

LIBERAL PEACEBUILDING IN IRAQ AFTER 2003 ACCORDING TO THE CONSERVATIVE MODEL: AN EVALUATION STUDY

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Introduction

The attempt to change Iraq politically and economically is criticized or supported by pointing to almost the same examples of Germany and Japan reconfigured under US occupation or as other examples such as Cambodia, East Timor and Kosovo reconfigured under UN control. However, Iraq is a unique case and deserves a unique approach in studying and analyzing its case. It is distinguished from the postwar success stories of Germany and Japan where the formation of democracy was not the original war goal of the Allied Powers. His society also differs from post-conflict societies controlled by the UN such as Cambodia and East Timor where protracted civil war escalated over entrenched ethnic, socioeconomic or religious dynamics. Moreover, the primary task of these countries was the effective establishment of internal peace and stability rather than the promotion of democracy. However, the primary task of the Iraq issue is democratic intervention, which is military action by outside powers in order to democratize the target political system. Iraq also deserves a unique approach because of its three factors that come above all others. First, Iraq has a historical background with totalitarian regime structures characterized by a command economy, one party, one ideology, and a state-dominated force. Secondly, Iraq is a rentier state, as it is oil that guarantees the country's political and economic strength. Third, Iraq is a failed state with multi-ethnic and multi-sectarian dynamics.

In this research, we will try to study and analyze the most prominent pillars of building liberal peace in Iraq, in addition to analyzing the reasons for the failure of the experiment.

Keywords: *liberal peace, Iraq, democracy, democratize, dynamics.*

First: The occupation of Iraq and the Peacebuilding process

More than a decade after the intervention, and the subsequent three rounds of elections, Iraq was one of the most dangerous and corrupt countries in the world. At this point, experts are questioning the feasibility of a liberal international Peacebuilding approach. From an international point of view, elections give political leaders the legitimacy to take over the rule of the country and exercise power. To create a legitimate government for international purposes, elections are often conducted as individual events and then the international community gradually withdraws, leaving behind an internationally recognized new or old regime without domestic legitimacy. Local actors are categorized into negative categories such as “recipients” or “victims”⁽¹⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Jawad, S., The Iraqi constitution: structural flaws and political implications. LSE Middle East Centre Paper Series, 2013, p.21

After the US invasion of Iraq, US policy was based on the idea that superior military power would soon be satisfactory for regime change, and thus the US introduced democratization under the guidance of President Bush. In other words, regime change and state reform can be achieved through the use of military force. To ensure the achievement of these goals, liberal peace-building was the first principle of rebuilding Iraq through the creation of liberal democracy and the free market⁽²⁾.

Here, Ronald Paris believes that the democratic and economic transformation in war-torn societies may cause unexpected consequences in which peace may be exposed to internal risks. War-torn societies may suffer from other serious ills, including: the problem of “bad” civil society, the behavior of opportunistic “ethnic entrepreneurs,” the danger of elections serving as focal points of destructive societal competition, the danger posed by local “spoilers,” and the disruptive and conflict-inducing outcomes of liberation Economy⁽³⁾.

Together, the reasons that may make the process of transition to democracy and a free economy significantly destructive are the severe societal conflicts, the lack of real brakes on those conflicts, as well as the fragility of government institutions that show the weakness of war-torn countries⁽⁴⁾. A security dilemma can also arise in which societal groups do not rely on the state to protect them from enemies due to ineffective institutions. At this point, some groups can arrange organizations to defend themselves. In this situation, some other competing groups mobilize to protect themselves. This situation could lead to ethnic or sectarian war. Hence, the position of Ronald Paris indicates the importance of real institutionalization before embarking on building liberal peace and strengthening the foundations of democracy, and this did not happen in the case of Iraq⁽⁵⁾.

In Iraq, the primary priority of the US-led coalition in Iraq has been to rebuild the state and legitimize the control of violence. More importantly, the establishment of a legitimate public authority with satisfactory autonomy for the occupiers and the local community and the inclusion of diverse ethnic and religious communities was the primary goal of that alliance⁽⁶⁾. However, the CPA applied universal liberal principles to transform the Iraqi state without considering the circumstances of Iraq, which faced 13 years of harsh sanctions and three wars for twenty years. Hence, the mechanisms provided by the Coalition Provisional Authority were not sufficient to maintain the Iraqi state, its security and stability⁽⁷⁾. In this sense, Sultan Barakat points out that “uniquely, Iraq has been deliberately dismantled in order to rebuild it into a new

(2) Mac Ginty, R., Routine peace: Technocracy and Peacebuilding. *Cooperation and Conflict*, 47(3), 2012, p.289

(3) Yousif, B., Coalition economic policies in Iraq: Motivations and outcomes. *Third World Quarterly*, 27(3), 2006, p.491–505

(4) Paris, R., *At War's end: Building peace after civil conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p.159

(5) *Ibid.* p.168

(6) Paris, R., *Op.cit.* p.171

(7) Luckham, R., The international community and state reconstruction in war-torn societies. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 4(3), 2004, p.497

paradigm”⁽⁸⁾. In this sense, the legitimacy of the entire liberal Peacebuilding agenda is called into question if viewed as a modality to the dominant US agenda. In this regard, Richmond and Pogodda saw that “peace dominated by liberal Peacebuilding depends on external support and international legitimacy, not domestic legitimacy. It results in a peace of poor quality in the local context”⁽⁹⁾.

Second: Evaluation of the process of liberal peacebuilding in Iraq after 2003

It is possible to identify the most important points that contributed to the failure of the liberal peace-building process in Iraq as follows:

- (1) Democratic transition reform is considered an important remedy for resolving ethnic conflicts in post-conflict societies by the international community. According to the United Nations, democratization constitutes a holistic approach that covers a wide range of new Peacebuilding priorities: top-down international election management, institutional management, and economic management; Also helping from the bottom up to create and promote a democratic political culture through community building⁽¹⁰⁾. Thus, in post-conflict societies, holding elections is the essential first stage towards the formation of an effective political system and representative democracy.

The institutionalization of free and fair elections ensures the building of a democratic culture. Most importantly, holding elections and drafting a constitution helps create a new government structure by forming legal and institutional roots. However, although electoral systems are the tools that have the potential to effect positive change in building peace, elections or the drafting of constitutions cannot easily take place in socially divided and politically polarized societies. Therefore, they - those in charge of the liberal Peacebuilding process - do not always guarantee a stable political system if there are weak social institutions, and they may promote divisive politics while further accentuating ethnic divisions⁽¹¹⁾.

In this sense, although the democratic process presented important moments for post-conflict Iraq, it can be said that the project of liberal democracy failed at certain points in post-conflict Iraq. It created a problem of legitimacy due to the absence of progressive social change. In other words, the social, economic, religious and ethnic dynamics were not taken into consideration by the model of liberal democracy in Iraq.

- (2) The model applied in Iraq - the conservative one - does not regulate the relationship between modern and traditional institutions. Therefore, this model chooses to create liberal institutions by intervening in repressed societies. Such intervention does not take into account their distinctive historical, political and economic features. On the other hand, the model of slow democratization highlights the strengthening of the capacity of the state and its institutions. Moreover, it entails a culture of citizenship that enhances

⁽⁸⁾ Dodge, T., Intervention and dreams of exogenous state building: The application of Liberal Peacebuilding in Afghanistan and Iraq. *Review of International Studies*, 39(5), 2013, p.1211

⁽⁹⁾ Barakat, S., Post-Saddam Iraq: Deconstructing a regime, reconstructing an Third World Quarterly, 26(4–5), 2005, p.567

⁽¹⁰⁾ Luckham, R., Op.cit. p.485

⁽¹¹⁾ Richmond, O., Pogodda, S., & Ramovic, J. (Eds.). *The palgrave handbook of disciplinary and regional approaches to peace* (1st ed. 2016 edition), Palgrave Macmillan. P.20

the efficiency of the state and the work of administrative institutions⁽¹²⁾. Thus, legitimacy is guaranteed and the ethnic and religious structures in society are taken into account. However, the ideological devotion of the United States to the model of rapid democratization creating problems of legitimacy can be seen in the representative structure and constitution-making process of post-conflict Iraq.

- (3) The representative structure created by the Coalition Authority has increased mistrust and ethnic and sectarian separatism in post-conflict Iraq. The Coalition Provisional Authority began the de-Baathification process. This process has been affected by sectarian politics⁽¹³⁾.
- (4) The Coalition Provisional Authority devoted itself to forming the elite in the ruling structures. The Governing Council formed by the CPA in July 2003 consisted of thirteen Shiites, five Sunni Arabs, five Kurds, one Turkmen, and one Assyrian. However, most of them are those who lived in exile and opposed Saddam Hussein's regime. In this sense, the United States was deeply sympathetic to the Iraqi National Congress, one of the main opposition groups in exile in Iraq. Ahmed Chalabi and his prominent supporters who have no ideological or institutional lines in Iraq⁽¹⁴⁾.

On the other hand, the new elites - the bulk of the council members - shaped politics on the basis of "us as a group". In this case, the new elite were legitimized because it had the right to rule the country. However, the new elite created by the occupier have limited administrative capabilities and an unclear vision of the future shape of the state. Moreover, these ruling elite were seen as pursuing its own self-interest, rather than focusing on reconstruction and rebuilding the state. In this regard, both of them were denied the support of all Iraqis and were not recognized by the people. In this sense, the CPA preferred to cooperate with key members of the Governing Council rather than remain neutral in the electoral process. This method illustrates the distorted nature of the US liberal peace-building process in Iraq⁽¹⁵⁾.

- (5) Political parties have tried to gain clients by distributing benefits to their supporters in the absence of the state. Political parties were able to guarantee jobs, security, or direct access to resources for loyal people because of their control over state institutions. Moreover, political parties with representation on the Transitional Governing Council were treated as mediators between the local population and the CPA. This type of brokerage is observed mainly in the field of work. It was better to take a letter of recommendation (recommendation) from the parties affiliated with the Coalition Provisional Authority to obtain priority in employment through participation in parties or giving money⁽¹⁶⁾.

⁽¹²⁾ Richmond, O., Pogodda, S., & Ramovic, J. (Eds.). Op.cit. p.23

⁽¹³⁾ Jeong, H. W., *Peacebuilding in post conflict societies*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner. 2005, P.114-115

⁽¹⁴⁾ Bridoux, J., & Russell, M., *Liberal democracy promotion in Iraq: A model for the Middle East and North Africa?* *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 9(3), 2013, p.327-346

⁽¹⁵⁾ Hampson, O & Mendeloff, D., *Intervention and the nation building debate*. In A. Crocker, & F. O. Hampson, & A. Pamela, editors (Eds.), *Leashing the dogs of war: conflict management in a divided world*. Washington, D.C: United States Institute of Peace. 2007, P.688

⁽¹⁶⁾ Ghanim, D., *Iraq's dysfunctional democracy*. Santa Barbara, Calif: Praeger, 2011. P.82

- (6) Other than the representative structure, the constitution-making process was primarily shaped by the occupier. The assembly chose the body responsible for drafting the permanent constitution. Moreover, they set restrictions and directly interfered in constitutional negotiations to protect American interests. The process of preparing and writing the constitution, which consists of two procedures, had contentious points in terms of ethnic and sectarian dynamics. One of the most important features of this constitution was leading to a radical change in the form of the state itself by adopting federalism in contradiction to the highly centralized totalitarian model that existed before 2003⁽¹⁷⁾.
- (7) Another aspect that caused the failure of liberal Peacebuilding in Iraq after 2003 was the liberal market. After the invasion, the new economic dynamics that were built within the framework of liberal Peacebuilding directed local actors to seek legitimacy in the economic sphere, in contrast to what was previously reported. It existed before 2003. The US strategy focused on the comprehensive freedom of movement of labor and capital, the reorganization of foreign trade, and the privatization of state institutions. These reforms have made the Iraqi economy one of the most open - unprotected - and unregulated economies in the world. This situation prevailed in Iraq, and the Iraqi popular support for the economic liberalization program was not secured. As indicated by an International Republican Institute poll in Iraq in November 2004, 65% of the population agreed with an important role for the state in the economy, and only 5% wanted a lesser economic function for the state.

Moreover, dependence on the oil economy continued in the rentier Iraqi state after 2003. Neither the private sector nor the state could adopt an effective development process, and they directed the new allocation of resources according to sectarian, ethnic and partisan affiliations. According to a 2014 World Bank report, there has been no shift in the structure of Iraq's GDP, and the share of oil rents in GDP has remained generally stable from the mid-1990s to the present, despite the turbulent events that occurred during this period⁽¹⁸⁾.

In this sense, the formation of the neo-liberal rentier system could not achieve great success. Rather, the expansion of the rentier economy led to the loss of opportunities for economic reconstruction. State intervention was highly restricted, protections were lacking, and the state was seen as the recipient of rents. In this sense, the abundance of natural resources enhances the struggle for state power. Natural resources have also been used to finance the state's excessive public spending instead of maintaining its investment capacity⁽¹⁹⁾. Moreover, the expansion of the rentier economy formed sectarian patronage, and led to an increase in corruption in the country⁽²⁰⁾.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Bremer, P. L. & McConnell, M., *My Year in Iraq: The struggle to build a future of hope*. London: Threshold Editions. 2006, P.203

⁽¹⁸⁾ Marr, P., *Iraq's identity crisis*. In D. M. Malone & M. E Bouillon & B Rowswell (Eds.), *Iraq: Preventing a new generation of conflict*. Boulder:Lynne Rienner Pub. 2007, p.303

⁽¹⁹⁾ Costantini, I., *State building in the Middle East and North Africa: The aftermath of regime change*. Routledge, 2018, p.64

⁽²⁰⁾ *Ibid.* p.71

- (8) Although violence is not a unique case in the history of Iraq, the remarkable rise in the curve of political violence is unique, and this was a result of the political developments in 2004 and 2005⁽²¹⁾. In other words, shortcomings in political participation have fueled the conflicts in Iraq. In general, and in post-conflict societies, first: when the political process is considered illegitimate by any group, their inclination to participate is not realized. Second, if the desired outcome is not achieved, groups are likely to find fault with the system. In this sense, if they ignore the order, they are liable to participate in the conflict. Third, if groups feel that their desires and viewpoints are not being taken care of, and that their needs are not guaranteed, they look for new alternatives to reach their goals⁽²²⁾. This is what happened in Iraq after 2003 and plunged the country into a cycle of continuous violence.

Conclusion

According to the foregoing, it is noted that the liberal Peacebuilding agenda that began in 2003 represented hybrid policies that led, at best, to a negative hybrid peace that often relies on hybrid forms of policies that consolidate existing power structures and hierarchies. As the International Crisis Group report refers to the lack of the local element in Peacebuilding in post-conflict Iraq, local participation was insufficient and there were dozens of lapses and mistakes: wrong priorities, a separation between Iraqi aspirations and rebuilding efforts, missed opportunities to empower Iraqis, and reform their institutions. More generally, strengthening local capabilities. What made matters worse was the recognition by foreign powers of the interests of the elites, and the reformulation of Iraqi politics on the basis of sectarian lines. It is worth noting that, although the United States was officially declaring that it sought to transform Iraq into a democratic model, it was at the same time showing vengeful policies that contributed to strengthening the division between the sects of Iraqi society. Once the CPA took control of the country, it dissolved the Iraqi army, terminated the jobs of 50,000 bureaucrats and shut down state-owned enterprises. In this sense, the United States dismantled the Iraqi state and led to a deep security vacuum and new administrative turmoil.

The democratization in which all segments of society accept free and fair elections requires a prior homogeneity of the population. Without this, the election results are unlikely to be recognized and may cement either to start or return to factional conflict. This claim can be seen after the 2005 elections in Iraq. Moreover, the constitution does not reveal a national consensus due to the lack of negotiation and the exclusion of specific social groups from its writing process.

In addition to the foregoing, the market shock therapy conducted by the Coalition Provisional Authority, which refers to the desire of external powers to rebuild Iraq's economy, deeply strengthened and raised sectarian fissures that reinforced insecurity because it was clear that its policies were inappropriate to Iraq's economic and political conditions, ignoring social fissures and constraints.

⁽²¹⁾ Looney, R. E., Reconstruction and Peacebuilding under extreme adversity: The problem of pervasive corruption in Iraq. *International Peacekeeping*, 15(3), 2008, p.428

⁽²²⁾ Kuoti, Y., Exclusion and violence in post-2003 Iraq. *Journal of International Affairs*, 69(2), 19. 2016, p.45

In this sense, these reforms were unfavorable and detrimental to the domestic recovery in the labor and welfare sectors. It has alienated local populations and discouraged a sense of local ownership of the Peacebuilding process.

In post-conflict Iraq, state-society relations were directed by sectarian leaders, who gained their legitimacy from the representation of their groups, rather than by ordinary citizens due to the political environment shaped by the occupier. Wozniak has called this kind of effort "ideological blindness." This is what causes the problem of legitimacy.

In this sense, the attempt to build peace that was built according to hybrid policies has led to taking the trend towards negative hybrid peace in post-conflict Iraq where peace is neither liberal nor liberating. As the state became externally dependent and subject to international capital. In this sense, a hybrid political system is built in which national elites rule the country for international interests. It is questioned whether there was truly local hybridization because Western powers often ensured the political system, constitution, and economic structure. At this stage, Peacebuilding attempts focused on rapid political and economic transformation without concern for local legitimacy, and thus, did not produce an effective state or sustainable peace as emphasized by Campell and Peterson.

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