The Infrastructures of Occupation: Iraq, 2003 – 2012

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Abstract

The United States invaded Iraq in March 2003, beginning a nine-year-long military engagement and occupation. Alongside more orthodox military activity, the US occupation attempted to rebuild and reshape Iraq's infrastructure networks, most of which had been severely damaged during the 2003 invasion, the United Nations sanctions, and previous wars. This dissertation is a critical history of the efforts of the US occupation to produce new infrastructures in Iraq. Drawing on a specific range of primary sources (namely, the documents of the various institutions of the occupation), the dissertation attempts to write a new narrative of the so-called reconstruction of Iraq. It rejects the absolutist understanding of state sovereignty as reflected in the state-building discourse as a productive analytical frame, and instead offers to look closely at the material, social, and cultural contingencies that shaped the state's agency. This narrative explores the materiality and the performativity of discourse in examining the effects of infrastructure on Iraqi politics, economy, and subjectivity. The first chapter focuses on material infrastructures, exploring the materiality of power and the interactions of US discourses and practices with Iraqi material and social actants. The second chapter examines financial infrastructure, analysing the occupying regime's attempts to produce the instruments of monetary policy, while conjuring a new figure of financial subjectivity. The third and final chapter focuses on political infrastructure, examining the process of drafting of the constitution and the production of civil society organisations through an infrastructural lens. All three chapters are linked by explications of the political and economic assumptions built into technical objects, the deployment of infrastructure as a counterinsurgency strategy, and revelations of the limits of state agency.

Contents

Introduction

In March 2003, the United States (US) and its coalition partners invaded Iraq, then under the control of Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party. Ba'athist forces were defeated within weeks, and the US established its occupational government, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). Although the CPA was in place for only one year, US combat troops remained in Iraq through 2011, and the US reconstruction programme continued through 2012, constituting a nine-year occupation. The occupation of Iraq has by no means been neglected in historical literature, but the narratives of this period have relied on theories of change focused on transformations in formal political processes. In this understanding, the overthrow of the Ba'ath regime and introduction of liberal representative democracy marked a complete break in Iraqi history. Such a narrative fails to account for the material and social agencies that continued to shape Iraqi society despite profound political changes. A narrative based on formal political change assumes the sovereignty and autonomy of the state, ignoring the contingent interactions that shape state agency.

A critical history of Iraqi infrastructures allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the changes in Iraqi society. Study of these infrastructures reveals the 2003 transition not as a complete break, as past material, social, and institutional infrastructures continued to determine the shape of new infrastructures, social relations, politics, and economic structures. In recent decades, scholars have begun to describe the power inherent in technical objects and practices through the term "technopolitics." This framework rejects the neutrality of the technical, instead

unveiling the political and economic power of technical processes. For Timothy Mitchell, technopolitics involves entrusting the expertise of engineering, technology, and social science with resolving fundamental political and economic issues, rendering them as technical problems within bounded reserves of specific expert knowledge.[1] Similarly, Gabrielle Hecht discusses technopolitics as the political and cultural configuration and ordering of scientific knowledge, and the framing of this knowledge as technical.[2] Antina von Schnitzler's work on technopolitics focuses on the ways in which technical procedures are used in the production and re-engineering of subjectivities within technologies of government.[3] This dissertation follows from these scholars' crucial works on technopolitics, a framework that can shed light on the ways in which the US occupation sought to render political issues as technical domains, reserved for the dictates of expertise.

Infrastructures are technopolitical networks of material objects, people, expertise, and practices that are bounded together and stabilised as systems that facilitate the flow and exchange of goods, people, and information through time and space.[4] Infrastructures are therefore not entirely material, but assemblages of human and nonhuman actors that requires constant effort to appear stable and bounded. Interrogation of these assemblages can reveal the political and social objectives they embody, and the forms of agency they afford or prevent. This dissertation extends an infrastructural focus beyond the traditional objects of this type of study. Rather than focusing entirely on electricity, water, transportation, or communications, it also employs an infrastructural framework in interrogating the technopolitical domains of the financial economy and the formal Iraqi political system. Financial and political systems, much like traditional infrastructures, are assemblages of numerous human and nonhuman actants that facilitate the distribution and exchange of goods, people, and information, their unity stabilised through the efforts of expertise and technical action.

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[1] Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 15.
[2] Gabrielle Hecht, *Being Nuclear: Africans and the Global Uranium Trade* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2012), 15.
[3] Antina von Schnitzler, "Citizenship Prepaid: Water, Calculability, and Techno-Politics in South Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 34(4) (2008), 902.
[4] Brian Larkin, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure," *The Annual Review of Anthropology* 42 (2013), 328.

An infrastructural focus can uncover the ways in which objects and practices are 'rendered technical,' ringfencing them for expert deliberation.[5] Bruno Latour refers to a process of framing technologies, both material and institutional, as technical "black boxes." Once framed in this way, their functioning and existence are largely ignored, except by those with technical expertise, allowing the social objectives embodied by black boxes to avoid interrogation.[6] Black boxing is a crucial feature of technopolitical governance, producing a boundary between the technical and the social and hence allowing fundamentally political questions to be reserved for expertise. This dissertation seeks to open and interrogate the black boxes of Iraqi infrastructure, revealing the role of technical and nonhuman actors in advancing political and social objectives.

A crucial early work in the critical tradition of infrastructural studies is Thomas Hughes' *Networks of Power: Electrification in Western Society, 1880-1930.* Hughes's history of electrification discusses the electrical grid as a system or assemblage, composed of a variety of material, social, financial, and organisational techniques.[7] This understanding of infrastructure allows for comprehension of the many actors involved in making these systems appear as bounded and stable. Hughes' analysis details the many smaller technologies, material, financial, and organisational, that are combined to form a single network. Crucially, *Networks of Power* reveals that the innovation and distribution of material technologies requires the invention of non-technological practices. Methods of calculation, bureaucratic procedures, and new forms of expertise must be formulated to facilitate the production and stabilisation of infrastructural assemblages. By shedding light on the non-technological elements of infrastructural networks, Hughes also introduces an understanding that infrastructure is not divorced from politics and culture, but is embedded within them, its development contingent upon and shaped by the social.

Antina von Schnitzler's *Democracy's Infrastructures: Techno-Politics and Protest After Apartheid* details state efforts to install prepaid water metres in a South African

[5] Tania Murray Li, *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 7.
[6] Bruno Latour, "On Technical Mediation-Philosophy, Sociology, Genealogy," *Common Knowledge* 3 no.2 (Fall 1994): 36.
[7] Thomas Hughes, *Networks of Power: Electrification in Western Society, 1880-1930* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1983).

township, as well as popular resistance to these efforts. A key insight of von Schnitzler's research is that technical objects and practices, seemingly apolitical, can be sites of immense political and social contestation. By challenging the neutrality of the technical, von Schnitzler reveals the ways in which infrastructures can embody political objectives, their agency affording novel technologies of government. Furthermore, von Schnitzler shows the ways in which technical infrastructures are imbued with political meaning not only for those planning and implementing them, but also for their users. These insights are crucial in understanding contestations and resistance to infrastructures. *Democracy's Infrastructures* focuses on small-scale infrastructure at its points of use by consumers, sites in which subjects are most likely to experience and comprehend the impact of infrastructures on their lives. A study of Iraq's post-Ba'ath infrastructure projects can complement this by revealing that even large-scale, national infrastructures can become politically contentious and popularly resisted.

Timothy Mitchell's *Rule of Experts* and *Carbon Democracy* marked definitive shifts towards infrastructural understandings of political and social change. *Rule of Experts* details the calculative and administrative technologies through which international organisations and creditors, as well as the Egyptian state, framed political and economic issues as technical challenges, marking them as domains reserved for expertise. *Carbon Democracy* focuses on the political and social organisations afforded by specific types of fossil fuels. Mitchell argues that the labour-intensive nature of coal as a fuel source afforded organised labour significant leverage against capital, allowing workers to create increasingly democratic societies. Oil, to the contrary, lent itself to undemocratic politics, its methods of extraction and transport affording states and corporations more control. He therefore reverts traditional understandings of state sovereignty and human mastery over the material world, instead revealing the ways in which material affordance shapes the forms of states, expertise, and politics. Mitchell's work on expert-led government and material affordance are critical in analysis of Iraqi infrastructure, but this dissertation is also compelled to depart from Mitchell's work in its attempt to understand the power of expertise and infrastructure in a context of ongoing violent conflict and direct foreign occupation.

Nikolas Rose, Peter Miller, and Michell Callon have broadened the object of infrastructural studies beyond strictly material constructions. Rose and Miller have

shown the ways in which modern governance relies on a stabilised set of connections between the state, civil society, and expertise, employing methods of social 'programming' through the installation of accounting practices, bureaucratic procedures, and licensure criteria.[8] These connections and technologies are not always material, but they function similarly to traditionally-defined infrastructures in facilitating the distribution of resources and people, their practices repeated consistently in order to appear stable. Furthermore, they operate as assemblages, composed of numerous financial, administrative, and political techniques that require constant unification to function as bounded infrastructural systems. Callon has described the work of unifying these heterogeneous actors in service of unified objectives as a process of "translation," through which actors' identities and agencies are stabilised through "obligatory passage points" to form a bounded network.[9] Callon has particularly applied this framework to the production of markets. He has shown the performative agency of economic discourse and revealed that a variety of material and calculative technologies are required in constantly producing and stabilising markets.[10] Callon's insight that markets are not a natural result of human behaviour, but phenomena that require constant reproduction, has allowed infrastructure studies to expand into the study of financial systems and economic relations. This dissertation follows from Callon in recognising the role of calculative devices in producing markets, but focuses on the contestation over these devices, investigating cultural resistance to imposed economic epistemologies.

Inspired by Mitchell's work on Egypt and the transnational history of fossil fuels, Katayoun Shafiee's *Machineries of Oil: An Infrastructural History of BP in Iran* traces the early history of British oil exploration in Iran, and its development in time through the nationalisation crisis of the early 1950s. The book untangles the technologies of accounting, scientific expertise, and political control that made Iranian oil calculable

[8] Nikolas Rose, "Governing 'Advanced' Liberal Democracies," in *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-liberalism and Rationalities of Government,* ed. Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne, Nikolas Rose (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 46; Peter Miller and Nikolas Rose. *Governing the Present: Administering Economic, Social and Personal Life.* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008.

[9] Michel Callon, "Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St. Brieuc Bay," in *Technoscience: The Politics of Interventions,* ed. Kristin Asdal, Brita Brenna, and Ingunn Moser (Oslo: Unipub, 2007), 61.

[10] Muniesa, Fabian, Yuval Millo, and Michel Callon. "An Introduction to Market Devices." *The Sociological Review* 55 (2) (2007): 1-12.

and manageable, as well as the effects of oil's material qualities on these technologies. Crucially, it opens the black boxes of technical knowledge and the technologies produced for framing knowledge as such, concluding that the divides between the technical and the social are outcomes of these technologies, not their inputs.[11] Shafiee's work thereby provides new ways of conceptualising political structure and transition in the Middle East. By adopting an infrastructural understanding of imperialism, *Machineries of Oil* details the technical systems that were necessitated by the British empire's confrontation with Iranian oil. Rather than a monolithic and autonomous state agency, the empire's sovereignty was contingent upon the affordances of oil in a remote corner of Iran. The calculations, technologies, expertise, and institutionalised connections that constitute the global machinery of BP, and to an extent the broader oil industry, were determined locally through interaction with the particularities of Iranian oil, substate tribal leaders, and organised labour.[12]

Comparable processes were at work in occupied Iraq, with technologies of counterinsurgency, financial calculation, and black boxing emerging out of local interactions with Iraqi materialities, substate political authority, and resistance. While Shafiee's analysis of imperialism does display the contingent and reactive nature of state power, it still presents imperial projects in their successes, managing to overcome local barriers. This dissertation presents a different image of imperialism, examining the impossibility of state sovereignty and its incapacity to maintain autonomous agency, while still recognising the violent, economic, and political power of the US state.

The US occupation of Iraq has attracted scholarship from a wide variety of perspectives. This literature can be broadly categorised into three clusters: namely, neoconservative-inspired discourse, state-building discourse, and Marxist-inspired discourse. Admittedly, given the wealth of literature on the occupation, there are also some studies that cannot be neatly placed into these three categories. However, rather than a book-by-book analysis, let me quickly describe the critical landscape in broad brushstrokes.

The neoconservative-inspired literature on Iraq was first promoted by the early twenty-first century American think tanks. The Project for the New American Century, the Hoover Institution, the American Enterprise Institute, and the Heritage Foundation

[11] Katayoun Shafiee, *Machineries of Oil: An Infrastructural History of Iran* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2018), 85.
[12] *Ibid.*, 122.

were highly influential in campaigning in favour of the invasion of Iraq, and their brand of discourse has managed to maintain its hegemony in both civil society and academia of the global north well after the war. Early neoconservative literature framed the war in deeply Manichean terms, as a battle between the civilising force of market democracy and the timelessly religious and morally corrupt Iraqi population.[13] The subsequent generation of neoconservative-inspired discourse was more subtle in its moral rhetoric but maintained an implicit understanding of Iraqi society as highly religious, collectivist, and requiring tutelage in preparation for democratic governance. Sectarian division and a historical lack of liberal, market-oriented governance were explanatory factors for neoconservative-inspired literature in understanding many of the outcomes of the occupation.[14]

The state-building discourse generally abandoned neoconservative Manicheanism and heralding of US military force. However, it maintained a belief in the universal necessity of free markets and liberal governance.[15] This paradigm envisions and seeks to create a peaceful global community of liberal market democracies. It promotes the reform and strengthening of state institutions towards meeting this objective, aligning with the 'good governance' and 'best practices' discourse of multilateral institutions and creditors.[16] State-building discourse asserts that social, economic, and political outcomes can be explained by the strength, form, and efficacy of state institutions, and their adherence to international norms. Iraqi communal violence, economic stagnation, and political instability are hence reduced to technical issues that can be explained and alleviated through the practices of specific state bodies.[17]

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[13] For examples, see Powell, Colin. "Speech at the Heritage Foundation." 12 December, 2002. https://www.heritage.org/middle-east/report/sec-state-colin-powell-the-us-middle-east-partnershipinitiative. And Kagan, Frederick W. Choosing Victory: A Plan for Success in Iraq: Phase I Report. American Enterprise Institute. 2007.

[14] A typical example is: Alice Hills, "The Unavoidable Ghettoization of Security in Iraq." *Security Dialogue* 41(3) (2010): 301-321.

[15] For examples, see L. Paul Bremer, James Dobbins and David Gompert, "Early Days in Iraq: Decisions of the CPA." *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 50 no. 4 (2008): 21-56; Eric Davis, "History Matters: Past as Prologue in Building Democracy in Iraq." *Orbis* 49(2) (2005): 229-244; and Bridoux, Jeff and Russell, Malcolm. "Liberal Democracy Promotion in Iraq: A Model for the Middle East and North Africa?" *Foreign Policy Analysis* 9 no. 3 (July 2013): 327-346.

[16] Nida Alahmad, "Illuminating a State: State-Building and Electricity in Occupied Iraq," *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 8 no.2 (2017): 337.

[17] Example: Looney, Robert. "Socio-Economic Strategies to Counter Extremism in Iraq." *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 29 no. 2 (2006): 21-44.

The Marxist and Marxist-inspired discourse employs a materialist understanding of history and political change in analysing Iraq and the occupation, eschewing the neoconservative emphasis on culture and faith, as well as state-building's emphasis on technical state capacity.[18] This discourse tends to focus on the imperial nature of the US occupation, with particular attention paid to economic structural adjustment in line with 'Washington Consensus' demands.[19] Many Marxist-inspired histories of Iraq also link the US invasion and occupation to the interests of capital, granting agency and a specific logic to capital.[20] The Marxist analysis of economic restructuring in Iraq has revealed processes of liberalisation and economic 'shock therapy.' But these processes are discussed in the literature as simply a rollback of the state, inevitably allowing more space for market forces. This framing reproduces the conception that the market is a natural aspect of human behaviour, neglecting the constant work required for markets to be produced and stabilised.

All three categories of literature on the occupation of Iraq provide useful insights yet are limited by many of the same analytical assumptions. Each of them retains a conception of the state as monolithic, sovereign, and autonomous in its agency. The historiography is therefore incapable of explicating the contingency of state agency, and the limits placed on its sovereignty by material, social, and cultural actants. Attributing events and outcomes during the occupation to the sovereign willpower of the US or Iraqi states fails to account for the interactions with war-damaged infrastructure, continued insurgency, and popular resistance that shaped the agency of these states from 2003 through 2012.

By assuming technical infrastructure to be apolitical, the existing literature reproduces the divide between the technical and the social, preventing an understanding of the ways in which technical objects and procedures can embody social objectives and enable or prevent certain actions. Only through opening the black box of the technical

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[18] For examples, see Mahdi, Kamil. "Neoliberalism, Conflict, and an Oil Economy: The Case of Iraq." *Arab Studies Quarterly* 29 (Winter 2007): 1-20. And Whyte, Dave. "The Crimes of Neo-Liberal Rule in Occupied Iraq." *British Journal of Criminology* 47 (2007): 177-195.

[19] Example: Samer Abboud, "Failures (And Successes?) of Neoliberal Economic Policy in Iraq." *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 2 no. 3 (2008): 425-442.

[20] Example: Baker, Yousef K. "Global Capitalism and Iraq: The Making of a Neoliberal State." *International Review of Modern Sociology* 40 no. 2 (2014): 121-148.

to understand the agency of infrastructure and materiality can exertions of power and historical change be understood.

This interrogation of the black boxes of the technical can reveal technologies of government far beyond the context of Iraq. Many late twentieth and early twenty-first century invasions, occupations, and imposed transitions have attempted to limit sovereign violence, instead exerting power through governmentality while maintaining the formal sovereignty of occupied subjects. These incursions, in line with the End of History thesis' emphasis on liberal rule, primarily remake economic, political, and social structures through infrastructure, technology, and the adoption of best practices. Violations of sovereignty are justified through reference to humanitarianism, free markets, and democracy. The occupation of Iraq, although devastating in its physical and sovereign violence, must be considered within this post-Cold War context of 'humanitarian' intervention, in which power is exerted and enshrined in society through the imposition of material infrastructures, financial legislation, and the restructuring of political institutions. The social agency of technical black boxes revealed in the present text undoubtedly played crucial roles in other national transitions, particularly those brought about through 'structural adjustment programmes' (SAPs). While SAPs did not involve physical occupation and sovereign violence, power was exerted through the imposition of new economic systems and political restructuring, much as it was in Iraq. Recognition of the agency of the technical opens the door to examining imperial exertions of power even in contexts in which legal state sovereignty remains formally intact, with imperial goals advanced through avenues as mundane as accounting standards or the adoption of best practices in monetary policy. Examining the social and political values inscribed

within these technical practices and objects therefore presents a tool through which to study contemporary imperialism beyond the Iraqi context, escaping the assumption of absolute state sovereignty and unity.

The first chapter focuses on material infrastructure, examining the reconstruction of electricity, water, oil, transportation, and communications following the US invasion. It begins by tracing the destruction of Iraqi infrastructures through the Iran-Iraq War, the Gulf War, the 1990s sanctions, and the 2003 invasion. It then proceeds to discuss the rebuilding of these infrastructures during the occupation, tracing the limits placed upon the US reconstruction programme by the form of previous infrastructures, as well as the ongoing insurgency. Finally, it discusses the turn towards constructing small-scale infrastructures as an explicit counterinsurgency strategy, and the implications of this transition.

The second chapter examines attempts to produce new financial infrastructures in post-Ba'ath Iraq. It explores the financial reforms enacted under the CPA and the first post-Ba'ath Iraqi governments, with particular attention to fruitless efforts towards producing secondary securities markets that would enable effective monetary policy. The chapter then turns to the construction of a network of microfinance institutions, detailing the calculative technologies invented to render microfinance institutions and borrowers calculable. The chapter concludes by discussing cultural resistance to microfinance, showing the limits of the US state's sovereignty in attempting to produce financial institutions that would operate as technologies of government.

The third and final chapter applies an infrastructural lens to the post-Ba'ath Iraqi political system. It examines attempts to render political issues as technical problems, ringfencing them as the domain of experts. Certain features of the constitution and political system were considered unquestionable necessities, closed off from democratic debate. These efforts were coupled with training programmes in Iraqi ministries and central government, producing the repeated practices of labour and expertise that would allow the infrastructural assemblage to become stabilised over time. The chapter concludes by exploring the occupation's efforts to reengineer civil society and Iraqi political subjectivities to correspond to the formal liberal democratic political system.

The primary sources consulted in this dissertation were primarily written by the US occupation, its contractors, and multilateral institutions. Reports from SIGIR (the US ad hoc financial oversight body for reconstruction), USAID, Department of State, and the Congressional Research Service are amongst the institutions from which sources were drawn. Although revealing valuable insights regarding the plans, practices, and self-reflections of the occupation, these sources are limited in that they are unlikely to reveal the full extent of their author institutions' failures or shortcomings. The author of this dissertation does not have the adequate reading comprehension in Arabic to make use of Arabic language primary sources. This limits the dissertation's focus largely to the institutions of the occupation itself, preventing analysis of many of the other actors involved. Despite these limitations, reports from US and multilateral institutions are widely available on the Internet, and this dissertation presents a novel infrastructural approach to interrogating these sources. By focusing directly on the black boxes of infrastructure, the following dissertation seeks to untangle the divisions between the technical and the social to reveal the agency of technical objects and procedures in shaping post-Ba'ath Iraqi politics, subjects, and economic relations.

Chapter One

Material Infrastructure

When the US occupational government, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), took power in Iraq in May 2003, one of its most immediate tasks was to rebuild the country's damaged infrastructure. The occupation had initially been planned as short and inexpensive, with a quick handover to a sovereign Iraqi government. But even for this envisioned short-term occupation, pre-war planners determined that infrastructure would have to be rebuilt. What they did not expect was that this limited reconstruction, framed as "liberate and leave," would stretch to almost nine years and cost more than $60 billion.[21] The scale of Iraq's destruction, caused by the Iran-Iraq War, the 1991 Gulf War, sanctions, and the 2003 invasion frustrated the US plans for a quick reconstruction project. The material reality of rebuilding in a severely damaged context, coupled with continuous violent conflict, hindered a reconstruction plan that had assumed a peaceful and more materially intact environment. Instead, the US state's agency in rebuilding was contingent upon interaction with a variety of material actants, as well as the social actants of insurgents, militias, and Iraqi political leaders.

Taking a larger role in producing new infrastructures than initially expected, the US occupation attempted to code its political and economic objectives into the reality of post-Ba'ath Iraq. Although material infrastructure transforms overtime, and is shaped by continuous labour and expert inputs, it does allow decisions and actions to be maintained long into the future. Once built, it sustains action much longer than human

[21] Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, *Learning from Iraq: A Final Report from the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction*, March 2013, 72.

decisions alone, as the social maintains visibility and durability through the enlistment of material actants.[22] Material infrastructure must therefore be thought of not as neutral and technical, but rather as imbued with social meaning and intention, part of a network that includes human political actants. Infrastructure also shapes everyday life, conducting human behaviour. Access to electricity, water, transportation, and communications are the foundations upon which social, political, and economic life are built, the form of these infrastructures creating the framework within which human agency is possible. Through leading the effort to produce new, politically and economically charged infrastructures in Iraq, the US could therefore affect Iraqi life long after formal withdrawal. But its ability to produce these effects was contingent upon Iraq's material and social conditions.

The occupation quickly realised that its sovereign capacity to determine the material form of the new Iraq would be continuously challenged and subverted. From 2004 onwards it therefore abandoned the large-scale, national infrastructure projects it had initially focused on, instead turning to small-scale, "community" infrastructure as an explicit counterinsurgency effort. The material actant of infrastructure was thereby enrolled in the war, perpetuating not only American political and economic objectives, but military ones as well. This new focus too was shaped by Iraq's material contingencies, with geographical, demographic, and insurgent factors guiding the distribution and form of infrastructure. By transitioning to local-level projects, the later rebuilding effort mirrored the US' Orientalist understanding of Iraq not as a national whole, but as a conglomeration of competing sectarian and ethnic groups, materially encoding this conceptualisation into the country's infrastructure. The continuation of political resistance, and the difficulties of building infrastructures in an environment ravaged by war, challenged the capacity of the US to produce its desired material outcomes, revealing the limits and contingencies of its sovereignty and agency.

THE MATERIAL REGIME OF IRAQ, C.2003

In the 1970s and 1980s the Ba'ath regime enjoyed an enormous influx of capital from rising oil revenues, much of which was spent on an extensive modernisation campaign

[22] Bruno Latour, "On Technical Mediation-Philosophy, Sociology, Genealogy," *Common Knowledge* 3 no.2 (Fall 1994): 61.

that included basic infrastructure such as electricity, water treatment, housing, and transportation.[23] Many oil producing countries, especially Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, seek to maximise oil output and keep prices low, with the hope of maintaining Western consumption patterns and long-term stability. Others, with larger populations and smaller oil reserves, attempt to maximise prices to fund their larger development programmes and other needs.[24] Iraq has always been in the latter category, requiring high global oil prices. It therefore benefitted immensely from the oil price shocks of the 1970s, enabling substantially expanded infrastructure development. The middle class grew rapidly through the 1970s, and there was almost universal access to the basic necessities of electricity, clean water, housing, and reliable road transportation.

This period of relative affluence was threatened once Iraq invaded Iran in September 1980. The post-revolution Iranian military immediately attacked Iraqi oil infrastructure, suddenly limiting Iraq's capacity to export oil, its primary source of revenue.[25] The state still continued to provide basic services and subsidise many consumer goods during the early phases of the war. Through extensive foreign borrowing it expanded its universal welfare programme alongside a military build-up, often described as the period of "guns and butter."[26] Materially, Iraq's infrastructure continued to be expanded and maintained despite a marked drop in oil revenues. But in 1982 the war began to be fought almost entirely on Iraqi soil, where it would remain until the cessation of hostilities in 1988. Not only did the war begin to damage Iraq's infrastructure, but in the same year Syria, which supported Iran, also blocked Iraqi oil exports via a pipeline through its territory, almost completely preventing Iraq from exporting oil.[27] The highly developed welfare state and extensive material infrastructure of the 1970s began to erode, ravaged by war on Iraqi soil and a lack of funding for repairs or expansion.

As war crept further into Iraqi territory, roads near the border with Iran were under increasing attack, threating military supply routes. Iraq therefore reorganised and expanded much of its road transportation infrastructure, creating new networks of

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[23] Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958: From Revolution to Dictatorship* (London: I.B. Taurus Publishers, 2001), 172-173.
[24] Abbas Alnasrawi. *The Economy of Iraq: Oil, Wars, Destruction of Development and Prospects, 1950-2010* (London: Greenwood Press, 1994), 113-114.
[25] *Ibid.*, 79.
[26] *Ibid.*, 81.
[27] *Ibid.*, 83.

highways that avoided the Iranian border.[28] These networks not only allowed transportation to be uninterrupted by Iranian attacks, but also gave Iraq the means to export oil via trucks to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, a capacity that would prove useful in later years. Despite these new roads, built as a necessity to prevent further Iranian attacks, Iraq's overall infrastructure was severely damaged during the war, never recovering to its 1970s state of abundance.

In the late 1980s, OPEC member states had conflicting demands in regards to the price of oil. It was in the interests of Kuwait, with its small population and large oil reserves, to maintain high output and lower prices. As oil prices dropped in early 1990, Kuwait refused to decrease its output, much to the detriment of financially struggling and high price-dependent Iraq.[29] Combined with disputes over Iraq's debt and a shared oil field, this compelled Iraq to invade and annex Kuwait in August 1990. A United Nations Security Council Resolution was passed within days, imposing sanctions that would remain until the 2003 invasion.

But before the sanctions had begun to take a serious toll, a US bombing campaign against Iraq began in January 1991. Although lasting only six weeks, this bombardment dealt a further blow to the infrastructure that had already been severely damaged during the 1980s. The attacks intentionally targeted infrastructure such as transportation, hospitals, electrical power structures, telecommunications, fertiliser plants, civilian industrial plants, and oil facilities. This relegated Iraq "to a pre-industrial age, but with all the disabilities of post-industrial dependency on an intensive use of energy and technology."[30] The extensive damage was coupled with a severe lack of financing for repairs, given the strict sanctions and pre-existing financial crisis. Furthermore, US officials later admitted that many of the infrastructure sites targeted had been identified for their inability to be reconstructed without foreign technical assistance and equipment, thereby putting leverage on Saddam's regime.[31] Not only did Iraq not have the financial means to repair this infrastructure, it also lacked the expertise, meaning that it would largely remain damaged until the 2003 invasion.

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[28] Nida Alahmad and Arang Keshavarzian, "A War on Multiple Fronts," *Middle East Report* no. 257 *The Iran-Iraq War 30 Years Later* (Winter 2010): 21.
[29] Alnasrawi, *The Economy of Iraq*, 115-116.
[30] *Ibid.*, 119.
[31] *Ibid.*, 122.

The condition of Iraq's material infrastructure continued to erode throughout the 1990s. The sanctions banned the import of parts and technical equipment, preventing repair and reconstruction from damage done during the Iran-Iraq War and the 1991 Gulf War. It was not until 2002 that a technical procedural change allowed Iraq to use funds from the United Nations Oil-for-Food (OFF) programme to import civilian parts for infrastructure.[32] Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, the US continued an aerial bombardment of Iraq's critical infrastructure. Enforcement of the 'no-fly zones' in Iraq's northern Kurdish region and southern Shi'ite region resulted in consistent bombing throughout the decade. These attacks increased to match political pressure on Saddam, with US bombing sorties flying almost every other day in 1998 and 1999.[33] The 1991 Gulf War's targeting of infrastructure as a political pressure tactic effectively continued until the invasion of 2003.

As material infrastructure continued to be degraded through war, sanctions, and lack of financial capacity, informal social infrastructures grew and strengthened to replace those that had been destroyed. The weakening of the state and its inability to trade during the sanctions resulted in a drastic rise in cross-border smuggling. The highway networks built to truck oil in the 1980s were enrolled as material actants in the 1990s as smuggling routes for illicit oil and other goods. This produced vast social networks to facilitate transportation, helping Iraqis to endure near total isolation from the global economy.[34] Many of the same smuggling networks continued to sell oil out of Iraq after 2003, taking advantage of the continuation of large consumer subsidies.[35] While the state's formal infrastructure projects could not be rebuilt, new informal social connections were built and stabilised, acting as social infrastructures for the distribution and transportation of resources. These informal, illegal smuggling infrastructures were again re-enrolled following the 2003 invasion, this time by al-Qaeda. The social smuggling networks that had arisen during the sanctions were appropriated by al-Qaeda in order to raise funds and smuggle foreign fighters into the

[32] Nida Alahmad, "The Politics of Oil and State Survival in Iraq 1991-2003: Beyond the Rentier Thesis." *Constellations: An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory* 14 no. 4 (2007): 597.
[33] Anthony Arnove, "Introduction," in *Iraq Under Siege: The Devastating Impact of Sanctions and War,* ed. Anthony Arnove (Cambridge: South End Press, 2000), 9.
[34] Alahmad and Keshavarzian, "A War on Multiple Fronts", 27.
[35] Steve Negus, "Runaway Petrol Smuggling is Big Business in Fuel-Hungry Iraq," *Financial Times* 4 June 2005, 8.

country.[36] Access to and control over smuggling infrastructure eventually raised tension between al-Qaeda and the Sunni tribes that had built these networks during the sanctions period, leading to the 'Anbar Awakening.'[37]

By the time of the US-led invasion, Iraq's infrastructure was in a state of severe disrepair, and the population had become increasingly reliant on nonstate infrastructures, including smuggling networks and tribal or religious structures.[38] The 2003 invasion itself dealt a further blow to Iraq's material condition. The infamous 'Shock and Awe' strategy deployed was premised on displays of overwhelming, spectacular force "to affect the will, perception, and understanding" of enemy forces, which included targeting transportation, communications, water, food production, and electricity.[39] Shock and Awe ravaged the infrastructure that had escaped damage during previous decades of war. Soon after the invasion, many desperate Iraqis took advantage of the complete collapse of the state, looting public buildings and infrastructure. The damage done through looting was particularly harmful to political infrastructure, in many cases destroying the buildings, technologies, and archives necessary for effective governance. Numerous public buildings were burned to the ground, while others were ripped apart so extensively that the rebar holding them together was sold as scrap metal.[40]

Once the CPA took power, all of Iraq's critical infrastructure networks were in varying states of disrepair and dysfunction. A US Army Corps of Engineers study conducted in 2003 determined that the material state of Iraq's infrastructure was far worse than had been initially expected by pre-war planners, forcing the US to abandon its envisioned short-term occupation in favour of a much longer, reconstruction-intensive effort.[41] Despite the clear damage done to Iraq's material infrastructure, in many cases essentially destroyed, this was not a complete break from the past. Older infrastructures still existed, and new US-produced infrastructures had to build on top of the old,

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[36] Matthew Levitt, "Foreign Fighters and Their Economic Impact: A Case Study of Syria and al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 3(3) (2009), 16.
[37] John McCary, "The Anbar Awakening: An Alliance of Incentives," *The Washington Quarterly* 32 (2009), 48.
[38] Roel Meijer, "'Defending Our Honor:' Authenticity and the Framing of Resistance in the Iraqi Sunni Town of Falluja," *Etnofoor* 17 (2004): 24.
[39] Harlan Ullman et al, *Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance*, Defense Group Inc, the National Defense University, Washington D.C., 1996, xxvii.
[40] Toby Dodge, "Iraqi Transitions: From Regime Change to State Collapse," *Third World Quarterly* 26(4-5) (2005): 710.
[41] SIGIR, *Learning from Iraq*, 72.

shaping the agency of the US reconstruction effort. Furthermore, informal and social infrastructures had emerged to fill the gap left by the destruction of material infrastructure. Iraqis had developed elaborate networks to organise finance and political activity, transport and distribute goods, and even trade with the outside world. The post-2003 infrastructure projects had to contend with these social infrastructures, which grew proportionally to the destruction of material infrastructures.

BUILDING NEW INFRASTRUCTURES

Faced with the immensely damaged state of Iraq's existing infrastructure, the US occupation immediately began projects to restore electricity, oil, transportation, and other basic services. However, these efforts were shaped by the material contingencies of Iraq, namely its dysfunctional existing infrastructure, demographic distribution, and the ongoing conflict.

Electricity was an immediate concern for the CPA, which sought to repair and expand the electricity grid and power stations rapidly. Following the procedural change to OFF rules in 2002, Iraq was able to import parts to repair its electrical infrastructure, bringing generation capacity to 3600MW, almost 1980s capacity, but the Shock and Awe invasion had brought generation capacity down to 711MW.[42] The US Army Corps of Engineers spearheaded rapid electricity reconstruction, eventually obligating $5.45 billion for electricity projects.[43] These efforts did manage to improve supply significantly, with pre-war generation levels regained by the end of 2003. Electricity is a critical infrastructure upon which other infrastructures rely, including financial systems, communications, transport, and oil. It was in economic terms that the US occupation framed its efforts restore generation, as the "power sector was key to reviving Iraq's economy."[44] Although rendered technical, the restoration of electricity was assessed according to social criteria, in this case its ability to support the envisioned liberal, growth-oriented market economy.

Although existing electrical infrastructure was quickly restored, power supply issues continued for decades. In 2011, the national grid only provided Iraqis with 7.6 hours of

[42] *Ibid.*, 76.
[43] SIGIR, *Learning from Iraq*, 76.
[44] *Ibid.*

electricity per day on average, with most households supplementing this by purchasing power from neighbourhood diesel generators.[45] Three main factors contributed to the US occupation's inability to maintain electrical supply in the longer-term. First, from late 2004 onwards reconstruction funds were 'reprogrammed' towards highly visible, small-scale, local projects. $1.3 billion was diverted away from electricity as a large-scale and long-term project.[46] Secondly, electricity demand skyrocketed with the liberalisation of the economy and removal of trade barriers, flooding the consumer market with energy-consuming products.[47] Finally, the necessity of electricity for the US' economic objectives was not lost on insurgent forces. They quickly realised that by disrupting electrical supply, they could also disrupt the oil industry, which was the largest industrial consumer of electricity. Single attacks could damage both oil and electrical infrastructure, allowing the grid-pipeline nexus to act as a "force multiplier" for insurgent attacks.[48] The energy intensive, oil-driven economic model presented insurgents with convenient and highly effective targets, incentivising them to increase attacks on electrical infrastructure. The material reality of building infrastructure in an active combat zone severely thus limited the US state's agency in unilaterally restoring electricity supply.

Transportation infrastructure also required immediate reconstruction and repair. Iraq had invested heavily in transportation in the 1970s and 1980s, but transport networks were particularly targeted during the 1991 Gulf War and rarely repaired since.[49] Post-invasion transportation repair was slow and ineffective, with construction projects again becoming high-impact and easily accessible targets for insurgent violence, forcing the occupation to divert much of its reconstruction funds towards security costs, to the detriment of actual construction.[50] As violence and insurgency increased in the years following the invasion, infrastructure construction was hindered or outright prevented.

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[45] *Ibid.*, 78.
[46] *Ibid.*, 76.
[47] *Ibid.*
[48] Nida Alahmad, "Illuminating a State: State-Building and Electricity in Occupied Iraq," *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 8 no.2 (2017): 345.
[49] SIGIR, *Learning from Iraq*, 86.
[50] Curt Tarnoff, "Iraq: Reconstruction Assistance," Congressional Research Service, CRS Report for Congress RL31833, August 2009, 11.

US surveys found 1156 major vehicle bridges to be either completely destroyed or in severe disrepair, but by 2009 only eight had been rebuilt.[51]

Even on repaired and materially sound road networks, movement was severely limited due to roadblocks and legal limitations on transportation, both efforts to bolster security. For much of the period of occupation, lorries and goods-transporting vehicles were only allowed to enter and exit Baghdad and other major cities between the hours of 16:00 and midnight.[52] This was a desperate measure to limit the capacity of insurgents to attack urban centres with truck bombs, but it functionally also limited private sector activity. This imposed limit points to a contradiction between efforts to stem violence and efforts to revitalise the economy. Roadblocks formed a new type of infrastructure, meant to provide the basic necessity of human safety. Movement through and between Iraqi urban centres was conditioned upon travel through numerous roadblocks, creating constant traffic blockages.[53] Initially meant as temporary security measures to stem the tide of violence, roadblocks slowly became a long-term, everyday feature of Iraqi life. Even following the US withdrawal, 'temporary' roadblocks remained, guarded by Iraqi military members and militia forces, often requiring bribes, which became a budgeted cost for transportation-reliant businesses.[54] The repeated, consistent practices of building and maintaining roadblocks were performative acts, making the nebulous concept of 'security' visible and calculable to the Iraqi public and other observers.[55] Counterinsurgent security infrastructure and transportation infrastructure were contingent upon each other's shape, with road transport creating security risks in its enabling of truck bombings, and security infrastructure slowing and hindering transportation.

Internet infrastructure was a foundation upon which numerous other infrastructures could be built. To connect themselves to global networks of expertise and finance, Iraqi microfinance institutions standardised their accounting and reporting through access to the web-based Microfinance Information Exchange (MIX), discussed in Chapter Two.

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[51] *Ibid.*
[52] "Why Business is Still in the Dumps: Iraq's Economy," *The Economist,* 3 July 2010, 55.
[53] David Loyn, "Local Heroes: Risk-Taking in Iraq," *British Journalism Review* 18(2) (2007), 22.
[54] "Why Business is Still in the Dumps: Iraq's Economy", 55.
[55] Elke Krahmann, "From Performance to Performativity: The Legitimization of US Security Contracting and its Consequences," *Security Dialogue* 48(6) (2017), 546.

Payment systems, mass communication, education, and even healthcare are fundamentally transformed and determined by internet connectivity. Furthermore, as infrastructure the internet organises and shapes the distribution and even content of mass-consumed media and communications.[56] Internet access was allowed under the Ba'ath regime from 2000, but in a censored and limited form, with a relatively small number of Iraqis actually making use of this access. Citizens could access the internet via state-run internet cafés, university internet centres, or by purchasing an expensive license to connect a private home to the internet.[57] All access was monitored and censored, and its exorbitant cost posed a barrier for most Iraqis, especially given the ongoing sanctions. Statistics are likely unreliable, but it is estimated that there were only 45,000 internet users in Iraq in 2002, out of a population of 24 million.[58] All internet access was cut during the invasion, a result of airstrikes to the Ministry of Information.[59] Efforts to restore internet access commenced almost immediately after the invasion, but they were driven largely by Iraqis, rather than the occupation. Former Ministry of Information engineers salvaged and repaired a bombed satellite dish and connected it to a diesel generator to create the first post-Ba'ath internet café in mid-2003.[60] Similar initiatives grew quickly, with internet cafés becoming commonplace within two years. However, as late as 2021 Iraq's internet infrastructure was underdeveloped and insufficient. Digital subscriber lines (DSL) were almost non-existent, and therefore most last-mile internet connections were through wireless technologies. Iraqi wireless internet connectivity transmits using radio frequencies of 2.4GHz and 5.8GHz, both posing significant problems. The former is the same frequency as emitted by many microwaves and cordless phones, meaning that Iraqis experienced increasing interference as these products became more available following trade liberalisation.[61] The 5.8GHz frequency faces fewer interruptions, but has a much lower coverage area. These frequency issues, the almost complete lack of DSL connections, and the

[56] Lisa Parks and Nicole Starosielski, "Introduction," in *Signal Traffic: Critical Studies of Media Infrastructures*, ed. Lisa Parks and Nicole Starosielski (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 5.
[57] Kevin Banks, "Global Diffusion of the Internet XIV: The Internet in Iraq and its Societal Impact," *Communications of the Association for Information Systems* 24 (2009), 143.
[58] *Ibid.*
[59] *Ibid.*, 144.
[60] Banks, "Global Diffusion of the Internet XIV", 144.
[61] Ruaa Alsabah et al, "An Insight Into Internet Sector in Iraq," *International Journal of Electrical and Computer Engineering* 11(6) (2021), 5139.

continuation of electrical supply problems have resulted in Iraq maintaining among the world's slowest and least reliable internet infrastructures.[62]

Al-Qaeda and other insurgent groups made extensive use of internet communications during the war. They used the web to spread images and videos of atrocities, publicising their attacks as visible spectacles that would otherwise only be seen by a limited audience. They often released such media in two formats, high resolution and low resolution, allowing Iraqis to view this media despite slow connections.[63] Al-Qaeda also enrolled the agency of new internet infrastructures in providing instructions for foreign fighters attempting to enter Iraq through the porous Syrian border, posting the locations of state checkpoints in real time.[64] While insurgents were able to bolster their activities through the new communications afforded by the internet, its slow speed and unreliability hindered other actors. Advanced payment systems such as electronic funds transfer (EFT) are dependent upon internet access. Slow internet speeds did not afford the ability to produce new payment systems for intra-government transfers, which ultimately resulted in local governments receiving less funding.[65] This limitation in the internet's affordance also meant that securities markets lacked the liquidity necessary for Central Bank open market operations, preventing effective monetary policy (discussed in Chapter Two).

The restoration of oil production and exports were infrastructure priorities for the US occupation. Kellogg Brown & Root (KBR), formerly chaired by Dick Cheney, was granted a non-competitive $7 billion contract on 8 March 2003 (before the invasion), the largest contract in US history.[66] KBR and its subcontractors managed to restore oil production to its relatively low pre-war levels by the end of 2003. But the occupation and GOI hoped to raise output levels far higher, given Iraq's extensive reserves. Pipelines and refineries became strategic targets for insurgent attacks, with bombings preventing the desired rise in output.[67] The unstable electricity supply also posed problems for the oil industry, which consumed a large portion of the country's power. Consistent attacks on oil

[62] *Ibid.*, 5138.
[63] Banks, "Global Diffusion of the Internet XIV", 143.
[64] *Ibid.*, 144.
[65] James Dobbins, Seth Jones, Siddarth Mohandas, and Benjamin Runkle, "Occupying Iraq: A History of the Coalition Provisional Authority," Volume 847, RAND Corporation, 2009, 144.
[66] SIGIR, *Learning from Iraq*, 84.
[67] SIGIR, *Learning from Iraq*, 84.

infrastructure forced the US to divert reconstruction funding towards security costs, including 'Pipeline Exclusion Zones' that created spatial enclaves into which non-security personnel could not enter, guarded by the 22,000 strong 'Oil Protection Force.'[68] Oil infrastructure was critical for the US vision in Iraq, providing almost all of the GOI's revenue and thereby funding much of the country's reconstruction. But it also served the interests of insurgent groups, which saw pipelines as convenient, highly impactful targets for sabotage.

MATERIAL FRONTIERS

The ongoing insurgency and militia violence posed perhaps the most pressing challenges to US infrastructure development projects. As discussed above, construction projects and infrastructural installations presented themselves as high-impact targets for insurgent sabotage. But the deterioration in security also meant that transportation for engineers, construction workers, and other contractors became exceedingly difficult, slowing reconstruction. The CPA and US Embassy were housed in Baghdad's heavily fortified 'Green Zone.' Administrators and contractors needed access to the outside world, especially in the early periods of reorganising the Iraqi ministries and banks, which were located throughout Baghdad. CPA officials later stated that many of their failures to implement reconstruction projects were due to increasing isolation in the Green Zone, from which they could not adequately "gather information, monitor reconstruction, and consult with Iraqis."[69] Furthermore, communications infrastructure was in a material state of disrepair, making it difficult to engage with Iraqis without physical travel.

A report written by two CPA banking advisors describes many of the difficulties faced as a result of the occupation's isolation in the Green Zone. The advisors noted that landline telephones were almost non-existent at the banks they were attempting to revive, communication between bank branches was done through physical travel, and cell phone and email services were dependent upon frequently disrupted satellite

[68] Christopher M. Blanchard, "Iraq: Oil and Gas Legislation, Revenue Sharing, and U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, Report RL 34064, 2009, 22.
[69] Anne Ellen Henderson, "The Coalition Provisional Authority's Experience with Economic Reconstruction in Iraq: Lessons Identified," United States Institute of Peace, Special Report 138, April 2005, 9.

connections.[70] These communication challenges were compounded by the rarity of travel outside of the Green Zone. Civilian travel to other parts of Baghdad had to be booked two full days in advance, including detailed information on timing and exact locations, so that the military could provide Humvees and troops. Humvee convoys were highly visible, and hence became frequent targets for the "bad guys."[71] The roadblocks set up throughout Baghdad and elsewhere also created a state of constant traffic.[72] This further complicated and slowed travel within dangerous urban areas for occupation personnel and Iraqis alike. The exorbitant width of US military Humvees also meant that they regularly became stuck in roadblock-induced traffic, lacking the mobility of smaller vehicles to drive on highway shoulders and sidewalks.[73] This constraint posed by the width of Humvees meant that civilian personnel sometimes resorted to the more dangerous alternative of travelling with private security contractors, which used smaller vehicles yet lacked the heavy security of Humvee convoys.[74] The material realities of damaged communication infrastructure, dangerous transport, and even armoured vehicle width did not afford the US occupation its desired power to travel and communicate with ease. These limitations impeded the power of the US occupation, reflected in the immense frustration expressed by CPA advisors and officials.

Severely damaged infrastructure and the limitations to transportation and communication posed by an ongoing insurgency were the primary material factors limiting US power in producing new infrastructures in Iraq. But environmental factors also exacerbated these constrains. Sand and dust storms (SDS) increased drastically in Iraq in the decade following 2003, threatening human health, reducing agricultural output, and damaging infrastructure.[75] The 1991 and 2003 wars saw heavy aerial bombardment and the movement of thousands of track-driven military vehicles across arid, sandy regions in southern Iraq. These activities disrupted the compact top soil, which had previously lain undisturbed, far from human activity. This militarily

[70] Michael F. Silva and Sophia Vicksman, "A Central Banker in Iraq," *Journal of International Business and Law* 3 (2004), 11.
[71] *Ibid.*, 12.
[72] Loyn, "Local Heroes", 22.
[73] Silva and Vicksman, "A Central Banker in Iraq", 12.
[74] *Ibid.*
[75] Varoujan K. Sissakian et al, "Sand and Dust Storm Events in Iraq," *Natural Science* 5(10) (2013), 1084.

disrupted top soil was picked up in SDS events, which increased in both frequency and intensity as a direct result.[76] A 2013 study calculated Iraq's annual cost of SDS damage to be over $1.4 billion in the health, transportation, and agricultural sectors alone.[77] These costs include the removal of dust and sand from transportation infrastructure, delayed travel, impairment and destruction of communication technologies, and damage to roads, railways, and airports. The $1.4 billion annual damage was more than the US' expenditures on transportation and communication in all the years of occupation combined.[78] While attempting to build new infrastructures, the US state's power was continuously subverted by the environmental impact of its own military.

THE OCCUPATION'S COUNTEROFFENSIVE

By the middle of 2004 it had become clear that the defeat of the Ba'ath regime's military did not mean the end of the war. In response to the new reality of widespread insurgent violence, the US "reprogrammed" $3.5 billion in October 2004, shifting focus from large-scale infrastructures to small-scale, local infrastructure projects that would improve security, a focus that would be prioritised for the remainder of the reconstruction process.[79] From late October 2004 onwards, US reconstruction authorities were largely unwilling to fund large-scale infrastructure, opting instead for small, 'quick release' projects. As the insurgency increased in intensity, so did the US emphasis on small-scale infrastructure-as-counterinsurgency. Funding was increasingly diverted to these programmes, especially as the mounting cost of the war made US political leaders wary of approving funding for expensive infrastructure development.

By early 2007 the insurgency had reached new highs, with hundreds of lethal attacks per day.[80] The US responded with the infamous "surge" strategy, in which it would deploy 25,000 new ground troops. Alongside the new troops, the US also greatly increased its 'community' infrastructure reconstruction projects, hoping that this would

[76] Ibrahim M. Aliyas, "Dimensions of Desertification on Sustainable Development in Iraq," *International Journal of Advanced Research* 4(9) (2016), 1554.
[77] Ali Emami Meibodi et al, "Economic Modelling of the Regional Policies to Combat Dust Phenomenon by Using Game Theory," *Procedia Economics and Finance* 24 (2015), 415.
[78] SIGIR, *Learning from Iraq*, 86.
[79] United States Department of State, "Rebuilding Iraq: U.S. Achievements Through the Iraq Relief & Reconstruction Fund," Department of State Publication 11317, February 2006, 5.
[80] SIGIR, *Learning from Iraq*, 90.

result in improved popular support for the US presence. To this end the US deployed Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), in which "development specialists" and other civilians working for USAID and Department of State were embedded within military units. They assisted combat counterinsurgency efforts by cooperating with local leaders to develop small-scale infrastructure, grant micro-loans, and support the private sector in areas that would be inaccessible to civilians without their embeddedness within military units.[81] Similarly, the post-2004 'reprogramming' emphasised the Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP), through which military commanders had access to funds with which to contract for reconstruction, small-scale infrastructure, and business assistance in order to "pacify" hostile communities alongside more orthodox military means.[82]

The occupation may have been on the back foot, caught off guard by the realities of building infrastructure in a combat zone, but the new strategy was a way of mounting a different attack against insurgents. Infrastructure construction became not just a way to materially encode market liberalism into Iraqi society in the long term, but also a way to perpetuate the war, to drain the social and political reserves required to sustain an insurgency. The strategy bargained on being able to appease insurgent communities through building infrastructures and providing access to basic service delivery. Paradoxically, the main hindrance to building infrastructure was the insurgency, and the solution to the insurgency was to build localised infrastructures.

The transition to localised infrastructure projects also produced the conditions under which material, geographical, and demographic contingencies could steer the reconstruction programme. The new aim of infrastructure was to intensify development in "insurgency-affected" regions, with the aim of buying hearts and minds amongst the most restive communities.[83] But this meant that infrastructure planning and distribution were no longer determined according to need or equitability, but rather according to levels of insurgent violence. This criterion for the distribution of reconstruction funding urges consideration of the ways in which demographic contingencies could be a predictor for portions of funding received. For example, the

[81] Tarnoff, "Iraq: Reconstruction Assistance", 16.
[82] *Ibid.*, 17.
[83] SIGIR, *Learning from Iraq*, 111-112.

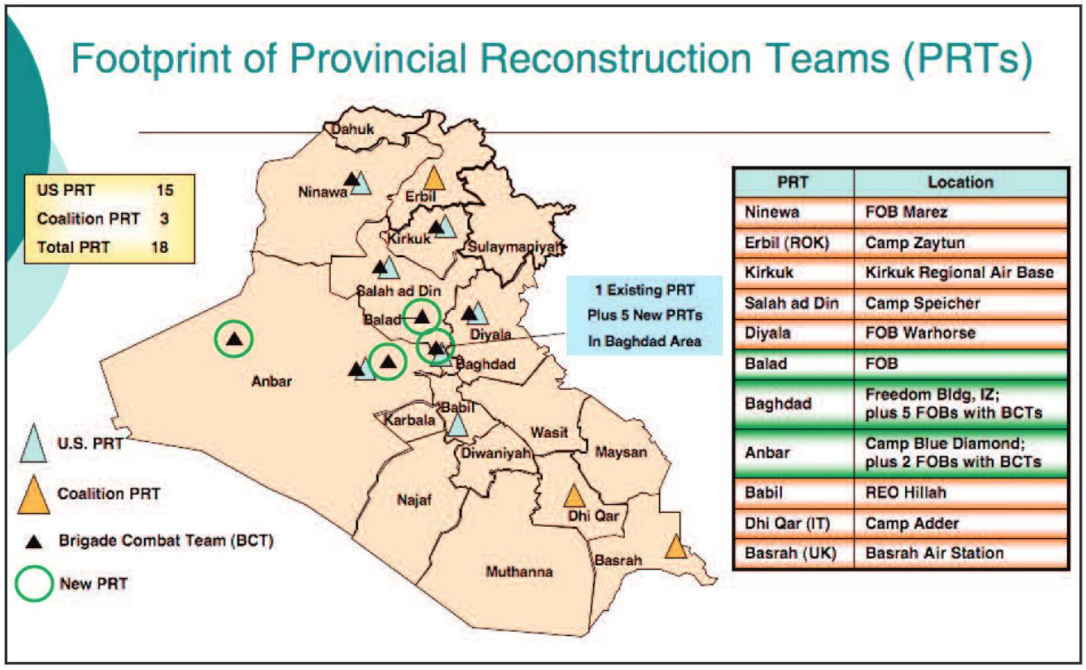
Kurdistan Region, containing approximately 20% of the population, received less than 3% of the reconstruction dollars spent in Iraq.[84] The Kurdish population was generally more cooperative with US forces during the occupation, suggesting that perhaps the reconstruction focus on restive regions resulted in a neglect of the Kurds. The US state's agency appears therefore not as rational and calculative, but as reactive to the contingent spatial distribution of sect and ethnicity across Iraq. Furthermore, this sect and ethnicity-guided infrastructure construction agenda was at odds with the formal aims of introducing a liberal democratic political system and fostering a liberal subject. The US state therefore reveals itself as fractious, its narrow military counterinsurgency agenda conflicting with a broader political goal of spreading liberalism.

The surge's economic and reconstruction aspects were explicitly aimed at pacification through "a deeper engagement with restive Sunnis."[85] This engagement was primarily achieved through attempting to produce a new material environment in Sunni communities, building infrastructure networks that would shape everyday life in regions most prone to insurgent violence. The PRTs and CERP became the primary mediums through which material reality would be shaped. As noted above, the transportation of civilians was dangerous, in many cases nearly impossible. This limited the ability of contractors and experts to leave the Green Zone, let alone travel outside Baghdad. But PRTs embedded civilians within military units, these civilian-military hybrids carrying out warfare through both conventional violence and material reconstruction. These systems allowed civilians access to the entire country, but it came at the cost of allowing demographic and geographical to determine the distribution of infrastructure, eschewing sovereign planning.

The surge's focus on Sunnis included the 'Sons of Iraq' programme, in which $370 million of CERP funds were used to award contracts to Sunni tribal leaders in order to keep Sunni fighters from joining the insurgency.[86] This programme employed 100,000 Sunni fighters as security guards, incentivising them to cooperate with the US rather than fight it. Similarly, even before the surge, USAID was implementing a "focused stabilization" programme in "insurgency-affected" cities. Through this 'non-lethal

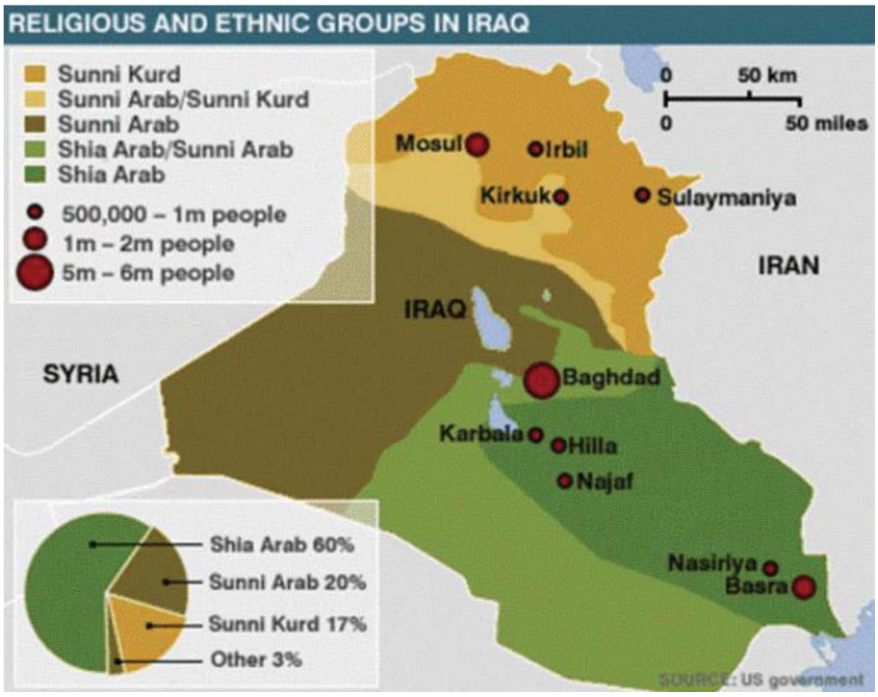
[84] *Ibid.*, 19.
[85] *Ibid.*, xi.
[86] *Ibid.*, 100.

counterinsurgency program,' USAID experts embedded in PRTs spent over $649 million on "generating employment, rehabilitating infrastructure, and stimulating local businesses."[87] This favouring of Sunnis in reconstruction ironically reproduced Saddam-era distributions of development funding. Saddam recruited large numbers of his fellow Sunni-majority Tikriti tribal members into the state and the armed forces, as well as creating similar networks with other tribes, both Sunni and Shi'a.[88] Much like the US rewarding Sunni communities for compliance with the occupation, Saddam supplied the villages of loyal tribal leaders with roads, electricity, and water systems.[89] Both the US and Saddam favoured Sunnis not because of sectarian loyalty, their favouring was a result of sectarian geographical contingencies. Nonetheless, this disproportionate provision of infrastructure to Sunni communities is a peculiar echo of the previous regime's policies.



Source: United States Department of State, "Provincial Reconstruction Teams: Building Iraqi Capacity and Accelerating the Transition to Iraqi Self Reliance," Bureau of Public Affairs, 11 January 2007.

[87] *Ibid.*, 111-112.
[88] Amatzia Baram, "Neo-Tribalism in Iraq: Saddam Hussein's Tribal Policies 1991-1996," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29 (February 1997), 5.
[89] *Ibid.*



Source: United Kingdom Home Office, "Country Policy and Information Note Iraq: Sunni Arabs," Version 3.0, London, January 2021, 10.

The above maps display the distribution of existing and planned PRTs in January 2007 and the sectarian and ethnic distribution across the country. Comparison of the two maps reveals a distinct lack of PRTs in Shi'a-majority southern Iraq. There were two coalition PRTs in Basra and Dhi Qar, but the only American PRT in the south was in Babil. The first map shows that there was a high concentration of PRTs in Baghdad, but also in the 'Sunni Triangle' area. This triangle lies to the northwest of the capitol, drawn between Baghdad, Ramadi, and Tikrit. Outside of Baghdad, PRTs were most prominent in Salah-ad Din and al-Anbar Governorates, which maintained Sunni majority populations and experienced notoriously high rates of insurgent activity. From late 2004 onwards, most infrastructure reconstruction was done through PRTs, CERP, and similarly mobile, civilian-military hybrids. The above maps display the extent to which this method of infrastructure provision allowed geographical contingencies to determine distribution.

INFRASTRUCTURE AS COUNTERINSURGENCY, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Infrastructures are crucial in mediating social interaction. They give form to culture and politics, reconfiguring societies and subjects in unexpected and constantly emergent

ways.[90] By evolving into a project focused on localised infrastructures, the reconstruction programme produced differences between the experienced material realities of distinct locales. The navigating and understanding of infrastructures is "learned as part of membership" in human communities, it is naturalised as a way of life and produces a shared experience.[91] Knowledge of the use of US-built infrastructure projects affects community coherence and social belonging in the long-term. Therefore, eschewing national or even provincial infrastructure in favour of 'community infrastructure' produced disparate, foreign-seeming social groups. Paul Edwards notes that "the degree to which such knowledge [of infrastructure] is shared accounts, in large part, for the spectrum between familiarity and exoticism."[92] The shift to decentralised, local-level infrastructure networks may have hindered nation-building aspirations by producing separate experiences of everyday life, and separate infrastructural knowledges shared only within distinct population groups.

Reconstruction projects were often contracted non-competitively, contradicting the competition-focused economic doctrines espoused by US administrators and revealing the limits of expertise. Most contracts included 'cost-plus' provisions, which allowed extra payments to contractors for performance exceeding the contracted requirements. Audits by SIGIR and KPMG Bahrain found that cost-plus awards were regularly granted for subpar work, as well as that overcharging and payment for incomplete or non-existent work were routine parts of contracting practice in Iraq's reconstruction.[93] Those in charge of contracting "could not provide sufficiently detailed statements of work, resulting in contract changes, delays, and higher project costs."[94] The reconstruction agencies did not know how many contracting personnel were present in Iraq, but it was in the hundreds of thousands throughout much of the war.[95] These reports reveal the

[90] Casper Bruun Jensen and Atsuro Morita, "Introduction: Infrastructures as Ontological Experiments," *Ethnos* 82 no. 4 (2017), 619-620.
[91] Susan Leigh Star and Karen Ruhleder, "Steps Towards an Ecology of Infrastructure: Design and Access for Large Information Spaces," *Information Systems Research* 7 (1996), 116.
[92] Paul Edwards, "Infrastructure and Modernity: Force, Time, and Social Organization in the History of Sociotechnical Systems," in *Modernity and Technology,* ed. Thomas J. Misa, Philip Brey, and Andrew Feenberg (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 189.
[93] Dave Whyte, "The Crimes of Neo-Liberal Rule in Occupied Iraq," *British Journal of Criminology* 47 (2007): 188.
[94] SIGIR, *Learning from Iraq*, 51.
[95] *Ibid.*

contracting process as disorganised and ad hoc, challenging an understanding of the state as monolithic, calculative, and rational.

This contracting system ensured that many projects would not be materially sustainable. Cost-plus contracting incentivised low-quality work, overcharging, and even bribery.[96] Furthermore, many of the largest contracts were granted to those at the intersection of the US corporate elite, appointed government office, and influential liberal think tanks. This included Halliburton, formerly headed by Dick Cheney, and Bechtel, then under the directorship of former Secretary of State George Shultz. Timothy Mitchell accurately captures this in describing USAID (which was responsible for obligating at least $6.89 billion[97]) as "a form of state support to the American corporate sector."[98]

The post-2004 transition to community infrastructure-as-counterinsurgency reproduced this infrastructure of contracting and procurement, but with the aim of enabling its continuation through local government and community elites, rather than the US and its corporate elite. Contracting was therefore explicitly formulated to capacitate Iraqi engineering and construction firms, coupled with budgeting and procurement training for local government personnel. This principle, known as "Iraqi First," was meant to foster the private sector, and "fed economic potential into local towns and villages."[99] By working with local Iraqi entrepreneurs, the reconstruction programme could build support amongst the emergent entrepreneurial classes, mirroring Saddam's production of a similarly compliant "contractor bourgeoisie."[100] Therefore, infrastructural counterinsurgency not only produced material distinctions between Iraqi population groups, but also instilled in local government and nonstate leadership an infrastructure of contracting that would function to channel public oil revenue to networks of local elites. The structural effect of the state was reproduced through these installed contracting practices, creating the approved channels through which public funding could pass into private hands while maintaining a formal discursive distinction between the public and private sectors.

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[96] Whyte, "The Crimes of Neo-Liberal Rule", 189.
[97] SIGIR, *Learning from Iraq*, 50.
[98] Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 240.
[99] SIGIR, *Learning from Iraq*, xi.
[100] Alahmad and Keshavarzian, "A War on Multiple Fronts", 19.

CONCLUSION

The US occupation of Iraq sought to encode its political and economic objectives into the country's material reality through the production of new infrastructures. Its planned infrastructure projects were rendered technical and apolitical, reserved for the dictates of expertise. The electrical, oil, and transport infrastructures designed by the occupation sought to support a highly liberalised economy and political system. It became clear almost immediately that the material conditions of Iraq would not afford the US the ability to autonomously and unilaterally produce new infrastructures. Instead, infrastructures would have to be produced and negotiated through the interaction of a wide range of material and social actants. The reprogramming of funds from 2004 onwards shifted the reconstruction programme towards small-scale, localised infrastructure projects, the distribution of which was determined according to levels of insurgency. This transition allowed the US to circumvent the problems posed by ruling from the Green Zone through the creation of civilian-military hybrid units. But it also created the conditions under which geographical, demographic, and material contingencies could shape the US occupation's infrastructure reconstruction. By producing infrastructure not as a national project, but as a series of distinct, community-level initiatives, the reconstruction programme reproduced and exacerbated existing inequalities and produced separate material realities for separate population groups. Infrastructure-as-counterinsurgency was a way of perpetuating the war, but it paradoxically served to materialise the very social distinctions the US purportedly sought to alleviate in a post-Ba'ath society.

Chapter Two

Financial Infrastructure

Upon assuming power in May 2003, the CPA set itself the task of revitalising Iraq's faltering economy, with the hope of substantially reshaping the country's financial infrastructure to align with Washington Consensus norms of liberalisation. Following a short but severely damaging war between US-led forces and Ba'athist troops, and over a decade of crippling international sanctions, Iraq's oil production and exports were far below the levels needed to finance reconstruction.[101] Furthermore, the non-oil economy was stagnant, public services were failing, and millions of Iraqis were threatened by the potential collapse of the universal Ba'athist safety net system. The CPA had to urgently restore services and maintain the safety net, while hoping to liberalise the economy before the handover of sovereignty to the new Iraqi state.

The CPA's belief was that intensive liberalisation and limited infrastructure rebuilding would allow the private sector to flourish, driving development and political stability. Within months it was clear that the private sector would not quickly rush in to fill the gap left by the demise of the Ba'athist state, and creating the secure environment necessary for private sector activity would require a long-term commitment. US occupying authorities struggled against the material constraints of previous infrastructures, an increasing insurgency, popular political resistance, and wavering international oil prices. Liberalisation was drastically slowed, and reform of the new state faltered. US agencies eventually began to abandon the state-building paradigm

[101] SIGIR, *Learning from Iraq*, 83.

that had driven the early years of the occupation, with the 2007 'Surge' strategy reflecting a transition towards engagement with nonstate actors.

DEREGULATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS

The CPA and its allies constructed a consistent image of its predecessor Ba'ath regime, focusing on motifs of inefficiency, uncompetitive state intervention, a bloated public sector, and an unenterprising population. Problematisations are always linked to particular solutions, and the very act of problematisation produces the conditions of possibility under which these solutions can be implemented.[102] In the case of Iraq, problematising the large public sector and market distortions was not apolitical, but implicitly advocated for privatisation and liberalisation. In the early phases of the CPA's reign, most authorities still believed that this would be a short occupation, and a rapid liberalisation programme coupled with oil-funded infrastructure reconstruction would enable the emergence of a competitive private sector. A Department of Defence official working on private sector development described the CPA's approach to economic reconstruction as an immediate "disempowerment of state-owned industry, in an expectation that in a secure stable environment private industry would quickly emerge."[103] With this belief that the private sector would flourish once peace was established and the constraints of Ba'athist intervention were removed, the CPA attempted rapid deregulation and privatisation, transitioning Iraq from a planned economy to a drastically liberalised economy almost overnight.

The restoration of oil production was crucial for the CPA, as US foreign policy and military leaders had promised the American public that oil revenues would pay for the war and occupation. Rather than allowing oil revenues to go directly to the Iraqi fiscus, Administrator Bremer opened an account at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, known as the Development Fund for Iraq (DFI), in which Iraqi state oil revenue would be held in escrow. Previously, Iraq's oil revenues were held by the United Nations (UN) in a BNP Paribas account as part of the Oil-for-Food Programme (OFF), and every expenditure had to be approved by UN officials. UN Security Council Resolution 1483 of May 2003 mandated that oil revenue, the remaining OFF funds, and frozen Ba'athist

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[102] Miller and Rose, *Governing the Present*, 15-16.
[103] Steve Negus, "U-Turn as US Tries to Revive Iraq State Industry," *Financial Times*, 8 March 2007, 11.

funds held overseas be transferred to the new escrow DFI account in New York.[104] The creation of the DFI gave the CPA access to roughly $20 billion to spend during its tenure, not counting Congressional appropriations. Audits from KPMG and SIGIR suggest that up to $12 billion in DFI-held funds remain unaccounted for, much of it distributed in physical cash that had been flown in from New York, preventing adequate accounting.[105] Alongside the urgent priority of restoring Iraqi oil production and exports, the CPA sought to quickly integrate Iraq into the global economy through trade liberalisation, the reduction of domestic quotas, removal of capital controls, and efforts to increase foreign direct investment. These reforms aligned with the neoliberal consensus of global economic expertise in the early 2000s, placing heavy emphasis on market-based solutions, economic integration, and the development of 'human capital.' Some of the crucial changes include the opening of Iraqi industries and banking to allow 100% foreign ownership and profit repatriation, a cap on corporate and income taxes at 15%, and an almost complete reduction of import tariffs along with efforts to gain World Trade Organisation (WTO) accession.[106] Through this restructuring Iraq rapidly became one of the most open economies in the region. In the early years of the US occupation both major American political parties were ideologically committed to free market reforms and the advancement of neoliberal globalisation. The Iraq War must be considered in its historical position following NAFTA, the WTO, the 'Bush tax cuts,' and Third Way liberalism. Furthermore, many of the individuals involved in the occupation's economic decision making were particularly faithful to free market economics, such as the CPA's primary financial advisor, Peter McPherson, who had previously served as Deputy Secretary of the Treasury under President Reagan.[107]

Perhaps most controversial was the plan to privatise almost all of the Iraqi SOEs. The World Bank asserted that when the state dominates investment and service delivery, "efficiency eventually declines, and unemployment remains stubbornly high."[108] The

[104] World Bank Group, "Rebuilding Iraq: Economic Reform and Transition," February 2006, Report No. 35141-IQ, 14.
[105] Whyte, "The Crimes of Neo-Liberal Rule", 186.
[106] Robert Looney, "Postwar Iraq's Financial System: Building from Scratch," *Middle East Policy* 12 (Spring 2005), 136.
[107] John B. Taylor, "Financial Reconstruction in Iraq: Strategy and Tactics," testimony before the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on International Trade and Finance, 16 September 2003, 2.
[108] WBG, "Rebuilding Iraq", 4.

Bank conducted a "simulation analysis" to explore policy options for employment creation, finding that a public sector-led job creation strategy was unfeasible, and therefore urged immediate private sector development.[109] By invoking a 'simulation analysis' to support its political agenda, the Bank was cordoning off economic development strategies as the domain of experts. The role of the state, considerations of public and private sector development, and privatisation involve political decision making. But the World Bank and the US occupation framed these as technical issues with correct solutions. The Bank's 'simulation analysis' justified immediate privatisation through the invocation of an unexplained technological analysis conducted by trained experts, closing off space for democratic deliberation or dissent. The CPA announced its plans to privatise much of the public sector in September 2003, basing its decision on what it deemed the successes of privatisation in other transitional economies.[110] The plan was met with hostility from across the political spectrum. The privatisation plan was abandoned in November 2003 in the face of insolvent (and therefore unsellable) SOEs and the required retrenchment of an estimated half a million workers if privatisation were to be completed.[111] The technical expertise that advocated for urgent privatisation came up against the inevitable political ramifications of its effects.

At the end of June 2004, the CPA was dissolved, transferring nominal sovereignty to the Iraqi Interim Government, the composition of which had been chosen by the Iraqi Governing Council, its own members hand selected by Bremer. At the end of its reign, the CPA had deregulated many of the controls on the Iraqi economic infrastructure. Foreign ownership was permitted, capital controls eliminated, import tariffs reduced to low levels, and corporate taxes comparatively low. These reforms set the stage for a market-based, FDI-reliant programme of private sector development. However, the CPA did not manage to affect many of the more fundamental changes it sought to achieve. Privatisation had been almost completely abandoned, subsidies remained largely intact, capital markets were almost non-existent, unemployment was high, and material infrastructure was deemed inadequate for supporting private sector growth. Although it had hoped that the collapse of the Ba'athist state would result in a

[109] *Ibid.*
[110] Anne Ellen Henderson, "The Coalition Provisional Authority's Experience with Economic Reconstruction in Iraq: Lessons Identified," United States Institute of Peace, Special Report 138, April 2005, 11.
[111] *Ibid.*

flourishing of entrepreneurial activity, by early 2004 it was clear that entrepreneurial development would require more than a simple reduction in state intervention.

GOVERNING BY DEBT[112]

Following the handover of sovereignty to the Iraqi state at the end of June 2004, the US occupation and its allies sought to continue control over the financial infrastructure of Iraq. In order to affect the ways in which post-Ba'ath financial infrastructure reconstruction was carried out, the IMF leveraged Iraq's enormous foreign debt burden. In 2003 Iraq's debt to Paris Club bilateral creditors totalled an estimated $37.15 billion, with another $88 billion owed to non-Paris Club states, commercial, and multilateral creditors.[113] This debt burden was clearly unsustainable, and Iraq's economic stability depended on finding ways to ease this burden. The US, not wanting to be stuck with the bill for reconstruction, believed that debt relief was an urgent necessity.[114] Freeing government spending for reconstruction and security needs and opening Iraq to global financial markets required that Iraq strike a deal with its many creditors. The US appointed James Baker, who had previously served as Secretary of the Treasury under President Reagan and Secretary of State under George H. W. Bush, as a special envoy to lead the debt relief effort. Baker determined that the Paris Club bilateral creditors should be approached first. This was for two reasons, the first being that the coalition of countries involved in the invasion of Iraq were well-represented in the Paris Club, and other Club members had similar geopolitical interests.[115] Easing Iraq's overall external debt burden was in the interests of many of the Paris Club creditors, so although these creditors were only owed about 30% of Iraq's debt, Baker believed that the Club was a suitable starting point for a broader debt relief effort.

Secondly, Paris Club debt relief agreements are always contingent upon a "comparability of treatment clause," meaning that debtor states are forbidden from

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[112] Cf. Maurizio Lazzarato, *Governing by Debt*, trans. Joshua David Jordan (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press for Semiotext(e), 2015).

[113] Emad Mohammed Ali Abdullatif, "Development of Government Bonds Market in Iraq (Application of Japan's Experience to Iraq)," Japan External Trade Organization, Institute of Developing Economies, No. 447, March 2009, 53.

[114] Simon Hinrichsen, "Tracing Iraqi Sovereign Debt Through Defaults and Restructuring," The London School of Economics and Political Science, Economic History Working Paper no. 304, 24.

[115] *Ibid.*, 27.

agreeing to more favourable relief terms with non-Paris Club bilateral creditors.[116] Therefore, by brokering a deal with the Paris Club first, Baker could effectively force the Gulf State creditors to accept the highly debtor-favouring terms of the Paris Club deal. The Gulf States, to whom the majority if Iraq's debt was owed, did not share with the Club a geopolitical interest in relieving Iraq's debt. But the comparability of treatment clause ensured that Iraq would be required to treat other bilateral creditors with no more favourably than it did the Paris Club. Many bilateral creditors including South Africa, Hungary, and Indonesia decided quickly to settle following the exact terms of the Paris Club deal. Yet Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, and Qatar refused to allow Iraq debt relief on such debtor-friendly terms. Debt to these countries is still outstanding, but sovereign states rarely pursue other sovereign states, so it is implicitly understood that this debt will not be repaid.[117]

Easing Iraq's debt burden served not only to ensure that Iraq would pay for its own reconstruction and occupation, but also effectively traded away much of Iraq's sovereign policy space for designing new financial infrastructures. The Paris Club debt relief agreement, signed 21 November 2004, amounted to an 80% reduction in three stages. The first stage was a 30% reduction upon signing the agreement, the second stage was another 30% reduction if Iraq signs an IMF economic restructuring agreement, and the third stage was a 20% reduction if Iraq passed an IMF review three years after signing the initial agreement.[118] If Iraq did not accept the massive economic restructuring prescribed by the IMF, it would only receive a 30% debt write down from the Paris Club, and by extension most other bilateral creditors. Although nominally sovereign, Iraq had little power to make its own economic choices, stuck between structural adjustment or an unsustainable debt burden and the inability to access future finance.

Two months before the Paris Club agreement, the funding-starved Iraqi Interim Government – the unelected caretaker government tasked with preparing Iraq for the 2005 elections – signed an agreement with the IMF. This 'Memorandum of Economic

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[116] Jorge P. Guzman and Michael G. Kuhn, "Multilateral Official Debt Rescheduling: Recent Experience," International Monetary Fund, World Economic Surveys, November 1990, 17.
[117] Hinrichsen, "Tracing Iraqi Sovereign Debt", 33.
[118] Martin Weiss, "Iraq's Debt Relief: Procedure and Potential Implications for International Debt Relief," Report for Congress, Congressional Research Service, Report no. RL33376, 26 January 2009, 6.

and Financial Policies' for 2004-05 was in exchange for the IMF release of 297.1 million Special Drawing Rights (roughly $436.3 million in 2004 dollars).[119] To utilise this much-needed credit Iraq was obligated to implement the IMF economic programme for the remainder of 2004 and 2005. This meant that the incoming Iraqi government, democratically elected in January 2005, would be powerless in shaping the new economic and financial systems. The unelected Interim Government had bartered away Iraq's sovereignty and democratic process in exchange for Special Drawing Rights.

This September 2004 agreement, officially an Emergency Post-Conflict Assistance (EPCA) package, contained conditions generally consistent with those of 'Washington Consensus' structural adjustment programmes. Fiscal policy was regulated, with budget deficits for 2004 and 2005 strictly limited, largely through capping public servant wages and pensions, and raising the domestic prices of oil products through the reduction of subsidies with the aim of achieving cost-recovery prices by the end of 2009.[120] In terms of monetary policy, the IMF mandated that the Central Bank of Iraq continue to auction US dollars as a system to manage liquidity and inflation, maintain the foreign exchange rate against the dollar, and provide dollars to the private sector for its own entrepreneurial activities. Recognising the instability of relying on foreign exchange auctions as the only monetary policy instrument, the Memorandum also agreed to new treasury bill issuances and efforts to produce a secondary market for these government securities.[121] The agreement stipulated specific dates upon which the GOI must make certain changes, and even set specific figures for amounts of currency issued, net international reserves, fiscal deficits, and limits on new borrowing, among others.[122] The Memorandum was therefore more than a rough guideline for transitioning to a market economy, it specified the exact policies and benchmarks for this transition. The EPCA conditions also included the mandatory creation of an automatic clearing house and an updated payment system by December 2004.[123]

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[119] Central Bank of Iraq and Iraq Ministry of Finance, "Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies for 2004-05," International Monetary Fund, https://www.imf.org/external/np/loi/2004/irq/01/, 24 September 2004.
[120] *Ibid.*
[121] *Ibid.*
[122] *Ibid.*
[123] *Ibid.*

The September 2004 EPCA set the agenda for Iraq's measures in transitioning towards a market-based, private sector-led growth strategy. The EPCA was in place through December 2005, and was replaced with an IMF Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) on 23 December 2005. By signing this IMF SBA, Iraq was reducing its Paris Club debt burden by a further 30% in accordance with the November 2004 deal, and also gaining access to an additional SDR475.4 million ($705.6 million in 2005 dollars). This was, of course, in exchange for relinquishing almost all sovereign control over economic and financial policy for fifteen months, until the commencement of the next SBA in 2007. The 2005 SBA contained many of the same conditions as the 2004 EPCA, and sought to continue the liberalisation of financial infrastructure. The SBA included detailed performance criteria and structural changes that the GOI was required to meet by specific dates in order to access SDR at pre-determined intervals.[124]

INFLATION, DOLLAR AUCTIONS, AND THE TECHNIQUES OF MONETARISM

American technocratic central banking practice has long been guided by monetarism, an economic doctrine largely formulated by Milton Friedman, positing that the most effective and appropriate state intervention in the economy is through monetary policy, not fiscal policy.[125] Monetarists tend to eschew large fiscal spending, instead relying on the constant intervention of central banks to control money supply, affecting inflation and interest rates. Neoliberal economics is popularly understood as a retreat of the state, but the monetarist policies implicit in neoliberal orthodoxy actually encourage a highly interventionist state, austere in fiscal policy but highly active in monetary policy. Numerous figures in early 2000s US domestic policy and the CPA administration, including Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan, Under Secretary of the Treasury for International Affairs John B. Taylor (heavily involved in CPA financial restructuring), and CPA financial coordinator Peter McPherson were active in monetarist academic circles. Iraq's financial infrastructure was therefore restructured in an environment in which control over inflation through open market operations and interest rate changes was considered paramount in state economic intervention.

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[124] International Monetary Fund, "Iraq First and Second Reviews Under the Stand-By Arrangement, Financing Assurances Review, and Request for Waiver of Nonobservance and Applicability of Performance Criteria," Middle East and Central Asia Department, 17 July 2006, 14-24.

[125] J. Bradford De Long, "The Triumph of Monetarism?", *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 14 (2000), 90.

Although the EPCA discussed inflation, it was not a primary concern. However, the first SBA in 2005 dedicated significant space to the discussion of inflation, highlighting CBI monetary policy as a central issue for the incoming government's new financial programme. In May 2006 twelve month consumer price inflation was estimated at 58%.[126] The IMF attributed the continued high inflation on the increasing insurgency and its consequent disruptions to supply in the non-oil economy.[127] The first monetary policy instrument available to the CBI was control over interest rates. In mid-2006 the CBI raised the policy interest rate by 5%, from 7% to 12%, with lending and deposit rates also raised in line with the policy rate.[128] Inflation continued despite these substantial interest rate increases. Iraq was largely a cash economy, with few loans made and a small deposit base, meaning that interest rates had very little impact.[129] However, it could be surmised that high interest rates likely disincentivised Iraqis from accessing financial services, further worsening the ineffective nature of interest rate controls.

The second, primary tool of the CBI's monetary policy infrastructure was the dollar auction. The first auction was in October 2003, but as of November 2021 it continues to operate on a daily basis. The Iraqi government sells oil in US dollars and these dollars are sold to the CBI in exchange for dinar, which the government uses to pay salaries and other expenses that require dinars. The CBI then sells dollars to the private sector, allowing the CBI to absorb excess dinars and thereby control inflation, as well as provide dollars to private importers.[130] The dollar auction is highly inefficient, and the IMF sought repeatedly to improve the CBI's monetary policy control through the production of a secondary market for government securities.

In developed financial systems, the various private and public institutions that make up financial markets transact through the trade of non-money financial assets, including government securities. High liquidity and rapid payment and clearing systems in secondary markets allow securities to be traded similarly to money.[131] With the

[126] IMF, "Iraq First and Second Reviews", 35.
[127] International Monetary Fund, "IMF Executive Board Completes First and Second Reviews Under the Stand-By Arrangement with Iraq," Press Release no. 06/175, 3 August 2006, 1.
[128] IMF, "Iraq First and Second Reviews", 8.
[129] *Ibid.*
[130] CBIIMF, "Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies for 2004-05."
[131] The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, *Developing Government Bond Markets: A Handbook* (Washington: IMF and World Bank, 2001), 218.

establishment of liquid secondary markets, the central bank can trade with banks and other financial institutions in the purchasing and selling of government securities, effectively swapping currency for securities to expand or contract the reserves available to banks in a system known as open market operations (OMO).[132] In most developed financial systems, OMO is the primary mechanism through which central banks engage in monetary policy.[133] The secondary securities markets that are necessary for OMO can therefore be thought of as a form of financial infrastructure that is crucial in enabling the type of monetary policy envisioned in highly developed, financialised, liberal economic systems.

The EPCA and all SBAs urged the formation of secondary securities markets so that the CBI could conduct monetary policy through OMO, but secondary markets almost completely failed to develop. With very few securities traded beyond the primary market (the CBI's initial sale of securities), most private financial transactions were in cash money, meaning that the CBI had very little control over money supply, as almost all currency was outside of its control.[134] Without the capacity to engage in OMO, and without adequate control over the currency, the CBI was forced to continue the inefficient and largely ineffective dollar auctions to absorb excess currency, while inflation continued to rise. American monetary policy since the 1970s has relied on pre-empting inflation as a way to control risk, and thereby create an environment conducive to investment. The mere spectre of inflation decreases private risk-taking investment, and pre-emptive monetary policy through OMO or interest rate changes (in economic environments in which this is effective) is deployed by an interventionist neoliberal state to promote investment behaviour before inflation can be felt.[135]

Without the infrastructure necessary for effective monetary policy, namely secondary securities markets, Iraq was incapable of developing a financialised economy. US financial advisors and the IMF sought to produce this infrastructure in order for Iraq to be able to conform with international best practices in monetary policy. However, the

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[132] Stuart I. Greenbaum, Anjan V. Thakor, and Arnoud W. A. Boot, *Contemporary Financial Intermediation: Fourth Edition* (London: Elsevier, 2019), 169.
[133] Stacey L. Schreft and Bruce D. Smith, "The Effects of Open Market Operations in a Model of Intermediation and Growth," *Review of Economic Studies* 65 (1998), 519.
[134] Abdullatif, "Development of Government Bonds Market in Iraq", 67.
[135] Randy Martin, *An Empire of Indifference: American War and the Financial Logic of Risk Management* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 4.

state could not unilaterally produce this infrastructure, its efforts required interaction with a wide variety of other social and material actors. To begin with, the production of a secondary securities market was contingent upon the willingness of capital to invest in government securities. The main form in which securities were issued was as treasury bills. The issuance of treasury bills began in July 2004, after Bremer had declared in June that internal public debt must be repaid. In order to repay Saddam-era internal debt, the Ministry of Finance (MOF) began bi-weekly treasury bill auctions, with the hope that these issuances would not only rollover outstanding debts, but also create a market for securities.[136]

Treasury bills were issued by both the MOF and the CBI, with the former issuing the vast majority. The treasury bills auctioned in the first issuance had 91 day maturities, and had market-determined 5-8% interest rates, but the MOF has also issued treasury bills with 28 and 63 day maturities, while the CBI bills have 182 or 365 day maturities.[137] Despite bi-weekly issuances, capital was largely unwilling to purchase treasury bills. This is reflected in the fact that almost all treasury bills issued by the MOF were purchased by the CBI, with the CBI holding 92.8% of MOF bills in 2006.[138] This meant the CBI sustained the vast majority of internal public debt. Furthermore, most of the treasury bills issued by the CBI itself were purchased by the state-owned al-Rafidain and al-Rasheed banks.[139] Domestic private capital purchased only a very small portion of government securities, and the state was unable to produce the infrastructure for effective monetary policy without the cooperation of capital. In July 2006 the IMF expressed frustration at the inability of the state to produce a secondary securities market for OMO, lamenting the futility of interest rate changes and dollar auctions in the face of ever-rising inflation.[140]

In order for a secondary market to be liquid enough that government securities can function as an alternative to money, and thereby allow central bank OMO, there must be a rapid payment system and automatic clearing and settlement.[141] Payments and

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[136] Nicolas Pelham, "Baghdad to Launch Bond Market with issue of Treasury Bills," *Financial Times,* 8 July 2004, 11.
[137] Abdullatif, "Development of Government Bonds Market in Iraq", 56.
[138] *Ibid.,* 57.
[139] *Ibid.,* 60.
[140] IMF, "Iraq First and Second Reviews", 35.
[141] WB and IMF, *Developing Government Bond Markets,* 219.

clearing must be almost instantaneous, otherwise securities will not be able to function like currency. The technology available to the Iraqi financial system did not facilitate instantaneous transactions, a material constraint to the production of securities markets. In 2003 Iraq had no electronic payments system, and data transfer between banks was carried out by physically transferring hard discs.[142] This system did not enable the rapid payments that would produce markets liquid enough for effective monetary policy.

The US Treasury's Office of Technical Assistance (OTA) sought to upgrade Iraq's material financial infrastructure, and in 2005 it awarded contracts for the installation of Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) and Automated Clearing House (ACH) systems.[143] The RTGS is mainly for large value interbank transactions, whereas the ACH tends to be a system for smaller values and retail transactions. Both systems became active in 2006. In November 2008 Iraq also completed a Government Securities Registration System (GSRS).[144] The GSRS allows both primary and secondary market transactions, but it is not linked to the Iraqi Stock Exchange, and therefore the GSRS is the only platform allowing the trade in government securities.[145] Iraq continues to suffer from inadequate electricity supply and limited access to internet, slowing the development of the banking sector and disrupting the electronic payment systems. Although the RTGS and GSRS have become active, their use is still curtailed by inadequate supporting infrastructure. A secondary securities market has largely failed to develop in the absence of enabling infrastructure and a developed banking sector to provide the necessary liquidity.

"THE SURGE" AND THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF MICROFINANCE

To produce a state, assemblages of infrastructure, expertise, institutions, and objects have to be put together and consistently stabilised in order to be articulated into the bounded abstraction of the 'state.'[146] State-building discourse asserts that social and

[142] Silva and Vicksman, "A Central Banker in Iraq", 16-19.
[143] Office of the Inspector General, "Audit Report: International Assistance Programs: Review of Treasury Programs for Iraq Reconstruction," OIG-06-029, Department of Treasury, 23 March 2006, 6.
[144] World Bank Group, "Republic of Iraq: Financial Sector Review," Report 65350, 2011, 27.
[145] Massimo Cirasino and Marco Nicolí, "Payment and Securities Settlement Systems in the Middle East and North Africa," The World Bank Group, June 2010, 51.
[146] Alahmad, "Illuminating a State", 344.

economic outcomes can be explained through the strength and efficacy of state institutions. If this is the case, then by early 2006 it was clear that state-building had failed in Iraq, a fact that did not go unnoticed by US reconstruction experts. Divisions appeared within the formal state apparatus, with different ministries essentially acting as distinct militias, even engaging in what many described as ethnic cleansing.[147] Political violence reached new heights following the bombing of the 'Askariyya shrine, a sacred site for the country's Shi'a, in February 2006. By the middle of 2006 there were over 3000 violent deaths per month.[148] This environment did not permit economic growth, and disincentivised even the bravest of foreign investments. The GOI, US agencies, and international financial institutions reached a state of exasperation as the violence continued and economic restructuring faltered.

State-building had been relied upon as an explanatory framework, but state-building is also a highly performative discourse, and its prescriptions had been translated into material effects 'on the ground.' The 'Surge' strategy of 2007 marked the beginning of a rejection of state-building discourse. The Surge involved an increase in troops, but more importantly it provided an income to non-state Sunni militants through the 'Sons of Iraq' programme and assisted communities to provide social services to themselves in the absence of the state.[149] The Surge appears as a rejection of the state, as it empowered non-state community governance structures and even non-state military formations. From the Surge onwards US interventions in the non-state domain increased dramatically, signalling an understanding that state-building had failed to deliver, despite its persevering popularity at the revolving door of American academia, think tanks, foreign policy bureaucracy, and official aid institutions.[150] The shift away from state-building reflected an embrace of a new logic of global capital, that of the derivative. Force is exercised by applying leverage to a small part of a larger whole, with the expectation that this small change will send ripples across the entire system.[151] The Surge exemplifies this, abandoning attempts to control all of Iraq, focusing instead on

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[147] Pierre-Jean Luizard, "Islam as a Point of Reference for Political and Social Groups in Iraq," *International Review of the Red Cross* 89 (Number 868) (2007): 847.
[148] Fanar Haddad, "Sectarian Relations in Arab Iraq: Contextualising the Civil War of 2006-2007," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 40(2) (2013): 115.
[149] SIGIR, *Learning from Iraq,* xi.
[150] Alahmad, "Illuminating a State", 339.
[151] Martin, *An Empire of Indifference*, 76.

applying maximum pressure on localised, community-level pockets of insurgent violence to stabilise the entire nation.

Consistent with the shift in strategy away from the prescriptions of state-building, US agencies sought to autonomise Iraqi subjects, breaking their economic dependence on the state. US authorities believed that the Ba'athist welfare system had made Iraqis reliant on the state to provide for their basic needs, decrying what they perceived as a lack of entrepreneurialism amongst the population.[152] Microfinance, at the time an immensely popular instrument in development discourse, was presented as a viable and cost-effective solution. Microfinance would both provide a source of credit to impoverished Iraqis, without the involvement of the crippled banking sector, and also act upon the population's financial behaviour. In the words of USAID, microfinance "supports self-respect and civic responsibility," by enabling small-scale, individual entrepreneurial activity.[153] By providing credit and promoting individual entrepreneurialism, USAID could lay the foundations for an enterprising Iraqi population even through the violence of the insurgency. Similarly, USIP noted that a 'lesson learned' from the CPA occupation was that the Iraqi economy would not automatically flourish after liberalisation, it would require "aggressive assistance to provide credit, training and opportunities."[154] These agencies saw not just the Ba'athist economic system as an object of intervention, but the very populace itself as also an impediment to the highly financialised, liberal market democracy they sought to engineer.

By the US occupation's assessment, small-scale credit and capital markets were almost entirely non-existent upon the arrival of coalition forces in 2003.[155] The CPA began to set up and capitalise microfinance institutions (MFIs) by the latter half of 2003, but these were limited in scale and reach.[156] The programme expanded dramatically from September 2004, when USAID contracted LBG, a US-based multinational engineering and logistics firm, to establish a network for microfinance, small-business lending, and

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[152] The Louis Berger Group, Inc., "State of Iraq's Microfinance Industry," USAID-*Tijara* Provincial Economic Growth Program, June 2010, 8.

[153] USAID, "Iraq: *Tijara* Provincial Economic Growth Program," https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/140997.pdf, 2010.

[154] Henderson, "The Coalition Provisional Authority's Experience with Economic Reconstruction", 2.

[155] Louis Berger Group, "State of Iraq's Microfinance Industry", 8.

[156] *Ibid.*, 4.

other private sector support through the $140.2 million *Izdihar* Private Sector Development Program. In 2008 this programme was replaced by the $192.5 million *Tijara* Provincial Economic Growth Program, also implemented through LBG.[157] These two programmes created fourteen MFIs, the first to be established in Iraq, which distributed hundreds of thousands of loans to individuals and small businesses. The initial capital for this network came from USAID and the Department of Defence, with the two institutions providing for loan capital and operational capital respectively.[158] Microfinance was consistent with the post-2004 emphasis on local, visible, small-scale infrastructure provision as a form of counterinsurgency. Just as reconstruction agencies had abandoned large-scale material infrastructure projects in favour of 'community' projects, so too did they abandon macro-level financial infrastructure changes in favour of the provision of small, local networks of financial infrastructure. Most MFIs were set up in collaboration with the US military through Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), as an effort to pacify restive regions through economic development.[159] As a joint civilian-military partnership, MFIs blurred the boundaries between sovereign violence and governmentality, attempting to shape subjects with the backing of military force.

Globally, microfinance began through small, non-profit organisations lending money to individual entrepreneurs and micro-businesses.[160] Traditionally, banks and other large creditors considered the world's poor to be too much of a credit risk for lending, and the operational costs of managing such an enterprise to outweigh the potential benefits.[161] It was assumed that the poor would be less likely than the middle and upper classes to repay their debts, and hence they were not worth lending to. Operationally, significantly more resources are required to make many small loans than are required for a smaller number of larger loans. However, large financial institutions have increasingly been drawn into the microfinance market. These institutions, including Deutsche Bank, Credit Suisse, and Citibank, have found that investing in the world's

[157] SIGIR, *Learning from Iraq*, 116.
[158] Louis Berger Group, "State of Iraq's Microfinance Industry", 10.
[159] *Ibid.*
[160] Elisabeth Rhyne, *Microfinance for Bankers and Investors: Understanding the Opportunities and Challenges of the Market at the Bottom of the Pyramid* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2009), 15.
[161] *Ibid.*, 58.

poor can be well worth the risk, and have reaped enormous returns on investment doing so.[162]

For these large investors, investing in MFIs hinges on the ability to quantify and manage the risk that traditionally prevented lending to the poor. Opening capital markets to MFIs has therefore involved global standardisation, methods for quantifying portfolio quality, and categorisation according to risk characteristics. By adhering to international standards in performance reporting and credit risk data, global MFI networks made themselves legible to established financiers, enabling integration into global capital markets. To this end, the Microfinance Information Exchange (MIX), a global online information sharing database, was created to provide information for potential investors and thereby increase capital flows to the MFI industry.[163] The Iraqi MFIs were no exception, and all institutions operating in the country reported to the MIX. Information on the MIX had to be rendered legible for traditional financiers, with performance and risk quantified in standardised form to allow for assessment of profitability. The MFI industry therefore innovated standard performance criteria, which all MFIs are incentivised to adhere to so as to access future financing. The primary MFI-specific metric through which risk is calculated is the innovation of portfolio at risk (PAR), the portion of the loan portfolio affected by delinquency as a percentage of the total portfolio.[164] PAR is generally reported for time periods of 30, 60, 90, or 180 days, and hence written as PAR30, PAR60, and so forth. PAR30 is the most commonly used measurement, but other time periods are reported as well. MFIs employ this simple calculation to report the 'quality' of their own portfolios, with lower values indicating a higher quality and lower risk. Traditional banking and investment industries do not report using PAR, it is an innovation created to quantify risk specifically in microfinance institutions.[165]

A whole array of technologies and practices are required in order to bring markets into existence and continuously stabilise them. Crucial in the construction of markets are devices that can incorporate peoples, behaviours, and things into economic processes.

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[162] *Ibid.*, 127.
[163] *Ibid.*, 133.
[164] MicroRate, "Technical Guide: Performance and Social Indicators for Microfinance Institutions," MicroRate Incorporated, 2014, 9.
[165] *Ibid.*, 12.

These "material and discursive assemblages that intervene in the construction of markets" are what Michel Callon and others have referred to as "market devices."[166] Nothing is inherently part of the economy, but through the process of "economisation" things and behaviours are rendered in such a way that they can be spoken of as naturally "economic."[167] Discursive and calculative devices such as accounting techniques, pricing systems, and trading protocols, as well as material devices such as shopping carts, all contribute to the rendering of things as economic and the drawing of the boundaries of 'the economy.'

The MFI-specific innovation of PAR is one such market device. It is a calculative technology that renders groups of small-scale borrowers quantifiable according to risk characteristics. It therefore 'economises' the behaviours of the poor and the development practices of lending NGOs, allowing the poor and the institutions that seek to serve them to be spoken about as economic actors. The innovation of PAR was therefore vital in the process of transitioning global microfinance from an NGO-based to a high finance-based practice. Creditors like Credit Suisse were unwilling to finance NGOs offering small amounts of credit to the poor. But through PAR these practices became economic, and NGO microlending became an asset, something that could be valued and traded in markets. With microfinance portfolios rendered calculable through PAR and related market devices, large creditors began to invest in now economised MFIs. This had led to enormous private investments in microfinance, including Credit Suisse's underwriting of a Mexican MFI's $1.56 billion initial public offering and Citibank's $180 million investment in a Bangladeshi MFI.[168] Through calculative market devices the world's poor have been rendered calculable and integrated into global capital markets.

Iraqi MFIs adhered to international standards, reporting the performance of their portfolios in PAR30 and sharing data with the MIX. These MFIs thereby rendered themselves financially calculable, and eventually many of them gained recognition as being 'investment worthy,' attracting large lines of credit.[169] By assisting in the

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[166] Fabien Muniesa, Yuval Millo, and Michel Callon, "An Introduction to Market Devices," *The Sociological Review* 55 (2) (2007), 2.
[167] *Ibid.*, 3.
[168] Rhyne, *Microfinance for Bankers and Investors*, 239-45.
[169] Louis Berger Group, "State of Iraq's Microfinance Industry", 17.

establishment of MFIs, and ensuring their adherence to international accounting standards, the USAID *Tijara* programme could enable action at a distance. MFIs 'conduct the conduct' of borrowers, producing certain types of financial behaviour through the incentive of further finance and the penalty of collateral loss. Their operations are consistent with liberal government, which seeks to conduct behaviour without infringing upon individual autonomy, and in fact relies upon the subject's capacity to make rational choices.[170] Microfinance therefore presented itself to USAID as a venue through which political power could be exercised, even after US withdrawal. Standardising accounting practices, reporting, and self-evaluation reorganised MFIs along a logic of financial rationality, producing newly calculable spaces amenable to the dictates of expertise.[171] USAID's *Tijara* programme ensured that Iraqi MFIs employed international best practices in accounting and reporting standards, including PAR30. By mandating these systems, USAID could make sure that MFIs economised the people that they sought to serve. The PAR measurement operates through a clear financial logic, making subjects calculable as sources of profit or loss. Through accounting practices MFIs are therefore conditioned to view subjects as economic actors, and their exercise of power accordingly seek to conduct the financial habits of borrowers.

Microfinance is imbued, through the imposition of standardised accounting practices, with a financial logic, economising both the Iraqi poor and the NGOs that purport to serve them. It is a form of infrastructure, one that facilitates the provision of credit and other financial services. As a form of infrastructure, microfinance contributes to the production of the "ambient environment of everyday life," and creates the conditions under which some politics and forms of power are possible, while preventing others.[172] Crucially, by adhering to financial logic MFIs produced the conditions under which a new financial subject could take shape. By economising individual subjects, it classified people as economic actors. People were incentivised to act accordingly in order to continue receiving credit. As a lifeline to capital, MFIs taught borrowers to manage their finances according to specific practices, producing economically rational subjects. The

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[170] Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 184.
[171] Natascha Mueller-Hirth, "If You Don't Count, You Don't Count: Monitoring and Evaluation in South African NGOs," *Development & Change* 43(3) (2012), 656.
[172] Brian Larkin, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure," *The Annual Review of Anthropology* 42 (2013), 328.

accounting practices instilled in MFIs by USAID were thereby passed on to individual borrowers. This process was a translation of financial accounting practices across space and time, practices that economised institutions and subjects, rendering them as economic entities.[173] Through this economising translation process people begin to think of themselves and others in economic terms, as "small capitalists," thereby also naturalising the market economy as a freestanding and bounded domain reproduced through universal human behaviour.[174]

The MFIs use of collateral also created the conditions for the exercise of specific types of power. The primary form of collateral was co-signature from any GOI employee, one fifth of whose monthly salary would be deducted in the event of a default by the borrower.[175] This form of collateral limited borrowing to only those with personal connections to public sector employees. LBG therefore began to suggest an alternative collateral option, marketed towards the poorest Iraqis. In this "Solidarity Group Lending" method, three to five unrelated individual debtors borrowed together and signed the agreement collectively. If one defaulted, the other debtors in the group would pay the outstanding balance.[176] This arrangement is explicitly formulated as a system of peer monitoring. Debtors are incentivised to self-discipline their economic activity through the social consequences of default. The conduct of financial behaviour was exercised through social mechanisms and communities were enlisted in the shaping of the subjectivities of their own members. Individual borrowers began to understand themselves as financial actors, regulating their economic behaviour with no coercion from the state. Group lending as alternative collateral in MFI infrastructures created the conditions under which power could operate through social community mechanisms, with communities holding individuals accountable for their financial behaviour. This lending method operated at the level of the group, not on the individual. But it incentivised peer monitoring and social coercion, preventing the group dynamics that had once given leverage power to the exploited masses. By assembling groups as apparatuses of financial discipline, 'Solidarity Group Lending' foreclosed any possibility

[173] Rose, "Governing 'Advanced' Liberal Democracies", 43.
[174] Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 247.
[175] Louis Berger Group, "State of Iraq's Microfinance Industry", 39.
[176] *Ibid.*

of collective bargaining, debt striking, or other mass actions that in the past have lent themselves to democratisation and liberation.

DIVIDED BY RISK

The highly financialised and globalised capital of the post-Cold War era embraced and encouraged risk-taking. Imperial domination became a way to equip states and subjects with the capacity to self-manage risk, and hence become autonomous yet conducted by a unifying financial logic.[177] The War on Terror, of which the invasion of Iraq was part, fragmented populations that had once been forcibly unified through colonialism, dividing them along registers of risk.[178] This new metric along which to divide populations opened many to global capital markets and a highly integrated economy, if they were willing to exchange security and once-promised development for a chance at prosperity by embracing risk. Those unwilling or unable to embrace risk were condemned to the category of 'at-risk,' ineligible for investment and excluded from global capital markets. The autonomous investor, self-managerial and reliant only upon their own capacity to leverage risk, became the model human, a trans-geographical subjectivity crafted out of the moral and rational embrace of risk.[179] Just as classical liberalism had found its ideal subject in the partner of exchange, and late twentieth-century neoliberalism had found it in the 'entrepreneur of himself,' so too did the new imperium of the twenty-first century find its ideal subject in the investor, no longer simply developing its human capital but leveraging it through risk-taking.[180]

MFI infrastructure was well-suited to facilitating the division of the Iraqi population along the lines of risk-takers and those at risk. Infrastructures reconfigure social relations, and their particular characteristics allow things to be thought of as 'natural' in specific contexts.[181] For example, the deployment of new accounting techniques economised institutions and subjects, allowing them to be thought of as naturally economic actors. Similarly, by sorting people into risk categories depending on their

[177] Martin, *An Empire of Indifference*, 98.
[178] *Ibid.*, 123.
[179] *Ibid.*, 41.
[180] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collége de France, 1978-79*, trans. Graham Burchell, ed. Michel Senellart (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 225-26.
[181] Casper Bruun Jensen and Atsuro Morita, "Introduction: Infrastructures as Ontological Experiments," *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology* 82 no. 4 (2017): 618.

ability to repay loans, MFIs reconfigure group identity and subjectivities to naturalise the fragmentation of the population along a register of risk. USAID's "Microfinance Strategy" noted that the calculation and reporting of PAR were particularly important in Iraq's conflict environment, as a rising PAR in insurgency-afflicted areas would signal that donors and financiers should reduce activities in these areas.[182] This was a method of risk management, through which populations relegated to the 'at risk' category could be cut off from financial infrastructure.

Similarly, MFIs themselves were placed on a risk gradient, classified as Grade A through D. They were graded according to a set of criteria in the MIX-inspired Performance Classification and Monitoring System (PCMS), which measured PAR, operational expense ratios, operational self-sufficiency, and financial self-sufficiency.[183] The lowest rated, 'D' grade MFIs were those that scored poorly in all of the standardised criteria. In order to be 'A' grade and 'commercially viable' for international investment, MFIs had to have a PAR30 below 2%, an outstanding portfolio above $15 million, and self-sufficiency ratios above 100%.[184] By June 2010, eight of fourteen Iraqi MFIs had qualified as A Grade and were financed through their own activities and global finance, whereas the remaining six MFIs were considered too high risk for investment and did not achieve A grade.[185] The distinct MFIs in Iraq largely operated in different areas. Examination of the PARs, 'grades,' and active locations of MFIs in June 2010 shows that those higher on the risk gradient tended to be in more Sunni-dominant and insurgency-affected towns or Baghdad neighbourhoods.[186] By classifying MFIs according to their portfolio quality, MFI monitoring and classification systems could effectively divide the country according to risk. MFIs in safer areas had PAR30 scores as low as .01% and were eligible for international financing, while those in insurgency-affected areas often had PAR30 as high as 7.9% and were rendered ineligible for inclusion in the highly globalised capital markets of the early twenty-first century.[187]

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[182] The Louis Berger Group, Inc. and The Services Group, Inc., "The Iraq Microfinance Strategy," USAID-*Izdihar* Private Sector Growth and Employment Generation Program, Contract no. 267-C-00-04-00435-00, 25 February 2007, 25.
[183] Louis Berger Group, "State of Iraq's Microfinance Industry", 27.
[184] *Ibid.*
[185] *Ibid.*, 29.
[186] *Ibid.*, 48-51.
[187] *Ibid.*, 49.

THE SHADOW OF SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURES

The putting together of microfinance infrastructure did not go unchallenged. In particular, religious leaders across the country posed obstacles to building this infrastructure, raising concerns about interest rates. MFIs in Iraq charged interest rates of 12-18% on loans, considerably higher than most bank loan rates.[188] Charging any interest is forbidden in Islamic law, hence the reluctance of many Iraqi religious leaders to support the MFI infrastructure. Their cooperation had to be garnered in order for MFIs to access customers and financing. The earliest MFIs, started in 2003 through 2006, were almost entirely in central and southern Iraq, and Kurdistan, but they remained very limited.[189] These regions were generally more peaceful, although there were insurgent attacks nationally. In late 2006 USAID began working through the military-civilian PRT programme in order to spread MFIs to all provinces, dramatically expanding the size and scope of Iraqi microfinance. The Sunni-majority governorates of al-Anbar, Nineveh, and Salah al-Din were wracked by increasing anti-occupation violence during this period, most notably in the infamous 'Sunni Triangle.'

Sharia law's regulation of banking is contested, and it is interpreted in a myriad of ways by different sects and schools. In Iraq, the Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani was the primary actor determining Sharia compliance for the country's Shi'a majority, but compliance for the Sunni minority was determined by a wide variety of provincial or local leaders.[190] The Ayatollah al-Sistani proclaimed that obtaining loans from non-Islamic funded financial institutions was permitted on the conditions that interest was not explicitly charged, and the funds were received by way of *istinqath,* which in Shi'a jurisprudence is the recovery of money from unbelievers.[191] The country's Shi'a were therefore implicitly allowed to utilise microfinance services, as MFIs were non-Muslim institutions. The Ayatollah's approval allowed for the formation of MFIs in the Shi'a majority central and southern regions of Iraq early as 2003. However, Sunni economic

[188] *Ibid.,* 17.
[189] *Ibid.,* 10.
[190] Louis Berger Group, Inc, "Iraq's Experience with al-Murabaha Islamic Microfinance," Produced for USAID, November 2010, 17.
[191] Ali al-Sistani, *Current Legal Issues,* trans. Najim al-Khafaji (London, 1996), 43.

jurisprudence differs from Shi'ite jurisprudence, so when USAID began to extend MFIs into all governorates, they had to find a way to enrol Sunni community leaders in the MFI project. The first efforts to expand into Sunni majority regions were in early 2007, when the al-Takadum MFI met with dozens of Sunni sheiks, supported by the US military.[192] This was consistent with the shift in strategy noticeable in the Surge, as it began to reject the state-building paradigm and engage with nonstate actors.

The engagements with Sunni sheiks were fruitful, and the MFI-USAID alliance managed to form agreements with many local leaders. To advance the microfinance programme into Sunni areas USAID reframed interest on loans as "mark-ups," and negotiated with Islamic leaders to issues fatwas proclaiming microcredit to be Sharia compliant.[193] Products offered by certain microfinance institutions were rebranded as al-Murabaha, a globally utilised form of Islamic banking. Instead of charging interest on loans, al-Murabaha products charged a "mark-up" rate in Iraq of 12-20% of the value of the loan.[194] This is consistent with, or perhaps slightly higher than, the rates of interest on non-Islamic loans offered by MFIs in Iraq. LBG's report notes the opportunity presented by al-Murabaha financing, allowing microfinance to "become more profitable, taking advantage of this opportunity of the no mark-up limits."[195] High interest rates drew scrutiny from the GOI and Sunni leaders. But by replacing interest with a "mark-up," microfinance institutions could charge much higher rates for their products without political backlash.

Despite spreading MFIs across the country from early 2007 onwards, the US occupation could not autonomously impose this programme without modifications. The microfinance market was continuously emergent and plastic, a result of the interactions of numerous material and social actors and the contingencies of wartime economic development.[196] It is clear through the primary texts that the power of religious leaders shaped the spread and development of new MFIs. An LBG report on al-Murabaha financing in Iraq notes the time-consuming and arduous process that USAID and its

[192] Louis Berger Group, "State of Iraq's Microfinance Industry", 37.
[193] Louis Berger Group, "Iraq's Experience with al-Murabaha Islamic Microfinance", 17.
[194] *Ibid.,* 15.
[195] Louis Berger Group, "State of Iraq's Microfinance Industry", 37.
[196] Hans Kjellberg and Claes-Fredrik Helgesson, "On the Nature of Markets and Their Practices," *Marketing Theory* 7 Issue 2 (2007): 140.

contractors went through in meeting clerics and sheiks, their power "underpinning-or undermining- an institution's credibility with the Islamic community."[197] USAID had to garner the consent of religious leaders throughout the country, noting the difficulties it faced in navigating the varying interpretations of Sharia law by different Iraqi faith communities.[198]

The US occupation was attempting to produce a new financial infrastructure in the form of a microcredit market. But this new infrastructure was not built upon a clean slate, it had to contend with previous infrastructures. The sanctions on Iraq that began in 1990 significantly weakened the power of the state, forcing Saddam to partially employ a form of indirect rule through qabilas, tribal federations that are generally homogenous in terms of sect.[199] Therefore, by the time of the US invasion sectarian actors had already begun to take on many governmental functions. With the further collapse of the Ba'athist state under US occupation, the qabilas, individual tribes, and religious organisations simply increased their share of governmental responsibilities by providing legal structures (through the ulama), food relief, and other traditionally state services.[200] Infrastructures are networks composed of material, discursive, and human actors. But some infrastructures are built primarily as social networks, "semiotic communities," and communication channels, which serve similar functions to material infrastructures in facilitating the transportation of resources and organising socialities.[201] Such infrastructures shape ways of thinking, affecting politics and power. The religious legal structures and tribal governance that rose to prominence from 1990 through 2003 should be thought of as infrastructures in this sense. They became strong networks of communication and distribution, the channels through which resources were transported following the retreat of the state. The Sunni Islamic influence in these social infrastructures, and particularly the prohibition on charging interest, shaped the ways in which people thought about 'the economy.' The geographical advance of MFIs in 2007, and their attendant economising market devices of accounting, clashed with the

[197] Louis Berger Group, "Iraq's Experience with al-Murabaha Islamic Microfinance", 15.
[198] *Ibid.*, 17.
[199] Thomas Schmidinger, "Tyrants and Terrorists: Reflections on the Connection Between Totalitarianism, Neo-liberalism, Civil War and the Failure of the State in Iraq and Sudan," *Civil Wars* 11(3) (2009): 366.
[200] Meijer, "Defending Our Honor", 24.
[201] Julia Elyachar, "Phatic Labor, Infrastructure, and the Question of Empowerment in Cairo," *American Ethnologist* 37(3) (August 2010), 461.

ways in which Islam-influenced social infrastructures had conceived of the economy and finance. Acceptance of MFI infrastructures required a reconfiguring of understandings of value and economy, a rethinking of even poor subjects as financial actors. Resistance to MFI infrastructures in pre-Surge Sunni communities was a matter of pre-existing social infrastructures naturalising understandings of subjecthood and economy that misaligned with the understandings naturalised by USAID's imposed MFI infrastructures. This resistance posed by old infrastructures substantially slowed and abated the rollout of microfinance across Iraq, shaping the distribution of economic development resources and political power.

CONCLUSION

Before the US invasion of Iraq, pre-war planners assumed that the occupation's goals could be achieved in under a year. They discursively constructed an image of Iraq as a rentier state economy excessively burdened by state intervention and a bloated public sector, with resources flowing through market distorting patronage networks, trickling down to a population that had become reliant on an inefficient welfare state. By simply rolling back the state's intervention in the economy, besides applying best practices in active monetary policy, the CPA could allow the private sector to flourish and diversify. Following the dissolution of the CPA, this dream was carried on by coercive IMF structural adjustments. However, by the end of 2004 it became clear that the private sector's flourishing could not be brought about simply by removing state interventions. The government revenue needed for producing financial infrastructures was imperilled as oil and electrical infrastructure became targeted as 'force multipliers' for insurgents.[202] Inflation was rampant, and the state lacked the monetary policy tools to address it. Unemployment remained rife, attracting many to join insurgent movements. The state itself splintered along sectarian lines as its monopoly on violence became increasingly ambiguous.

This situation worsened, and by 2007 the US occupation authorities realised that following the 'good governance' prescriptions of state-building discourse had not brought the liberal market utopia it promised. The Surge strategy marked a rejection of

[202] Alahmad, "Illuminating a State", 345.

state-building and a recognition of the power of nonstate actors and entrenched forms of subjectivity. Among other engagements that sought to work with local communities in infrastructure provision and economic development, microfinance was adopted to enable action at a distance. USAID imposed accounting standards and risk measurement tools on MFIs, market devices that economised the poor, allowing them to be thought of as financial assets. Microfinance thus displaced the local ownership of debt and created new socialities in which the poorest Iraqis became financially linked to the highest tiers of global capital.[203] Economisation was passed along to individual borrowers through the incentives of further credit and the social consequences of default as collateral in group borrowing arrangements. But this new financial infrastructure conditioned subjects to think of the economy, and themselves, in a drastically different manner than to which they had been conditioned through pre-existing social infrastructures. Sectarian and geographical differences shaped the ways in which people responded to the new 'community' infrastructures, which in turn shaped the process of reconstruction and development across the country. Abandoning the once trumpeted project of state-building in favour of local-level empowerment in turn fragmented resistance. National liberation from the new imperium was impossible when imperialism's object of intervention was no longer the nation, but the community. The national consciousness to which Ba'athism had so arduously laid claim was not only ideologically decomposed, but substituted at the infrastructural level with corollaries of local struggles against an imperial power that interfered at the most intimate sites of semiotic community and subject-formation.

[203] Martin, *An Empire of Indifference*, 8.

Chapter Three

Political Infrastructure

Upon taking over responsibility for governing Iraq in early 2003, the US occupation's Coalition Provisional Authority sought to quickly develop the political infrastructure that would allow a return of sovereignty to an elected Iraqi government. This effort required assembling the institutions, expertise, and material components of a political system, as well as stabilising this assemblage. Pre-war planning was contradictory and contested between various agencies of the US state, a confusion that led to an indecisive early period of the occupation.[204] The US state was incapable of acting as a unified, monolithic body, which hindered its ability to project a clear conceptualisation for its envisioned post-Ba'ath Iraqi political system. The CPA originally envisioned its own existence as a two-year occupation government, but this was quickly shortened to one year, with the handover of sovereignty scheduled for the end of June 2004.[205] The drastically shortened timeframe led to a rushed process of producing political infrastructures, but the broad vision of the occupation becomes clear through interrogation of the Transitional Administrative Law, which acted as an interim constitution, as well as the CPA's ministerial training programmes.

Following the handover of nominal sovereignty in June 2004, the US and international agencies continued attempting to shape the political system through influence in the constitutional drafting process, ministerial and local government training programmes, production and support of civil society organisations, and engagement with nonstate

[204] Dobbins, Jones, Mohandas and Runkle, "Occupying Iraq", 36.
[205] *Ibid.*, 267.

authorities. Early interventions focused on capacitating the Iraqi central government in the administration of a particular system of government. Governance and administration were framed as technical matters requiring the skill of international experts. As sectarian violence and insurgency began to increase from late 2004 onwards, the occupation's agencies realised that the central government alone was not capable of governing. Citizens were active in politics not through the formal, approved channels of liberal democracy, but through violence and protest. These social and material contingencies required the occupation to reprioritise the focus on the central government. The object of expert intervention shifted to reformatting the very structure of society, with attempts made to shape it according to a naturalised vertical understanding of the roles of the state, civil society, and citizenry. Furthermore, public education and civil society projects aimed to promote a certain figure of subjectivity, the active liberal citizen that would correspond to the institutional infrastructure of the new political system. The typical object of state-building was abandoned as the occupation began to approach society and its subjects as arenas for technical intervention and reprogramming, efforts continuously disrupted by resistance from social infrastructures and the material constraints of an ongoing violent conflict.

THE MASTER TROPE OF SECT

Occupying authorities repeatedly produced a specific image of the Ba'athist political system, which assisted in justifying the production of new, imposed political institutions. US discourse repeatedly insisted that Iraqis had never enjoyed democratic governance, and hence were incapable of even imagining or designing a democratic political system. The Ba'athist regime had undoubtedly been deeply undemocratic and totalitarian. But the insistence on Iraqis' inability to construct their own democratic governance mechanisms served to justify continued violations of Iraq's formal sovereignty and self-governance. It produced an aesthetic of the Ba'athist political system against which new infrastructures could be contrasted and justified. Exclusion of Iraqis from their own democratic processes was most evident in the drafting of the constitution. There was almost no consultation with the broader Iraqi public, other than small groups of elite Baghdad-based legal teams, and US discourse decried the inability

of Iraqis to comprehend the concepts open to debate in the constitutional process.[206] The occupation's consistent argument was that Ba'athist totalitarianism left Iraqis incapable of the civic engagement and political expertise necessary in producing and sustaining a liberal democracy. This belief in the stunting of the Iraqi political habitus by decades of totalitarianism was most crudely summarised in the words of celebrated American diplomat and CPA official Hume Horan, who stated that "it would take almost a generation of mandate-style colonialism to detoxify their politics and their psychology."[207]

The Ba'athist political system was thus discursively constructed as a system so oppressive that the Iraqi citizenry was incapable of even understanding the concept of democracy. This rendition of Ba'athism justified a continued US presence and heavy involvement in the production of new infrastructures. But the notion of a heavily centralised and totalitarian Ba'athist state coexisted with an understanding of Iraqi society as timelessly organised according to sectarian affiliation. Numerous sources evoke an image of Ba'athism stifling a sectarian tradition, which was unleashed upon the arrival of US forces.[208] The production of governance mechanisms based on sectarian representation, as well as the contestations over federalism and consociationalism, were largely predicated on this understanding of the centrality of sect in Iraqi political and personal life. There is therefore a tension between the understanding of life in Ba'athist Iraq as dominated by the centralised, modernising, secular state, and the understanding of Iraq as a deeply religious country organised on the basis of sectarian affiliation.

As has already been mentioned, the undemocratic and totalitarian nature of Ba'athist regime cannot be underplayed. The citizenry had very few opportunities for meaningful engagement in decision-making. And while the American discursive construction of sect as the bedrock of Iraqi society does betray Orientalist undercurrents, sect and religion, along with region and ethnicity, have been important elements in the country's social and political history. Saddam's regime had a complicated relationship to religious leadership, at times rejecting religion in favour of modernisation, and at other times

[206] Jonathan Morrow, "Iraq's Constitutional Process II: An Opportunity Lost," United States Institute of Peace, USIP Special Report 155, November 2005, 12.
[207] Dobbins, Jones, Mohandas and Runkle, "Occupying Iraq", 283-284.
[208] SIGIR, *Learning from Iraq*, 90.

adopting Islam in a unifying nationalist rhetoric. High level Ba'ath leadership positions were dominated by Sunnis, owing to Saddam increasingly selecting leaders from his native Tikrit, which happened to have a Sunni majority population.[209] This strained the regime's relationship with the Shi'a population, particularly following the neighbouring Iranian Revolution. The regime therefore adopted a more overtly Islamic stance from the late 1970s onwards, as well as making efforts to win the favour of influential ulama, in order to appease the Shi'a and unite the country around nationalist Islamic rhetoric.[210]

In the 1990s the Ba'ath regime's power waned with the onset of sanctions. It began to increasingly rely on both Sunni and Shi'ite religious leaders in the exercise of government, their power incorporated into the political infrastructure of the late Ba'athist era. Religious leadership took responsibility for a wide variety of governmental roles, including legal dispute settlement and the provision of food relief during the sanctions-induced famine.[211] Religious structures therefore became a part of the infrastructure of the political system, with the formally non-state actors of the ulama functioning to shape and guide political activity within the confines of Ba'athist totalitarianism.

Overall, the US discursively constructed the Ba'athist political system as centralised and totalitarian, but concurrently deeply religious and organised along lines of sectarian division. The US state's calculative capacity is brought into question in the face of these contradictory accounts of Iraqi history and politics. Rather than rationally gathering accurate information to inform its occupation strategies, the state's calculations appear to differ amongst varying bodies of the state, their understandings of Iraqi politics all dependent upon cultural and social constructions of the Orient.

What buttressed this construction was the deliberate staging of sect as a master signifier in Iraqi history, underpinned by a strategic forgetting of the long and complex interplay "between the sectarian and class cleavages."[212] In his classic work *The Old Social Classes*

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[209] Baram, "Neo-Tribalism in Iraq", 5.
[210] Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958*, 199.
[211] Meijer, "Defending Our Honor", 24.
[212] Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists, Ba'thists, and Free Officers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 18.

and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq, historian Hanna Batatu offered a rich and nuanced analysis of the emergence of the Ba'athist regimes which showed how "through cutting the roots from under large-scale private property, and by dint of the virtual financial autonomy of the state from society, flowing from its huge oil income, the relationship of individuals or groups to property has receded in importance, and control of the apparatus of government has become the determinant of social action more conclusively than ever before."[213] And yet, Batatu contended, the material gains of this state "salariat" sat in an uneasy tension with entrenched forms of regional, sectarian and ethnic loyalty, making political contingencies and innovations possible and even inevitable in modern Iraq.[214] In resorting to an analytic that erased the histories of post-1958 proprietorial redistribution and of an urbanization built on disproportionate expansion of state functionaries, and instead positioned the conflict between the Sunni and the Shi'ite sects as the primal and prime mover of Iraqi history, the Occupation regime plugged into an old Orientalist repertoire of zealot Middle East. The complex infrastructural assemblage that made the rise of the Tikriti Ba'athists possible[215] was moved into an invisible background in this discourse so as to make the dramaturgy of an unending, multi-century conflict between the sects the principal motif of Iraqi history.

CPA AND THE IMPORT OF EXPERTISE

It was in this discursive ambience that the CPA was tasked with rapidly preparing Iraq for a transfer of sovereignty to a newly elected government. Pre-war planners had differing opinions of the desired nature and length of the occupation. This meant that upon taking power, the CPA did not have a consistent and credible plan for producing new political infrastructures. Furthermore, once the CPA's trajectory had been largely agreed upon, domestic Iraqi political constraints prevented the full completion of US plans. The various agencies of the US state apparatus had to negotiate and contest their plans with local political actors, and the eventual CPA reconstruction process was a contingent outcome of these interactions. In September 2003 CPA Administrator

[213] *Ibid.*, 1125-7.
[214] *Ibid.*, 1129.
[215] Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, *Iraq Since 1958*, 300.

Bremer published a *Washington Post* article outlining a seven step plan to transfer sovereignty to an elected Iraqi government. Crucially, this plan envisioned the CPA dissolving itself only after the ratification of a permanent constitution and the holding of elections for a new government.[216] This was therefore understood as a declaration that the occupation would last for at least two years, and that the US would be directly involved in the drafting of the constitution and the running of the first elections. Had this plan been followed, the US would have had an even stronger hand in designing the post-Ba'ath political system.

The notion of a two year, highly-involved occupation met immediate resistance from a variety of sectors in Iraqi society. Most notably, many powerful Shi'ite nationalists, widely expected to lead any new government, condemned the expanded timeframe as an infringement on Iraqi sovereignty.[217] The CPA was politically pressured to drastically increase the speed at which sovereignty would be transferred, as it could not risk losing the support of Shi'ite political and religious leaders. Crucial in this pressure was a fatwah issued by the Ayatollah Sistani, declaring that a constitution crafted by the occupation or unelected leaders would be invalid.[218] Sistani and other Shi'a leaders urged a mid-2004 handover of power, which eventually gained traction with domestic American political leadership. The Iraqi Governing Council (IGC), the members of which were personally selected by Bremer, eventually also pushed for a shorter occupation. The CPA realised that it could not substantially disagree with the IGC and Sistani, as losing the support of Shi'a leaders would run the risk of losing any power over political affairs following the transfer of sovereignty.[219] The CPA, and the entire US state apparatus, was revealed to be less powerful and monolithic than it appeared, its agency contingent upon Iraqi political concerns and sectarian demographics. The IGC and CPA signed what became known as the November 15 Agreement, stipulating a complete transfer of sovereignty by 30 June 2004.[220]

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[216] L. Paul Bremer III, "Iraq's Path to Sovereignty," *The Washington Post,* 8 September 2003, Accessed online 17 September 2021.
[217] Dobbins, Jones, Mohandas and Runkle, "Occupying Iraq", 266.
[218] *Ibid.,* 269.
[219] Dobbins, Jones, Mohandas and Runkle, "Occupying Iraq", 272.
[220] Iraqi Governing Council and Coalition Provisional Authority, "The November 15 Agreement: Timeline to a Sovereign, Democratic and Secure Iraq," 15 November 2003.

Following the Agreement, the occupation turned towards producing the expertise and practices that would allow the political system to operate according to specific logics following the dissolution of the CPA. By training the GOI's bureaucracy in specific administrative procedures, the US occupation could instil in the bureaucracy practices that would make the GOI calculable and amenable to the dictates of expertise. Liberal government requires methods through which political power can conduct the conduct of individual and institutional actors without infringing upon their formal autonomy.[221] It therefore reformulates the state not as an apparatus of absolute authority and sovereign might, but instead as a centre of social programming capable of directing behaviour from afar.[222] The installation of specific practices of administration, accounting, or evaluation acts as a way to recode the behaviour of autonomous actors, their use of the new practices maintaining a certain order. The 'best practices' in which bureaucrats or accountants are trained are not free of political or economic values, but function to naturalise specific ways of thinking about the work performed and the objects of intervention. Following the November 15 Agreement, the CPA began to urgently train Iraqi ministry officials, programming specific administrative models to produce "compliance with a defined set of standards of behaviour."[223] Much like the adoption of PAR accounting in microfinance institutions, the "standards of behaviour" advocated by these trainings programmed a specific way of thinking about, and acting on, the objects of administrative intervention. This would thus consistently reproduce the routine practices required by the labour and expert components of political infrastructure, as training had naturalised a certain conceptualisation of their roles and responsibilities.

While political infrastructure relies on the proper conduct of labour and expertise, it also requires the appropriate institutional and legal framework. State-building seeks to produce a political system in which human, institutional, and material actants are aligned and coordinated in a unitary governance apparatus. Regardless of the training of ministry personnel, the CPA also had to produce an appropriately liberal democratic constitutional and formal institutional system. The decision to limit the occupation to

[221] Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* Volume 8, no. 4 (1982): 790.
[222] Rose, "Governing 'Advanced' Liberal Democracies", 46.
[223] Dobbins, Jones, Mohandas and Runkle, "Occupying Iraq", 276.

one year, which also necessitated drafting the constitution only after transferring sovereignty, upended the US plans, requiring an ad hoc reaction. But Bremer and other CPA officials believed that by "operating stealthily" in drafting the interim constitution, the US could deeply influence the design of the permanent constitution.[224] Therefore, in its short period of existence the CPA devoted significant effort to drafting a temporary, transitional constitution that would align with the US vision of a post-Ba'ath Iraqi political system.

The Ayatollah Sistani's fatwah had declared such an occupation-drafted constitution as illegitimate, and hence the interim constitution was termed the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), while in effect it functioned as a constitution. The CPA's experts, drawn from the American and British academic and legal elite, had three priorities for the TAL, namely a "democratic system of checks and balances…preserving Iraq's viability as a unified, federal state…and preventing Islam from becoming the controlling basis for law."[225] These priorities were explicitly written into the TAL in the hope that it would become a "blueprint for the permanent constitution," and likely be the most effective means of shaping Iraq's longer term political structure.[226]

These three priorities of 'checks and balances,' a federally unified Iraq, and a secular legal basis, were framed as unquestionable and technical. In the discourse of state-building, a paradigm to which the US occupation still subscribed, these principles are tantamount. The TAL was officially drafted by the IGC, as stipulated in the November 15 Agreement. The various blocs of the IGC did politically negotiate certain provisions. However, a team of American-educated Iraqi lawyers and American CPA advisors drafted portions of the TAL focused "on nuts-and-bolts issues that were not deemed politically contentious…mechanisms for government formations, phrasing on human rights guarantees, structure of the judiciary, etc."[227] By rendering these issues as technical, and removing them from the political debate of the IGC, the CPA's legal team managed to significantly affect the drafting of the TAL while avoiding political controversy. "Mechanisms of government formation," human rights, and judicial

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[224] *Ibid.*, 272-73.
[225] *Ibid.*, 290.
[226] *Ibid.*
[227] Noah Feldman and Roman Martinez, "Constitutional Politics and Text in the New Iraq: An Experiment in Islamic Democracy," *Fordham Law Review* 75(2) (2006), 895.

structure all significantly impact the Iraqi political process, but by discursively framing these as 'nuts-and-bolts' issues, they could be left to the dictates of expert opinion and isolated from political or democratic scrutiny. These CPA-backed 'technical' drafting discussions proved to be highly influential in both the TAL and the permanent constitution, with almost all of their provisions included in the TAL with little or no alterations.[228] The nuts-and-bolts drafting process shaped much of what became the post-Ba'ath political system, producing a liberal model largely based upon the US constitutional structure.

Crucially, the sections of the TAL drafted by the CPA-backed experts, and later adopted by the IGC, included substantial provisions determining the power of the executive branch of government, the judicial selection process, and governmental oversight.[229] These issues shaped Iraqi politics during the transitional period, and much of the TAL was eventually maintained in the permanent constitution. Infrastructure undergirds everyday life, shaping what is considered as natural and normal.[230] By determining the transitional procedures for selection of judicial candidates, for example, US-backed expertise naturalised these particular procedures. The political infrastructure of post-Ba'ath Iraq was an assemblage of human, organisational, and material actors, an assemblage that required the constant stabilisation of alliances. Texts, as actants in themselves, channel human behaviour through producing and stabilising organisational pathways.[231] A text such as the TAL was therefore capable of stabilising human political conduct more durably than human agency alone could. Furthermore, texts in organisational settings tend to erase formal traces of authorship.[232] In a political environment in which US interference was widely condemned, the TAL allowed for the exertion of political power and the instilling of political values without an explicit American presence, as the TAL's authorship was not made explicit within the text itself. Both the drafting of the TAL and the training programmes for ministry workers relied upon the pastoral power of expertise, which necessitated producing faith in expert

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[228] Larry Diamond, *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq* (New York: Times Books, 2005), 150.
[229] *Ibid.*, 149-160.
[230] Larkin, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure", 328.
[231] François Cooren, "Textual Agency: How Texts Do Things in Organizational Settings," *Organization* 11(3) (2004), 388.
[232] *Ibid.*, 379.

opinions. By framing crucial structural issues, such as judicial selection processes, as 'black boxes,' these issues could be reserved for experts. Liberal rule requires that subjects maintain their formal capacity for free choice, and power becomes the shaping of the field of actions available.[233] Political power thereby shifts away from the sovereign exertion of force, instead building the authority of expert classes through various techniques of licensure such as professionalisation and bureaucratisation.[234] The reverence to expert authority shapes conduct, constructing specific options as correct and natural. The expertise wielded in training Iraqi ministries set expectations for correct conduct in governmental administration, with bureaucrats abiding by US dictates without a direct US presence. Similarly, the expert drafting committee of the TAL produced consequential aspects of the transitional political system, and eventually the permanent constitution. While the authority of international constitutional expertise, drawn from academia and legal professions, allowed for the TAL's adoption without political debate, the durability of organisational texts ensured that it stabilised the political system's trajectory more sustainably than human agency alone was capable of.[235]

THE BLACK BOX OF CONSTITUTION

On 28 June 2004 sovereignty was nominally transferred from the CPA to the Iraqi Interim Government, with the expectation that a constitutional referendum and democratic parliamentary elections would be held by the end of 2005. Crucially, Iraq still lacked a permanent constitution, and this quickly became amongst the most politically contentious issues of the immediate post-CPA era. As a key aspect of the country's political infrastructure, the constitution would shape political life for the foreseeable future. Constitutions are durable by design, typically requiring a legislative supermajority and extensive political will to amend or reject.[236] They organise the basic structure of governance and the procedures through which leaders are selected and removed, thereby forming the foundation upon which other political infrastructure

[233] Foucault, "The Subject and Power", 790.
[234] Rose, "Governing 'Advanced' Liberal Democracies", 46.
[235] Cooren, "Textual Agency", 378.
[236] Richard Albert, "The Structure of Constitutional Amendment Rules," *Wake Forest Law Review* 49 (2014), 918.

builds. Despite the constitution's status as critical, foundational infrastructure, the US occupation and the interim government attempted to close off many of its key tenets to popular political deliberation, instead marking them as matters for expert prescriptions. Through rendering the constitution as a technical issues, core structures and functions of the state were framed as 'black boxes,' excluding the input of laypeople. 'Blackboxing' makes the operations of technical artefacts opaque, allowing them to act in the background, outside the gaze of non-experts.[237] Understanding of the ways in which technological artefacts works is generally left to specific experts, whose presence is only known upon the breakdown of their objects of expertise. Constitutions are similarly black boxed, as their structure shapes the possible human political conduct, making possible or inhibiting certain human agency. Yet understanding of the details of constitutions is reserved for legal and political experts, despite the effects of constitutional law on the agency of all citizens. The specific features and technical details of much of the 2005 constitution went largely unchallenged, many retained from the TAL.

Primary sources from US occupation authorities, multilateral institutions, and academics employed a variety of literary technologies to achieve this black boxing of the Iraqi constitution. Certain issues within the constitutional structure were produced as 'facts,' and hence rendered unquestionable matters meant for expert authority. Experts involved in the drafting of the Iraqi constitution used a linguistic style that bounded constitutional law as a distinct, technical, and opaque field. This garnered respect for legal expertise, and created a barrier that prevented non-expert entry into the discourse surrounding the constitution's drafting. Specialist language therefore acted both as a sign that its object of study was technical, and as a tool for producing a boundary around a distinct field of intervention.[238] The use of this language in debates over the new constitution limited participation only to those trained in the discourse of specific legal practices.

Certain matters could not successfully be rendered technical. Experts selected by US authorities universally stressed the importance of adopting a federal model as a way of

[237] Latour, "On Technical Mediation", 36.
[238] Steven Shapin, "Pump and Circumstance: Robert Boyle's Literary Technology," *Social Studies of Science* 14 no. 4 (1984), 510.

balancing Iraq's sectarian divide, framing it as the correct way to structure the new nation.[239] But federalism nonetheless became a source of political contention. The Kurdish minority, long oppressed under the Ba'ath regime and denied statehood following the Sykes-Picot Agreement, urged a deeply federal constitution in order to maximise their autonomy. Many Shi'ite legal experts also supported a strong federal system, particularly in relation to the sharing of oil revenues, given that some of the world's largest oil fields are in Shi'a-majority southern Iraq.[240] However, Sunnis involved in the process officially opposed a federal model, arguing that it would splinter the nation. Yet the Sunni bloc's lawyers informally acknowledged that federalism would be beneficial for their constituency too, while formally opposing it. An American constitutional expert in Iraq therefore argued that the question of federalism became contentious not because of its actual substance, but because Sunni lawyers felt ignored, and hence wanted to assert technical competence to regain a sense of professional pride.[241] The constitutional drafting process thereby revealed itself as more than a technical exercise, as negotiating blocs sought political recognition and belonging in the new state through participation in the discussions. Political actors recognised the profound social importance of the constitution, and federalism more specifically, rejecting attempts by US-selected experts to construct federalism as a black box.

Certain other constitutional features were also discursively framed as universally necessary pieces of any political infrastructure assemblage. Core amongst these was the rhetoric of "checks and balances," found throughout the US occupation's sources on the constitution. A robust system of checks and balances was considered as a core aim of the constitutional process. The wielding of constitutional expertise necessitated managing dissent, allowing certain topics to be debated in order to preserve the epistemological integrity of matters of fact.[242] But a specific understanding of checks and balances was discussed in a tone of absolute certainty and confidence. This certainty limited the space in which dissenting opinion could be voiced, leaving the desirability of checks and balances unquestioned. In discussing the system of checks and balances in the TAL, retained in the constitution, Administrator Bremer wrote that

[239] Morrow, "Iraq's Constitutional Process II", 14.
[240] *Ibid.*, 8.
[241] *Ibid.*, 12.
[242] Shapin, "Pump and Circumstance", 502.

"dividing government power among a prime minister, a presidency, a legislature and the judiciary…will provide for Iraq a government of laws and not of men."[243] Bremer's tone is absolute, framing the separation of powers and its inherent checks and balances as a compulsory feature of effective government. Furthermore, his discourse invokes a moral tone, drawing on Iraq's history to defend the factual necessity of a particular form of political infrastructure. He states that "without the rule of law another Saddam Hussein could take power and once again citizens' rights would be trampled."[244] Bremer here deploys regular speech, eschewing specialist legal language. Combining accessible language with moralised appeals is necessary to build popular support for respect for the rule of law, rights discourse, and checks and balances, producing their necessity as a social fact.[245] This popularising discourse also promoted the new regime's aesthetic of accountability and stark contrast from Ba'athist tyranny.

Building the post-Ba'ath political infrastructure through a process of expert-driven technical deliberation challenged the sovereignty of the Iraqi state. Although the appointed Drafting Committee members were all Iraqis, they were mainly politicians, not legal scholars. The experts guiding the process, providing the specialist knowledge that the Committee would use to write the document, were drawn from the relatively recent constitutional drafting processes of South Africa, Afghanistan, and Albania, reflecting the globalised state-building paradigm of the early twenty-first century.[246] By attempting to construct the concept of a constitution as a technical black box, understood only in specialist language, this global class of experts could conduct the Drafting Committee's activities, resulting in a constitution that exhibited many of state-building discourse's favoured international best practices in governance. The experts advising the drafting process were selected by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and International Republican Institute (IRI) as part of their collective $250 million USAID-funded "democracy-building" contracts.[247] These 'non-governmental' organisations were chaired by Madeline Albright and John McCain, respectively,

[243] Bremer III, "PSA-Transitional Administrative Law."
[244] *Ibid.*
[245] Shapin, "Pump and Circumstance", 510.
[246] Morrow, "Iraq's Constitutional Process II", 8.
[247] SIGIR, *Learning from Iraq*, 106-7.

putting into question the boundary between the state, civil society, and the private sector, as well as the sovereignty of Iraq's constitutional process.

Recognising the exclusionary nature of an expert-driven constitutional process, an "Outreach Unit" was created in order to gather public opinions on constitutional issues, as legally required in the TAL.[248] Primary sources reveal the Outreach Unit as a rushed, haphazard, ad hoc, and under-resourced project, given only eight weeks to consult the Iraqi public. Consultation with the public was done only through a questionnaire with seven questions in total, almost all distributed to Shi'ite Arab regions.[249] The Iraqi public had no ability to provide input beyond answering these seven questions, which hence structured the ways in which Iraqis could react to, and even think about, the constitutional process. The United States Institute of Peace-funded questionnaire constructed the field of possible reactions to the proposed constitution. The input received through the Outreach Unit was never formally circulated to the Drafting Committee before the finalisation of the constitutional text, meaning that even the limited questionnaire never affected the drafter's policies.[250] The outreach unit's semiotic role contributed to the production of a particular political aesthetic, in which the post-Ba'ath Iraq was democratic, technically proficient, and accountable to the citizenry.[251] This aesthetic may have borne little relation to the reality of governance, at least in terms of public involvement in constitutional drafting, but the formation of an Outreach Unit contributed to the state's performance of accountability.

Overall, the process of drafting the post-Ba'ath constitution, culminating in its October 2005 approval in a referendum, was driven by the power of expertise. The occupation attempted to construct constitutional issues as black boxes, which would allow action at a distance through expertise. The substantive issues of constitutional law were framed in specialist language, which both signified the text's technical nature and formed a boundary around constitutional law as a distinct field requiring specific training to comprehend. But the process was nonetheless imbued with deep political and emotional meaning, symbolising sovereignty and hope for a peaceful future, with

[248] Morrow, "Iraq's Constitutional Process II", 19.
[249] *Ibid.*
[250] *Ibid.*, 20.
[251] Larkin, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure", 335.

many understanding the constitution as a contract between Iraq's communal groups.[252] Efforts to render it technical therefore faltered, with issues such as federalism remaining politically contested, even in popular and media discourse. Expertise struggled to make the constitution fade into the background as technical infrastructure, as it instead became a source of intense political debate.

SOVEREIGNTY, DISSIPATED

Despite efforts to produce the institutions and legal framework that would allow Iraq to function as a liberal market democracy, it was clear by the time of the first parliamentary elections that the Iraqi state's legitimacy and sovereignty would be challenged. In June 2004 the Iraqi state had been granted nominal sovereignty, taking over from the US' CPA. Iraq entered the global community of states as an autonomous member, joining the United Nations and other multilateral forums. But social and material actors continued to challenge the state's legitimacy and sovereign agency.

The infrastructure reconstruction project was largely funded and implemented by the US occupation. The US and Iraqi states' sovereign ability to produce a new material environment was incomplete, dependent as it was upon interaction with material actors. But the infrastructural choices that were available were often chosen by the US, not Iraq. Material, institutional, and social infrastructures are of paramount importance in determining the form and content of socialities and politics, providing the conditions of possibility for human agency. The US' substantial role in infrastructure reconstruction therefore challenged the notion of the new Iraqi state's sovereignty and autonomy, limiting its agency even following US withdrawal.

It was not only the importance of material actors that revealed the impossibility of the state's sovereignty, as social and political actors too challenged the state. The monopoly of violence by a monolithic entity, the supreme marker of a sovereign state, was continuously contested. Within a year of the first elections, various ministries, the police, and branches of the military were acting independently as their own sect-based militias, often in direct combat with each other.[253] In early 2006 it became public knowledge that the Interior Ministry had been operating its own Shi'ite death squad,

[252] Morrow, "Iraq's Constitutional Process II", 5.
[253] James D. Fearon, "Iraq's Civil War," *Foreign Affairs* 86(2) (2007): 6.

which continued a campaign of ethnic cleansing in Baghdad through the year.[254] The Weberian monolithic state was fractured, in its place an assemblage of various branches of government operating independently. This state's distinction from, and elevation above, society were also ambiguous. Nonstate militias, religious leaders, and private sector actors had alliances and influence with the various branches of government. The "line drawn internally" within a broader apparatus of political power was blurry and continuously redrawn.[255]

Not only was the state itself fractious and internally contested, but a variety of nonstate actors asserted their own sovereignty through campaigns of political violence. Insurgents, militias, and death squads limited the abilities of the US and Iraq to maintain any monopoly on violent force. Nonstate assertions of sovereignty were made materially possible by the disbanding of the Ba'athist military through the de-Ba'athification orders, which not only produced hundreds of thousands of unemployed, military-trained males, but also released countless weapons into society. With the military's disbandment, its weapons became openly and inexpensively available on Iraqi black markets, and "the coercive instruments of violence had been redistributed to the people in general."[256] Although Iraq had adopted a largely liberal constitution and other state institutions, state-building prescriptions failed to produce sovereignty, and Iraq fell deeper into violence.

ENGINEERING THE SOCIAL

As violent chaos engulfed the new Iraq by the end of 2005, the US occupation confronted the failures of its state-building paradigm. The end goal of state-building discourse is unitary, accountable, and effective, an assemblage of institutions, technologies, and consistently repeated procedures that continuously enact a specific political system. Many of the components of this political system had been produced, most notably with the adoption of the constitution. Tens of thousands of Iraqi civil servants had been trained in effective governmental administration, with the hope that

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[254] Human Rights Watch, "Iraq: End Interior Ministry Death Squads," 28 October 2006, https://www.hrw.org/news/2006/10/28/iraq-end-interior-ministry-death-squads.
[255] Timothy Mitchell, "Society, Economy, and the State Effect," in *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader,* ed. Aradhana Sharma and Akhil Gupta (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 175.
[256] Marshal Sahlins, "Iraq: The State-of-Nature Effect," *Anthropology Today* 27(3) (2011): 30.

they would adopt the routines that constitute the expert and labour components of political infrastructure. But despite these efforts, state-building's object of intervention failed to operate in the ways the occupation had hoped. Basic service delivery remained inadequate and national economic performance was floundering. But most crucially, the relationships between the state, civil society, and citizenry were undeveloped, and often violent. Formal political channels were often ignored, with political violence rampant. The occupation therefore sought to reformulate the basic structure of political society, not just the state. Academic and popular understandings of society produce an image of vertical encompassment, in which the state sits 'above' civil society, itself sitting above 'communities' and 'the family,' with civil society operating as mediator between citizens and the state.[257] In this conceptualisation, a strong civil society channels political activity into appropriate state channels, organising a healthy relationship between the state and its citizenry.

The occupation's discourse reflected a naturalisation of this state/civil society/communities hierarchy, presenting it as the correct social structuring. Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Bremer both presented robust civil society as a necessary precondition for a democratic society, a "foundation for self-government."[258] Rumsfeld cited Iraq's weak civil society as justification for postponing the first elections, arguing that without civil society as mediator between the state and citizenry, democratic elections would likely empower extremists. Bremer's understanding of civil society's role reflected a similar understanding, describing civil society as a set of "shock absorbers" that would ease both the impact of the state on citizens, and the impact of popular political sentiment on the state.[259] Civil society would mediate between the two, ensuring that political activities followed approved channels.

One of the largest civil society initiatives was implemented through a USAID contract to the John McCain-chaired International Republican Institute, which produced or developed dozens of NGOs to mobilise and educate voters ahead of elections.[260] This

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[257] James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta, "Spatializing States: Towards and Ethnography of Neoliberal Governmentality," *American Ethnologist* 29(4) (2002), 982.
[258] Dobbins, Jones, Mohandas and Runkle, "Occupying Iraq", 42.
[259] *Ibid.*
[260] United States Government Accountability Office, "Rebuilding Iraq: U.S. Assistance for the January 2005 Elections," Report to Congressional Committees, GAO-05-932R, 7 September 2005, 7.

civil society network promoted the types of political behaviour that were deemed appropriate in a liberal democracy, conducting the behaviour of citizens by channelling their political sentiments into the outlet of voting. By producing an NGO network that taught citizens the value of voting, and educating them in the basics of the political system, the US attempted to re-channel political frustrations, naturalising voting and civil society participation as the preferred means of democratic politics.

The incorporation of Iraqi civil society into the broader political machine, of which it would be a core component, challenges the distinctions between public and private, as well as the local and the global. Civil society tends to be academically conceptualised as a conglomeration of 'grassroots,' independent, voluntary associations.[261] But the US, primarily through USAID and the Department of State, funnelled almost $1 billion into the creation of new civil society organisations during the occupation.[262] American agencies explicitly recognised that the textual and institutional components of its imposed political infrastructure would fail without bolstering "the grassroots," especially in Sunni-majority regions.[263] The independence and autonomy of such grassroots organisations therefore appears dubious. As explicit projects of the US occupation and the Iraqi state, civil society organisations are better understood as loosely connected subsidiaries of the state, forming a key part of its newly engineered political system.

The production of a strong civil society, with a healthy relationship to the state, also necessitated the fostering of a new subjectivity, an Iraqi citizen as active participant in appropriate modes of political and market behaviour. Much of this effort was facilitated through the newly formed civil society networks. But the state and US occupation also sought to more directly shape subjectivities through mass education. A major civic education programme was devised to teach Iraqis "the benefits of living in a free democracy," and to be "better citizens."[264] This education project aimed to garner respect for the post-Ba'ath political system, naturalising its various infrastructural components as correct and virtuous. The CPA, and later the Embassy and USAID, recognised that the success or failure of the "democratization program would ultimately

[261] Ferguson and Gupta, "Spatializing States", 993.
[262] SIGIR, *Learning from Iraq*, 108.
[263] Morrow, "Iraq's Constitutional Process II", 22.
[264] SIGIR, *Learning from Iraq*, 108.

depend on the people of Iraq."[265] Regardless of the efficacy of the formal political infrastructure, Iraqi citizens themselves would have to act appropriately in performing the routines that would make Iraq resemble a liberal market democracy. Civic education created norms and standards of political and social behaviour, backed by the power of expertise. Fostering adherence to these norms promoted a specifically liberal citizenry, aware of and practicing their responsibilities in a democratic society.

To this end, the US opened "democracy centers" around the country, which provided civic education and resources to new political parties, individual citizens, and civil society organisations.[266] Access to educational opportunities and resources acted as incentives to these organisations and individuals, shaping their conduct. US-run 'democracy centres' chose to favour secular and "pro-democratic" organisations in their intervention, which further produced standards of proper political behaviour by disincentivising and condemning religious or 'anti-democratic' politics.[267] Despite the US efforts to create an Iraqi politics free of religious sentiment, the 2005 elections cemented sect as the basis of party segmentation. While US 'democracy centres' and civil society programmes attempted to foster a secular political subjectivity, other agents of the US state were actively organising Iraqi politics around sect. As mentioned, the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) members were hand-picked to conform to the CPA's understanding of Iraqi religious identity. As some bodies of the US state sought to erase religious sectarianism from Iraqi life, others sought to concretise it as an ordering principle in party politics.

Attempts by the US to reengineer civil society and Iraqi subjectivities to correspond to the larger political system met consistent hindrance and challenge. Iraqis were often unwilling to allow the occupation its desired interventions at the most intimate levels of subjectivity and voluntary association. In the difficult decades of the Iran-Iraq War, the Gulf War, international sanctions, and consistent coalition airstrikes, nonstate infrastructures of solidarity and survival had emerged. Particularly during the 1990s, the power of the Ba'athist state was weakened through isolation and political leverage. The resultant vacuum was filled by religious institutions, smuggling networks that provided

[265] Dobbins, Jones, Mohandas and Runkle, "Occupying Iraq", 282.
[266] *Ibid.*, 283.
[267] *Ibid.*, 283.

much-needed resources, and social networks to facilitate aid. The Ba'athist state's destruction was completed in 2003, but the informal political networks that had arisen as a result of its earlier weakening continued to operate. Although they had largely been empowered as a result of the US efforts to leverage the Iraqi state during the 1990s, in the post-2003 era these social infrastructures functioned to obstruct the efforts of the US occupation.

Much as social and semiotic communities had resisted US efforts to establish networks of microfinance as an economic development paradigm, these same communities functioned as substate political networks that resisted not only the formal constitution and institutional structure, but also interventions in civil society. Many communities near borders, particularly the Syrian border, continued to rely on cross-border smuggling, which had arisen as a direct result of the 1990s sanctions.[268] This economic activity produced novel political infrastructures to distribute resources autonomously from the state. Considerations over smuggling at times created affinities with al-Qaeda, hindering US-formulated civil society efforts to dampen the insurgency. Eventually, multiple Sunni tribes turned against al-Qaeda as it began to compete against their smuggling enterprises, resulting in the Anbar Awakening.[269] The Awakening marked a turning point in the war, severely weakening the insurgency. This turn was a result of economic contingencies and substate political alliances, which operated outside the formal infrastructures of liberal democracy.

Political activity through religious and tribal networks was common, most clearly evident in the wide variety of militias operating throughout the country in the lead up to the Surge. The military defeat of the Ba'athist state, followed by its dissolution through the de-Ba'athification Orders, produced the space in which substate actors could take on increasing governance capacities. US interventions, guided by state-building discourse, sought to create a governance system based on a formal state, with supporting roles from civil society and an appropriate form of citizenry. But Iraqis nonetheless organised much of their political activity through substate actors. Militias, tribal groupings, and religious networks tended to have greater local legitimacy than

[268] Matthew Levitt, "Foreign Fighters and Their Economic Impact: A Case Study of Syria and al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 3(3) (2009), 16.
[269] McCary, "The Anbar Awakening", 48.

the formal state in the eyes of Iraqis, and hence they were often trusted with dispute settlement and the distribution of resources.[270] Despite the production of new civil society networks to channel citizen participation into appropriate channels, and the fostering of a subjectivity that would separate the public from the private, the US occupation could not enhance the legitimacy of the Iraqi state. Substate actors emerged to challenge the state-building paradigm, their local legitimacy allowing them to further undermine assertions of sovereignty by the US and GOI.

CONCLUSION

The US occupation of Iraq attempted to produce in Iraq a political system modelled on the western vertical structure of state-civil society-citizenry. Its first task was to produce a constitution that would align with this image. Its draft of the TAL was translated into the permanent constitution, and its selected international experts guided the entire process, with the final text largely conforming to American demands. But textual and institutional actors are only parts of a political infrastructure, and hence training programmes had to be devised in order to set the norms and standards by which the labour and expertise of the assemblage would continuously follow the routines necessary in stabilising the political assemblage.

As Iraq slipped deeper into militia and insurgent violence, it became more clear that state-building had failed, its produced infrastructures incapable of stemming the tide of violence, even facilitating such violence. The US occupation and Iraqi state realised that more than the formal state alone had to be re-engineered. In a desperate attempt to make Iraq perform as a liberal democratic society, US and Iraqi actors sought to produce a civil society that would mediate the political demands of the citizenry, channelling their political frustrations into the appropriate forms of political participation. But this would also require the fostering of a new Iraqi subjectivity, a liberal citizen that would actively participate in secular public life while maintaining a strict distinction between public life and the interiorised private self of religious and emotional conviction. Traditionally focusing on formal governance, state-building broadened its scope, its objects of intervention now including the most intimate sites of personal identity and

[270] Ranj Alaaldin, "Sectarianism, Governance, and Iraq's Future," Brookings Doha Center Analysis Paper, Number 24, November 2018, 22.

social interaction. These efforts too were built upon previous infrastructures, and the social and semiotic communities of religious, tribal, and militia leadership that had grown stronger in the preceding decades challenged the US attempts to reengineer Iraqi society, continuing political activity that ran counter to the dictates of state-building discourse.

Conclusion

The US occupation of Iraq lasted for nine years, despite the state's commitment to a quick project of "liberate and leave."[271] US agencies attempted to reconstruct Iraq's technical infrastructure, ranging from electricity and water to credit and the constitution. By leading the reconstruction efforts, the US could enable forms of action at a distance, translating its political and economic objectives into material, institutional, and textual infrastructures. The infrastructures of post-Ba'ath Iraq were therefore not produced as socially neutral, but instead imbued with the values and cultural assumptions of American liberal market democracy. Their agency as technical actants allowed US decisions to remain embedded in Iraq's material environment long after US withdrawal, conducting Iraqi conduct in the absence of human intervention. Much as a speed bump can regulate driver behaviour without the presence of a police officer, US-built infrastructures sought to shape the field of actions available to Iraqis in their daily lives, economic activities, and political involvement.[272] This dissertation has interrogated the black boxes of post-invasion Iraqi infrastructure constructions, challenging the neutrality of the technical to examine the social, political, and economic objectives embodied by technical actants.

The US could not autonomously produce these infrastructures of occupation. Its autonomy and sovereignty were continuously contested by material and social actors, revealing the impossibility of sovereignty as traditionally conceptualised. Despite their

[271] SIGIR, *Learning from Iraq*, 72.
[272] Latour, "On Technical Mediation", 39.

severely damaged state, Iraq's pre-invasion infrastructures continued to exist, shaping the agency of the occupation and the GOI. Infrastructural decisions made long ago, by Ba'ath and even pre-Ba'ath planners, determined the possible infrastructures that could be produced following the invasion. The infrastructure reconstruction programme had to contend with the transportation routes, electrical grid, political sentiment, and financial behaviours built previously, their form guiding the shape of new constructions. The US state did not wield absolute sovereignty; its infrastructural choices were dependent upon the affordance of Iraq's material environment.

Exasperated by sustained insurgency, material challenges, and popular political resistance, American reconstruction agencies sought to reengineer not only formal infrastructural assemblages, but also Iraqi subjectivities and social bonds. The US envisioned the formation of post-Ba'ath Iraq as a liberal market democracy, which would require not only the appropriate infrastructures and institutions, but also a citizenry able to exercise its responsibilities in a liberal society. To defeat the insurgency and form a new liberal subject, the reconstruction programme shifted away from large, national projects, instead focusing on the production of local, small-scale infrastructures projects. These local initiatives were formulated as a 'non-lethal counterinsurgency' strategy, aiming to win hearts and minds in the communities most affected by insurgent activity.[273]

Material infrastructure reconstruction became focused on the local needs of distinct communities, paying particular attention to Sunni regions. Small-scale reconstruction was meant to generate employment and provide basic services, draining the political and economic reserves of insurgent groups. This was accompanied by the production of a microfinance network, which through "Solidarity Lending" practices aimed to conduct the financial behaviour of the Iraqi poor, fostering an entrepreneurial subjectivity. By adopting new calculative technologies, Iraqi MFIs were able to render themselves calculable, economising themselves and their borrowers. The market devices of standardised accounting and reporting standards enabled international creditors to measure the economic value and risk of these institutions, incorporating them into the global financial system as assets. To facilitate the continuation of a liberal democracy,

[273] SIGIR, *Learning from Iraq*, 111-2.

Iraq's financialised subjects also had to practice politics through the appropriate channels. As newly liberal citizens, their political sentiments were to be expressed through voting and civil society participation. The occupation therefore produced, funded, and supported numerous new civil society organisations, with the hope that they would act as a buffer between the state and citizenry. Public education programmes, often implemented through US-funded civil society, taught Iraqis their roles and responsibilities in a liberal democratic system, attempting to deconstruct the political and social networks through which they had previously expressed political sentiment. Despite this, other US state agents sought to actively reproduce and solidify the sectarianism that public education campaigns worked to eliminate, revealing the state's composition as an assemblage of distinct agents with differing, or even competing interests.

As with the construction of material infrastructures, the occupation's attempts to foster a new Iraqi subjectivity were continually subverted and challenged. Infrastructure-as-counterinsurgency projects were targets for consistent insurgent attacks and sabotage. The economising effects of microfinance and its attendant market devices clashed with pre-existing economic and religious epistemologies, mounting significant resistance to networks of small-scale lending. And despite widespread new civil society networks and public education, Iraqis continued to practice politics outside of the formal channels of liberal democracy. Despite its immense political, economic, and military might, the US state's sovereignty and autonomy in reengineering subjectivity were challenged at every step, the outcome of these efforts determined by interaction with local social and material actants. US foreign policy was therefore negotiated and created not in the halls of Washington D.C., but in the local interactions of heterogeneous actors throughout Iraq.

The US occupation of Iraq enrolled technical actors in its imperial project, their agency allowing actions that human agency alone was incapable of. The technical was not socially neutral, but embodied the objectives of an occupying power, encoded with the values of liberal market democracy. But while US expertise repeatedly attempted to frame technical actors as unquestionable black boxes, Iraqis recognised the social role of these actors. Technical infrastructures became sites of intense political contestation, with consistent Iraqi resistance to their role in perpetuating imperial power. The

infrastructural reconstruction programme shifted towards the production of small-scale, community infrastructures, enrolling local material and social actors in counterinsurgency and the fostering of new subjectivities. As imperial power's object of intervention transitioned from the state to the subject, Iraqis responded in kind, mounting resistance on the new battlegrounds of subject-formation, social organisation, and community cohesion, subverting US intervention in the most intimate aspects of life and revealing the impossibility of absolute state sovereignty.

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