirements comes out of

nowhere, though, and most of us don't know the reasons behind their execution (20 February 2015).

The Iraqi government's inclusion of nation-based NGOs into a broader philosophy of cultivating an active civil society thus presented several complexities to the humanitarian sphere of Iraq. On the one hand, the level at which laws, regulations, and recognition the Iraqi interim and permanent governments expressed was unwitnessed before 2003, ultimately creating for Iraqi civil society a space of operation that, at least on the surface level, acknowledged the necessity of actors beyond the governmental sphere to tackle Iraq's most pressing humanitarian crises. Yet the reality for many Iraqi NGO workers suggests a distance rife with miscommunication and misunderstanding existed between the two sectors. While the nascent Iraqi NGO sector grappled with their newly, and in many cases haphazardly, structured organizations amidst a deplorable security context, the Iraqi government, too, struggled with the chaos of weaving completely reconfigured institutions together. Such a task necessitated the cultivation of an Iraqi civil society consisting of a variety of functional NGOs, but it also proved, in reality, difficult to actualize.

International Structural Forces

The international forces outlined above are most relevant on a structural level when considered from a funding perspective. From the outset of the military invasion in 2003, millions of US dollars were funneled towards the specific purpose of facilitating

the creation and operation of Iraqi NGOs. Undoubtedly, the amount of money coming

into Iraq at this time was the main reason thousands of nation-based NGOs actualized

so quickly. The US Congress allocated $50 billion for the reconstruction of Iraq, $3

billion of which was for the specific use of "development" (Genot 18). Mainly

stemming from coalition governments (the United States being the top donor) and

international organizations, other funding sources were given widely and generously to

Iraqi NGOs; in fact, beyond the tens of millions of dollars devoted exclusively to Iraqi

NGOs $10 million was targeted towards programs for women and youth that promoted

the skills and ideas necessary to cultivate an Iraqi civil society (CPA 220). Yet very

quickly the amount of funding created two distinct structural problems for the

collective Iraqi NGO sector. Firstly, much of the funding targeted towards increasing

the efficacy of Iraqi NGOs proved wasteful and misdirected. Many Iraqi NGO workers

were given copious amounts of money to travel to international conferences and stay at

luscious European hotels, all the while bringing back mostly futile skills and ideas for

implementing projects in an Iraqi context (Genot 20). Even more alarmingly, the

irresponsible allocation and implementation of funding transcended the Iraqi NGO

sector. In a report to the US Congress, the US Department of Defense expressed that it

was unable to account for $8.7 billion of the $9.1 billion it received for reconstruction

efforts in occupied Iraq (Genot 22). Thus, many new Iraqi NGOs during military

occupation were given enough funds to operate, but the ways in which these funds

were poorly directed failed to robustly and sustainably structure many Iraqi NGOs

proportionally to the copious amount of money acquired. Another consequence of

significant international funding likely had more of a lasting and negative impact on the

Iraqi NGO sector. Obtaining international funds for the creation and function of NGOs

quickly became the easiest and surest way of obtaining money in general, especially

since de-Baathification and a collapsed economy did little to accommodate the

socioeconomic needs of most Iraqi civilians. Thus, very quickly, working for NGOs

became a way to simply make a living at best and an avenue to squander government

funds for personal use at worst. As one Iraqi NGO worker noted, 'I would say 25% of

all Iraqi NGOs are of noble purpose, but most of them were created just to obtain

money' (Mahmood interview). Because so many organizations espousing humanitarian

purposes were merely empty vessels of corruption, the collective reputation of the Iraqi

NGO sector was tarnished. This had lasting effects for Iraqi NGOs trying to obtain

funding in the later years of occupation as international aid dwindled, as well as for

those nation-based organizations hoping to partner with international organizations.

CHAPTER FIVE: Conclusion

This paper aims to answer how the US military occupation of Iraq from 2003 to 2011 affected Iraqi, humanitarian-oriented non-governmental organizations. By examining international NGOs and the relationships with their Iraqi counterparts, the security crisis enveloping the country, and the structural forces-both international and domestic in nature- critical in shaping the Iraqi NGO sector, I have attempted to outline the causal factors that most prominently impacted the Iraqi NGOs within a military occupation context. Through the consideration of these variables, two important observations can be made. On the one hand, the US military invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the subsequent eight year occupation directly facilitated the emergence of a broad Iraqi NGO sector consisting of hundreds of organizations with humanitarian focuses. By ousting President Saddam Hussein and his highly repressive Ba'ath regime and attempting to construct a democratic government inclusive of civil society organizations, American forces allowed for Iraqi NGOs to emerge at an unwitnessed level. Further, through generous funding from foreign government and international organizations, the nascent Iraqi NGOs had access to monetary sources that would greatly enable their operation. The international NGOs that flocked to Iraq from the outset of the military occupation also positively impacted their Iraqi-based counterparts

on multiple levels, particularly by offering logistic services and, once most left Iraq due

to security reasons, allowing for Iraqi humanitarian organizations and personnel to

garner acute importance as they were among the very few addressing humanitarian

concerns in the country. On the other hand, however, the military occupation

ultimately created an environment harmful for Iraqi NGOs to operate. American forces

largely executed a poorly run occupation which dismantled the Iraqi infrastructure,

exacerbated sectarian tensions, and dismissed considerable swaths of the Iraqi

population from their government jobs through de-Ba'athification. Through the

employment of private security companies to carry out security and reconstruction

tasks, the humanitarian landscape in Iraq significantly shifted. These companies

negatively impacted reconstruction efforts, while also damaging the collective foreign

reputation within Iraqi society. Iraqi civilians increasingly perceived international and

Iraqi humanitarian organizations as aligned with the mistrusted foreign occupation, so

that the ability of these organizations to function optimally was consistently

compromised. Further, the occupation and interim governments exacerbated sectarian

tension amongst the Iraqi population, so that insurgent and counterinsurgent forces

created an environment hostile for Iraqi NGOs to implement their projects. And while

significant foreign funding facilitated the creation of many Iraqi humanitarian

organizations, these funding avenues became one of the few ways for civilians to earn

an income. Because of this, much of the Iraqi NGO sector consisted of "empty-shell"

organizations simply laundering money for personal use. Thus, the impact of the US

military occupation on Iraqi, humanitarian NGOs is two-sided; delineating the military

occupation context as a complete success or failure for the Iraqi NGO sector would be

misleading.

Limitations

Before considering these observations on a broader level beyond the Iraqi

context, the limitations hampering this project must be considered. Perhaps most

glaringly, the academic literature that exists on Iraqi NGOs, much less Iraq's civil

society as a whole, is dismally meager. The few people who have written about this

subject are mostly humanitarian aid workers themselves, writing for their respective

organizations and offering largely policy-related suggestions rather than examining the

issue from an academic standpoint.

Relatedly, while a considerable portion of my research relied crucially on

interviews with current Iraqi humanitarian workers, the information gathered from

these interactions is highly subjective and opinion-based. The workers I spoke with

were predominately timid to offer any perspectives on their organizations that were not

positive, so while the input they provided on the military occupation was complex and

valuable, I had difficulty drawing definitive conclusions on the ways in which Iraqi

humanitarian workers felt about their organizations as a whole. This is most likely due

to the workers wanting to avoid tarnishing their organizations' images, and, in some

cases, for privacy concerns (a few workers I spoke with desired that they remain

anonymous as they were worried about putting their jobs at risk). Additionally, the

perspectives offered by these Iraqi humanitarian workers come from a place of

retrospection. Because the collective political, security, and economic situation of Iraq

has deteriorated significantly since complete US combat removal at the end of 2011,

several of the Iraqi workers I spoke with expressed a sense of difficulty in disentangling

current frustrations from their perspectives on the period considered for this study.

In addition to the limitations of academic literature and interviews with Iraqi

humanitarian workers, the recent nature of the Iraq War poses its own set of issues.

While officially ending within the past four years, historical formulations of the war as a

whole are nascent and malleable. How academics, policy makers, and humanitarians

conceptualize the effects of the Iraq War on Iraqi society will inevitably shift

considerably in the coming years as the distance of time allows for more objective

observations.

Iraqi NGOs as Products of a Top-Down Approach

The artificiality debate mentioned at the beginning of this study provides a

compelling lens with which to consider the Iraqi NGO sector during the context of a

military occupation. This debate suggests that the superficial ways in which colonial

bordering and repetitive foreign interference constructed the Iraqi state have led to

lasting consequences for the country. Toby Dodge compellingly expands on this

argument by paralleling British colonialism of Iraq during the early twentieth century

with the US occupation beginning in 2003:

> The manner in which order was imposed on Iraq, both under the mandate and after April 2003, profoundly shaped the interaction, or more accurately the lack of it, between the population and the nascent institutions of the state and ultimately played the key role in the comparative failures of state-building. (191)

Thus, one cannot separate the exogenous methods of state-formation in Iraq from the

country's meager institutions; these two concepts are crucially interrelated and provide

meaningful considerations for the emergence of the Iraqi NGO sector during US

military occupation. As examined in chapter four, the international forces largely

responsible for the emergence and persistence of the majority of Iraqi humanitarian-

oriented NGOs stemmed from US government sources, which provided the monetary

and logistical support required to construct a new Iraqi NGO sector. This top-down

approach ultimately compromised the efficacy of many Iraqi humanitarian

organizations. Their very existence relied, in many cases, on temporary aid that was

contingent on certain requirements formulated by US government officials. Contrary to

the more successful NGO sector in Iraqi Kurdistan, which existed in a much larger

capacity compared to the rest of Iraq before 2003, a top-down approach part and parcel

of a broader American reconstruction package facilitated the emergence of much of the

Iraqi, humanitarian-oriented NGO sector considered in this study.

By affirming the condition that humanitarian-focused NGOs serve as crucial

forces in any civil society and accepting Diamond's definition of civil society outlined

previously ("an intermediary entity standing between the private sphere and the

state"), the Iraqi NGOs considered in this study raise pertinent questions about military

interventions and the roles they play, both positive and negative, in configuring a host

country's civil society. The question this study aimed to answer, how military

occupation impacted Iraqi NGOs during the 2003-2011 time period, thus fails to capture

the much larger and pressing issue of *if* and *how* an intervening government can play a

significant exogenous role in forming civil society organizations in an occupied country.

Should a thriving civil society, and more specifically the NGOs it fosters, always stand

upon a foundation of agency actualized by the civilians of the concerned country? Are

the Iraqi NGOs formed during the most recent American occupation of Iraq destined

for failure because of the foreign structural forces critical in their actualization, forces

that no longer support financially or not to the same extent? These questions demand

further examination in future studies on not just Iraqi NGOs, but NGOs globally,

specifically in countries that have experienced foreign military occupations.

The Importance of Iraq's NGOs

Despite the largely negative factors affecting the ability of Iraq's humanitarian NGOs to operate optimally during US military occupation, the very existence of these organizations reflects an important shift in the ways in which many Iraqis conceptualize a civil society for their country. Every Iraqi humanitarian worker I spoke with expressed a strong sense of affirmation in not only their work but the Iraqi humanitarian sector as a whole. The organizations that emerged, some consisting of only two or three people, are revolutionary in nature, at least in the Iraqi context. Within months of the expulsion of an authoritarian regime, thousands of Iraqi civilians, invigorated with the promise of living in a democratic society, congregated to form NGOs of their own, each unique in perspective and approach to the disastrous circumstances enveloping the country.

Future military interventions, especially those spearheaded by the US, are inevitable. The Iraqi case, while ubiquitously devastating for Iraqi society, does offer compelling insights on the role of domestic NGOs during an occupation period. Whether already existent or formed following invasion, domestic NGOs with humanitarian orientations possess the unique ability of not only addressing humanitarian concerns (which their international counterparts are often more equipped and experienced in), but also developing crucial social networks in the process of

alleviating communities entrenched in deplorable circumstances (which their international counterparts can rarely enact). These social networks enhance the prospects of a healthy civil society.

What Western media consistently glossed over in its coverage of Iraq in the beginning of US occupation, which largely featured angered civilians looting buildings and engaging in violence against one another and towards American soldiers, was the overwhelming actualization of people invested in forming a civil society, in whatever capacity, through the construction of NGOs. This study has suggested the context of the US military occupation, while facilitating the emergence of an Iraqi NGO sector, provided a largely negative atmosphere for these humanitarian organizations to operate; however, it does *not* argue a civil society did not exist during this period, nor does it suggest the projects these organizations implemented failed to positively impact Iraqi society. Rather, I would stress the existence of these organizations indicate civil societies can evolve and reconfigure amidst the chaotic political and economic contexts characteristic of military occupation. The negative variables during occupation hampering the ability of Iraqi humanitarian NGOs to function are unquestionable--the agency inherent in the Iraqi civilians who formed NGOs to cultivate a newly conceived Iraqi civil society is perhaps more so.

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