Disciplining movement:

State sovereignty in the context of Iraqi migration to Syria

Sophia Hoffmann

This thesis is submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
School of Oriental & African Studies
University of London
2011

Declaration

2

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own. All sources have been indicated in the footnotes and all assistance has been acknowledged. All errors remain mine.

<u>Signature</u>

Abstract

In most academic writing on state sovereignty, it is considered as a special, abstract form of independent power. This thesis considers sovereignty from a historical and anthropological perspective, arguing that it is a certain form of social and political organisation through which the state's power is performed and maintained as natural. This organisation and maintenance rests on particular, powerful ideas, for example on the assumed unity of territory, government and population, and on certain values about what constitutes politics and a fulfilled human life.

By analysing the management of Iraqi migrants in Damascus through state and humanitarian institutions, this thesis shows the daily-life bureaucratic and violent practices through which state sovereignty became a reality in this context. The analysis emphasises that state sovereignty exists as an imagined 'ideal', as reflected in international law or world maps, and as a much more complex, context-dependant, lived reality. The differences between the way that humanitarian agencies considered Iraqi migrants from the perspective of the 'ideal', and the way Syrian state institutions governed Iraqi migrants according to very different standards, highlighted this distinction.

Methodologically, this thesis calls for, and attempts to provide, a hermeneutic approach to social inquiry, in which empirical evidence underpins arguments about theory. Ethnography and interviews in Syria were used to collect in-depth information about the lives of Iraqi migrants, and the interventions and programmes through which Iraqi migration was being managed, in 2009 and 2010.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

For his unfailing and borderless love, his happiness and energy, his ambition, his surprises and his belief in me I wish to thank my wonderful husband Theodore Murphy, who buoyed and energised me throughout the PhD. I feel deeply grateful and wildly lucky to have found your companionship Theo, and I look forward to many more adventures together!

My brother, Lorenz and my parents Reimer and Heidrun as always gave their consistent love and care, always ready to speak on the phone, be it to London, Damascus, Amman or Geneva. They surprised with thoughtful and generous gifts and, together with my grandparents, provided a crucial backbone of familiar relationships that has kept me confident and happy since a very early age, and during this PhD. I thank them deeply.

Finally, I wish to extend a big hug and a big thank you to my network of friends in the UK, Germany, Switzerland and the rest of the world, for keeping me social, happy, loved and well fed and for sharing with me the stories of their lives. Without all of you, this PhD process would have been a struggle, instead of a pleasure.

Note on Translation and Transliteration

This thesis follows the Arabic transliteration rules from the International Journal of Middle East Studies.

Whenever well-known English names were available for place names, the names of persons or names of institutions these have been used.

Certain colloquial phrases particular to the Syrian dialect, such as the French word *serviis* used for a collective taxi, have been transliterated to approximate their local pronunciation.

All translations from Arabic are my own.

Chapter 1

State Sovereignty in the academic Literature

This thesis analyses the social production of state sovereignty in a particular setting, that of Iraqi migration to Syria. Its analysis draws on international relations and political theory, anthropology, historical sociology, human geography and regional and migration studies. Ethnographic data collected during long-term field research provides the empirical base. This multi-disciplinary approach has a clear goal: to combine theoretical and empirical investigation in order to answer the key research question: how was state sovereignty maintained as an idea and as a lived experience in the management of Iraqi migration to Syria?

The ethnographic fieldwork conducted for this study necessarily localizes it in a particular, geographical place, that of Damascus, Syria. However the international interventions taking place in the field of Iraqi migration mean that this study also allows for the drawing of some wider conclusions about the agents and practices that maintain sovereignty globally. These interventions involved numerous states participating in the resettlement of Iraqi refugees, receiving Iraqis as skilled migrants, or funding aid programmes aimed at Iraqi refugees. Further, the UN's High Commissioner for Refugees ('UNHCR'), which played a central role in the management of Iraqis in Damascus, brought to bear the global, humanitarian, refugee regime, which contains a large body of legal, moral and technical regulations based on state sovereignty. The framing of Iraqi migration as a humanitarian crisis led to the involvement of a small but significant group of international NGOs, whose writings and programs also reflected the beliefs and practices of the global humanitarian sector and its understanding of sovereignty.

This thesis aims to overcome the difficult 'inside-outside' distinction that sovereignty creates; 'inside' referring to the domestic and 'outside' to what lies beyond. Academia usually replicates this sovereign divide, reflected in the two disciplines International Relations (focused on the 'outside') and Comparative Politics (focused on the

'inside'). But these two abstract spaces are created by and within the same system of meaning - state sovereignty - and it is this system of meaning, and its maintenance, that needs to be studied in itself, if a stronger understanding and theory of sovereignty is to be developed. Replicating the inside/outside distinction by accepting it as a starting point, as so many international relations and political science scholars do, will necessarily limit any analysis of sovereignty, which straddles the divide. Instead, what this thesis does, is to show the practices and beliefs through which inside and outside are produced as separate spheres of action, and how state sovereignty is constructed quite differently in each sphere, and serves distinct (yet connected) power structures. The inside (or domestic) sphere is constructed through context dependent state-government-population relations that create distinct forms of governance on the territory of different states. The outside (or international) sphere is constructed through much for standardised and ritualised interactions based on the sovereign ideal and its underlying myths of popular self-determination and the equality of all states.

A crucial element in this conceptual 'straddling' of inside and outside is the idea of the nation. The globe's 'national topography' retains a powerful hold on domestic and international political imaginaries, and provides an important intellectual and emotional justification for state sovereignty. This thesis provides insights into how national identity was enforced and wielded as a fundamental marker and distributor of rights in the programs of some organisations focused on Iraqis migrants. Yet it also demonstrates the contradictions that daily life in Syria presented to national identity, which, in practice, often mattered little to Iraqi existence in Damascus. Most notably Syrian state institutions, but also other actors, did not mobilise nationality as a defining feature for Iraqi existence abroad. By examining such 'peaks and valleys' of the national topography, the thesis is able to argue that while the idea of the nation indeed forms a basis for the sovereign ideal, and is a crucial element for the international bureaucracy of sovereignty, it played a much weaker role in Syria's domestic space, where daily life was rather shaped by other forms of power that applied to all persons on Syrian territory regardless of their nationality.

State sovereignty, and the particular way that it is understood at this moment in time, is a political rationality that structures people's lives and that is a currently hegemonic form for exercising politics. This thesis thus considers sovereignty as a form of social and political organisation that relies on entrenched ideas about the social relations that

make up political space. These include, for example, ideas about the relationship between territory and government, about the location and legitimate exercise of power, about the unity of a national population. The development of sovereignty's imaginary of modern politics can be traced back to the European absolutist monarchies of the middle ages, and to social changes through which the power of the monarch became linked to an increasingly defined and limited territory. These medieval origins, which rested on ideas about divine law, can also help explain the sacred and religious motifs that still attach to the sovereign and sovereign power, noted by contemporary theorists as a political theology. In this thesis, sovereignty is not thought about as a mysterious and difficult to identify moment of absolute power, as which it is often analysed and questioned in political theory. Instead sovereignty is understood as a particular way of ordering political society on a global scale, from a perspective informed by international sociology and historical materialism.

Sovereignty exists as an ideal, contained in abstract concepts reproduced in perfection on political maps of the world, or the set-up of the UN general assembly. In these constructions, borders, territories and governments appear as clearly defined and separated, each representing a state, which, as it possesses all these hallmarks, is sovereign. But in daily life, sovereignty appears as a huge array of human actions that confirm or undermine sovereignty. Sovereignty 'on the ground' is created through a continued, enormous field of activity that constantly allocates to humans around the world rewards, identities, documents and punishments in accordance with sovereignty's assumptions.

Herein lies the physical performance of the inside/outside divide: located in different, geographical places humans have to perform different actions, depending on whether these places are designated as their 'inside' or their 'outside'. Showing a passport and buying travel insurance are actions that designate the 'outside'. Paying taxes, voting in national elections and obtaining a passport are actions that designate the 'inside'. It is through differing (and necessarily localized) human actions that, in the physical world, we learn whether we need to imagine a geographical place as an 'inside' or an 'outside'. In this way the ideal of sovereignty is translated into a daily lived experience that has become, where states are strong, so well-established and accepted that it is understood as natural and unquestioned.

But what happens when a large number of human beings decides to ignore the actions required to maintain the physical manifestation of the sovereign ideal? As is so often the case in research, the production of a social norm is most easily observed when it is called in to question. Migration, people on the move, is an aspect of human life that is not easily integrated with the behaviour and activities required by sovereignty, and challenges both sovereignty's ideal and its physical reality. Migration weakens a number of powerful assumptions and imaginations on which the ideal of sovereignty rests, and undermines control over borders, territory and population, which present the most fundamental attributes of sovereignty. It is not surprising therefore that the management and suppression of migrants is a key concern for even the strongest states, which mobilize large administrative systems and brutal violence to ensure that only desirable/legal migrants reach their territory and that those, which disrespect the laws of sovereignty, are kept outside.

Iraqi migration to Syria provided an extraordinarily interesting setting to observe the production of state sovereignty. The reason for this case's particular relevance was the confluence of a number of social arenas in which the production of sovereignty was being carried out in an occasionally conflicting manner. Of relevance to these contradictions was the post-colonial character of the Syrian state, which made the Syrian state itself suspect from the point of view of sovereignty. As will be explained in this thesis, the Syrian state's weak bureaucracy, its heterogeneous population and the prevalence of regional, rather than national identities meant that Iraqi migrants fell into a category that, from the perspective of sovereignty, was vague: neither citizens nor foreigners, with hardly more or less rights than Syrians, but greater access to further migration through their acquired identity as refugees. Considering how Syrian state practices managed and integrated Iraqis into the Syrian body politic, Iraqis blurred sovereign categories of population and borders in a number of ways.

The interventions mounted by UNHCR and international NGOs to manage Iraqi migration reproduced sovereign categories differently than Syrian state structures, mobilising more strongly sovereignty's abstract ideal. Unlike the Syrian state, UNHCR and most NGOs operated fully within the system of meaning prescribed by modern sovereignty and many of their programmes aimed at 'normalising' Iraqi migrants into this system. These programmes revealed techniques of governance used by different actors to structure the lives of Iraqis in accordance with the political

rationality of sovereignty. The interventions also revealed how norms and practices of sovereignty were exercised on Syrian territory by other states and the UN, and how they differed from those prevalent in Syria previously. The burgeoning humanitarian sector in Syria showed interesting examples of how norms are diffused via the humanitarian sector in a post-colonial setting, and showed that sovereignty, rather than waxing and waning, was constantly reconfigured through changing policies, regulations and applications of authority. Given the simultaneously domestic and international character of these interventions they were an especially rich site to study how sovereignty was performed to structure these two spaces.

Definitions and understandings of sovereignty used in this thesis

In academia and in every-day political discourse, the term 'sovereignty' refers to a variety of ideas, concepts and practices. Sovereignty may describe *types* of power (even here the concept is unclear), for example divine power, or the assumed, exclusive control of a state over its territory and population, or, in a Foucauldian sense, a power over life and death, wielded in a cruel and spectacular manner. Yet sovereignty may also describe actions, such as the sovereign right of a state to issue a currency or passports to its citizens. Further, 'sovereignty' can be an attribute of actors, speaking about 'the sovereign' can refer to a monarch (pointing to sovereignty's historical development) or more generally, can describe the power assumed to wield ultimate control over a situation, a territory or a population. Often, 'the sovereign', simply refers to a state.

Going beyond a direct usage of the term, it is important to understand that 'sovereignty' also has a wider, conceptual influence that appears indirectly. For example, sovereignty has a spatial dimension. When people refer to 'Syrian territory' or conversely 'the international', they speak about spaces constructed through their understanding of how state sovereignty shapes the world. Similarly, when national or citizenship identities are invoked, sovereignty's impact on the categorising of people is indirectly mobilised.

This thesis thus firstly argues that 'sovereignty' needs to be understood as a system of meaning, for which the hegemonic belief in the existence and need for a type of power that is sovereign, is the first, and most important premise. Without the belief in (the need for) a foundational, central, all-encompassing and unchanging source of

power, sovereignty would be meaningless as a political ordering principle. This thesis investigates and analyses how aspects of this system of meaning are maintained through hegemonic ideas and daily-life practices.

Secondly, and more specifically, this thesis focuses on the ideas and daily-life practices that maintain *state* sovereignty in the context of large-scale migration, and the national and international management of this migration. As has been highlighted by multiple scholars, state sovereignty is constructed through intricate categorisations of groups and individuals according to a 'national topography', through the bordering of territory and detailed forms of exclusion, many of which focus on migrants and refugees (detailed further below).[1] How such categorisations, borderings and exclusions are created and maintained through localised, daily-life practices has been identified and highlighted by a number of scholars from various disciplines, including by critical, Foucauld-inspired IR authors.

By focusing on the daily-life encounters between Iraqi migrants in Damascus and several national and international actors, this thesis provides significant evidence about how state sovereignty was constructed in these encounters. A key finding of this thesis is that state sovereignty was not a power experienced by Iraqis through the interventions of a single, centralised source (the state). Instead, as has been argued by other critical IR scholars and anthropologists, sovereignty was created through innumerable, often small events carried out by state and non-state institutions focused on managing Iraqi life in Damascus.

The 'definition' of state sovereignty that this thesis uses is therefore as follows. State sovereignty is the hegemonic principle of today's political and social order, according to which the state remains as the central, exclusive power and arbiter of politics. State sovereignty is based on certain categorisations, definitions, exclusions and constructions of people(s) and spaces, which are created through innumerable, daily-life events and encounters. Crucially, these events and encounters do not have to involve state institutions, but are frequently carried out by public or private non-state actors. This latter point reveals that the centrality of the state, on which the order of

---

[1] The term 'national topography' is coined by the American anthropologist Lisa Malkki in her below-cited book *Purity and Exile : Violence, Memory and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania*.

state sovereignty is allegedly based, is not as consistent as the idea (or myth) of state sovereignty would have us believe.

The position of this thesis in the academic literature and its contribution

Before the remainder of this chapter sets out in greater detail the interdisciplinary readings forming the theoretical background of this thesis, the following paragraphs clarify its position within this broad body of work. The arguments that this thesis makes about the construction of state sovereignty through daily-life practices, and about the influence that powerful, international organisations embodying liberal forms of sovereignty have on a local, post-colonial context, position it within the small, but significant, post-structuralist literature on international relations.[2] This literature is characterised by the belief that the origins of the political structures of today's world need to be studied themselves, rather than taken for granted, in order to understand the nature and effects of power. A further, uniting factor of these critical IR writings is the idea that social reality is constructed through human ideas and behaviour, and thus not fixed or natural. It is therefore crucial to investigate, highlight and understand such behaviour, changes to it, and how it affects the way people live their lives, in order to understand how complex political phenomena such as states, borders and sovereignty are upheld. From this position, the techniques of power through which humans are compelled and convinced to behave in accordance with sovereignty, become an important focus of scholarship. This focus connects this literature with the work of the French historian Foucault, whose work on the changing nature of social control wielded by European state authorities since the early middle ages, provides a major inspiration to many post-structuralist IR scholars working on sovereignty today.[3] Through its ethnographical investigation of the varying, changing and changeable social controls applied to Iraqi migrants in Damascus, this thesis is positioned within this Foucauldian tradition.

Within critical IR literature, migration, and the regimes of control brought to bear on migrants, have been recognised as particularly revelatory loci to study how liberal

---

[2] Leading scholars in this field include Didier Bigo, Wendy Brown, David Chandler, Michael Dillon, Roxanne Doty, Vivienne Jabri, Jef Huysman, Marc Salter, Michael Shapiro, R.B.J. Walker.

[3] Some examples of IR engagement with Foucault's theories are Vivienne Jabri, "Michel Foucault's Analytics of War: The Social, the International, and the Racial," *International Political Sociology* 1, no. 1 (2007); Michael Dillon and Andrew Neal, eds., *Foucault on Politics, Security and War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008).

governance functions through bureaucratic routines, bio-political techniques and the categorisation of people.[4] Migrants provide a particularly complex challenge to liberal aspirations to human rights, justice, security and stability. In their attempt to manage this challenge, liberal regimes often reveal their limits and the foundational violence that they are based on. Further, and of particular relevance for students of the international, migrants are a particular focus of (non-military) humanitarian interventions by large and powerful humanitarian organisations based on liberal ideas of rule. This aspect of migration provides IR scholars with the opportunity to study how liberal governance is spread through ostensibly politically neutral actors representing the 'international community as a whole'.

This thesis engages with the existing, critical IR literature on state power and migration, and develops a significant contribution to its arguments by providing unusually in-depth and detailed ethnographic accounts of dozens of specific, daily-life events and encounters through which sovereignty became present and transformed in the context of Iraqi migration to Syria. The thesis' focus on an international, humanitarian effort conducted within a local context in which liberal forms of power were largely absent, provides highly relevant insights into the potential spreading of liberal governance through international, humanitarian organisations. This approach also situates the thesis within the context of critical studies of humanitarian organisations as agents of power, rather than neutral deliverers of services to marginalised populations.[5]

---

[4] See for example Didier Bigo, "Security and Immigration: Toward a Critique of the Governmentality of Unease," Alternatives 27, no. Special Issue (2002); Michael Dillon, "The Scandal of the Refugee – Some Reflections on the "Inter" of International Relations and Continental Thought," in Moral Spaces Rethinking Ethics and World Politics ed. David Campbell and Michael J Shapiro (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); Roxanne Lynn Doty, "States of Exception on the Mexico–U.S. Border: Security, "Decisions," and Civilian Border Patrols," International Political Sociology 1, no. 2 (2007). Jef Huysmans, The Politics of Insecurity: Fear, Migration and Asylum in the EU, New International Relations Series (London: Routledge, 2006). Mark B. Salter, "The Global Visa Regime and the Political Technologies of the International Self: Borders, Bodies, Biopolitics," Alternatives: Global, Local, Political 31, no. 2 (2006). Chandler, David et al. "Assessing the Impact of Foucault on International Relations Roundtable." International Political Sociology 4, no.2 (2010)

[5] Examples of such studies are Mark Duffield, "Development, territories, and people: consolidating the external sovereign frontier," Alternatives 32, no. 2 (2007); Monika Krause, "The logic of relief: Humanitarian NGOs and global governance" (Ph.D., New York University, 2009); Carolina Moulin and Peter Nyers, ""We Live in a Country of UNHCR"—Refugee Protests and Global Political Society," International Political Sociology 1, no. 4 (2007).

The ethnographic approach of the thesis fits with some existing attempts within critical IR to produce empirical evidence on the effect of power on people's lives. Yet the thesis goes further than most of this writing in providing rich, detailed and convincing evidence from interviews and observations to demonstrate firstly, the connection between ideas about sovereignty and its implementation, and secondly, the impact of institutional practices on the lives of individuals, shaping them in conformity with sovereignty. Through its close interweaving of theoretical arguments informed by critical IR writing with ethnographic material, the thesis makes an important contribution to the critical IR field and furthers its arguments by furnishing accessible and strong evidence for their correctness. The thesis convincingly demonstrates that ethnographic method can be an important tool for constructivist scholars, as through ethnographic research, the effects of techniques of power can be observed and collected.

The remainder of this introductory chapter sets out the key literature that this thesis draws on. This literature selection reflects a dominant training in international relations theory; however many sources from other disciplines were used to find ideas and inspiration about how to address the complex puzzle thrown up by the research questions and methods. The reading for this thesis was guided by three considerations: to develop an overview of the intellectual and empirical history of the concept of sovereignty, to understand how authors have analysed sovereignty in connection with migration, and to gain awareness of anthropological studies that investigate the daily practices constructing sovereignty.

The classic approach to sovereignty: locating and justifying absolute power

In line with Gramsci's observation that an epoch's philosophy always reflects its social relations, the Dutch legal scholar Galina Cornelisse argues that since the Middle Ages, the history of the idea of sovereignty and the intellectual enquiry into it has been linked to changes in the distribution and exercise of political power in European societies.[6] The growing power of absolutist monarchs prompted intellectuals to seek explanations and justifications for royal exceptionalism; initially these inquiries were grounded on ideas about divine, and later natural law. A primary

---

[6] Galina Cornelisse, *Immigration Detention and Human Rights Rethinking territorial Sovereignty* (Leiden/Boston: Martin Nijhoff, 2010).

exponent of these early conceptualisations of sovereignty is Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), who was chiefly concerned with strategies to maintain the state and the monarch, and who demonstrates an awareness of the body politic as an abstract entity on which later ideas about sovereignty rest.[7] Yet the first thinker to develop a systematic theory of sovereignty as an indivisible, absolute and independent power, on which political order depended and without which a state's existence was impossible, was the French jurist Jean Bodin (1530–1596). Although Bodin still conflated sovereignty with the personal power of the monarch, who stood above civil law, but was bound by divine/natural law, his theory of sovereignty as supreme and unbound power formed the basis of the modern philosophy of sovereignty.[8] Bodin's locating of sovereign power in a defined, physical location (that of the ruler) can be regarded as one explanation for the methodological problems encountered by post-Enlightenment theorists of sovereignty, who continued struggling to identify the locus of sovereignty, even though the structure of the state had significantly changed since Bodin's times. An historical awareness of how recently territories and associated rights over people and places could be bought, sold, forfeited and regained by private individuals and communities, at a time when sovereignty had not attained today's abstract and unquestionable power, is indispensable for a critical analysis of the concept as it defines politics today. As an example, it was only in 1848 that the King of Prussia was forced to cede a substantial territory (the Neuchatel area) to the Swiss Confederation; Neuchatel had previously *personally* belonged to the king, not forming a part of the territory of the Prussian kingdom.[9]

The increasing territorialisation of royal power in the later middle ages, succeeded to concentrate previously diffuse popular loyalties on the monarch, presented as a single source of state power and identity. Thomas Hobbes' (1588-1679) theory of the sovereign Leviathan presents the intellectual culmination of this development, as an unprecedented call for and description of totalizing state power over a defined people

---

[7] Niccolo Machiavelli and George Anthony Bull, *The prince*, Penguin classics (Penguin, 2006); Lorna Weir, "Sovereignty, governance and the political: the problematic of Foucault," *Thesis eleven* 94, no. 1 (2008).
8 Jean Bodin and Julian H. Franklin, *Bodin: On Sovereignty (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Cornelisse, *Immigration Detention and Human Rights Rethinking territorial Sovereignty*.
9 Jonathan Steinberger, *Why Switzerland?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

and territory.[10] Hobbes' Leviathan does not distinguish between state, government or society and bases a government's legitimacy of rule only on the question of how well it is able to protect its subjects. The unity of the body politic and the (stated) absence of the divine, which continue as hallmarks of current ideas about sovereignty, are recognizable in Hobbes' writings. In these ways, Hobbes and his famous contemporary opponent John Locke (1632-1704), who developed a theory of sovereignty based on constitutionalism and law, signal the approaching Enlightenment. Their mobilisation of human reason as the prime explanation for social order, rather than god, and the centrality they award to the individual, precede the modern conception of men as equal, rational actors.[11]

The revolutions in the USA (1776 – 1788) and in France (1789-1799) served to anchor the idea of popular sovereignty and hastened the formal passage of sovereignty from monarchs to the people. The treaties on popular and community-based sovereignty that accompanied these upheavals rejected absolutist theories and interestingly, although they used the notion of *universal mankind*, popular sovereignty in practice emerged together with nationalism. Cornelisse explains this with the fact that the political reformers of the 18th century operated in a pre-existing territorial framework, in which Christian ideals of universal humanity had already lost ground to territorialising practices of monarchs.[12] In the developing framework of modern states from the 18th century onwards, nationalism and exclusive citizenship became a key source of unity and legitimacy of state rule.

Yet (post)-Enlightenment theorists from Rousseau to Hegel to Schmitt failed to develop a fundamentally new theoretical basis for explaining sovereignty in the rapidly changing social and political context of industrialising Europe. Rather, they present internal critiques of the absolutist project of mercantilist sovereignty and, as anthropologist Ronald Jennings convincingly argues, "remain locked within a political logic that is really meant for breaking down old systems and not for imagining new futures, and the reason for this rests largely in terms of this unitary

---

[10] Thomas Hobbes and J.C.A Gaskin, *Leviathan (Oxford World's Classics)* (Oxford: Oxford Paperbacks, 2008); Ronald C. Jennings, "Sovereignty and political modernity: A genealogy of Agamben's critique of sovereignty," *Anthropological Theory* 11, no. 1; Barry Hindess, *Discourses of power : from Hobbes to Foucault* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).
[11] Cornelisse, *Immigration Detention and Human Rights Rethinking territorial Sovereignty*.
[12] Ibid., pages 44 onwards.

account of power-as-sovereignty in which so much of our thought takes place."[13] Unfortunately, this critique extends to much of what IR and political science has produced on sovereignty in the last two decades. Even critical, constructivist writers, who made important contributions to our understanding of the discourse and exclusions of sovereignty, display a curiously a-historical and un-sociological approach to sovereignty, that allowed sovereignty to retain an ephemeral, quasi-religious quality.[14] The same may be said of the more recent turn by scholars to Carl Schmitt, who might help us perceive the ideas on which sovereignty rests, but do not adequately tackle or explain how these ideas become translated into political structures.[15]

Michel Foucault recognized the extreme focus of political theorists on the location and definition of sovereignty-as-power in the 1970s, calling it an 'obsession' and inviting academics to 'cut off the king's head' in their analysis of political power. [16] To Foucault, the continuing attempts to understand power in terms that were coined in relation to medieval monarchies appear as "utterly incongruous with the new methods of power whose operation is not ensured by right but by technique, not by law but by normalization, not by punishment but by control, methods that are employed on all levels and in forms that go beyond the state and its apparatus."[17] In his later work, Foucault acknowledges the continued relevance of the state as a key mechanism through which modern political life is structured, and draws attention to the development of national exclusivity as a defining feature of state sovereignty. Arguing that in the late 18th century new ways of understanding popular politics, which no longer glorified the sovereign, threatened the dominance of states, Foucault shows how racial purity became a powerful, pro-state idea and racism a tool to

---

[13] Jennings, "Sovereignty and political modernity: A genealogy of Agamben's critique of sovereignty.", page 32

[14] Richard K. Ashley and R. B. J. Walker, "Reading dissidence/writing the disipline - crisis and the question of sovereignty in international studies," *International Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 3 (1990); Jens Bartelson, *A genealogy of sovereignty*, Cambridge studies in international relations ; 39 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Thomas J. Biersteker and Cynthia Weber, *State sovereignty as social construct*, Cambridge studies in international relations ; 46 (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Alexander Wendt and Raymond Duvall, "Sovereignty and the UFO," *Political Theory* 36, no. 4 (2008).

[15] Carl Schmitt, *Political theology : four chapters on the concept of sovereignty*, Studies in contemporary German social thought (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: MIT, 1985).

[16] Michel Foucault, Mauro Bertani, and Alessandro Fontana, *"Society must be defended" : lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76* (London: Allen Lane, 2003).

[17] Michel Foucault and Robert Hurley, *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge v. 1* (London: Penguin, 1998)., page 91

preserve state sovereignty. The idea that national society should be homogeneous, and was threatened in its health and purity by infiltrating foreigners went hand in hand with this development, foreshadowing the continued relevance of migration management for the maintenance of sovereignty today.

Modern and post-modern explanations of sovereignty

The important role migrants play in the creation of the exclusion inherent to sovereignty was perhaps first recognised by Hannah Arendt, who traces the rise of 'stateless' persons in her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.[18] Arendt, who had herself been made stateless by the German national-socialist government, also reminds us of the historical circumstances that shaped the nation state in the 20th century, firmed up its borders and entrenched the ideal that its populations should be of a homogeneous nation. She traces the material circumstances as well as the imaginations of the time that created the inside/outside of international relations that we recognise today.

Arendt stresses the importance of the sovereign right to bestow and withdraw nationality from people and lays out the devastating effects of 'statelessness' in a world in which one has to rely on one's national government for the enforcement of one's rights. Arendt points out how sovereign exclusion of refugees, while being so important for constituting the sovereign state, at the same time undermines and destabilises its claim to goodness, justness and truth. The exclusion of refugees by the modern, sovereign nation state, argues Arendt, contains a contradiction that endangers its hegemony.[19] Although not explicitly, Arendt is here already touching on the problem that the 'interstitial' location of migrants – neither inside nor outside sovereignty - creates for sovereign power, as this unclear location constantly highlights the intense contradictions and problems that sovereignty creates.[20]

Analysing and describing the effects and mechanisms of sovereignty as a domestic and international organising principle has been the central focus of international relations scholars working on sovereignty throughout the 20th century. Well-known

---

[18] Hannah Arendt, *The origins of totalitarianism*, New [5th] ed., A Harvest book ; (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973).
[19] Ibid., page 368
[20] Liisa H. Malkki, *Purity and exile : violence, memory and national cosmology among Hutu refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago ; London: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Emma Haddad, "The refugee: the individual between sovereigns," *Global society* 17, no. 3 (2003).

theorists of sovereignty, such as Hans Morgenthau, Hedley Bull and Steven Krasner, proceeded from the assumption that sovereignty was an a priori property of states and produced a system of anarchy, as all states were formally equal. Consequently, their writings are chiefly concerned with the question of how international politics produces order from anarchy, and what can lead to a breakdown to this order. While Bull pointed out shared norms among states that produced an 'international society', Krasner referred to power differences between states that led to the formation of hegemonic states that ruled over others.[21]

However it is only with the post-modern turn in international relations and other disciplines that thinkers really began to question sovereignty itself as a historically contingent (and not constitutive) form of political organisation and to analyse it as a social construct. From the outset of this academic development, the figure of the migrant/refugee has been recognised as highlighting the limits and contradictions inherent in the narrative of sovereignty.[22] These critical and constructivist scholars pointed out the methodological short-fallings of previous writings on sovereignty that broadly failed to investigate their own assumptions about reality and knowledge. In 1990, Richard Ashley and Robert Walker published their influential article "Reading Dissidence/Writing the Discipline: Crisis and the Question of Sovereignty in International Studies" which provided a forceful criticism of how positivist scholars reified sovereignty as a source of truth and power, and failed to analyse its continuous production through discourse.[23] Importantly they argue that the stability of sovereignty as a legitimate system of meaning rests on a blindness towards and marginalisation of people and experiences that destabilise sovereignty's truths. However by carrying their argument that stable truths need to be abandoned in favour

---

[21] Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 3rd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty: organized hypocrisy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); Hans Joachim Morgenthau, Kenneth W. Thompson, and W. David Clinton, *Politics among nations: the struggle for power and peace* (McGraw-Hill, 2006).

[22] Dillon, "The Scandal of the Refugee – Some Reflections on the "Inter" of International Relations and Continental Thought."; Salter, "The Global Visa Regime and the Political Technologies of the International Self: Borders, Bodies, Biopolitics."; Nevgaz Soguk and Geoffrey Whitehall, "Wandering Grounds: Transversality, Identity, Territoriality and Movement," *Millennium Journal of International Studies* 28, no. 3 (1999).

[23] Ashley and Walker, "Reading dissidence/writing the disipline - crisis and the question of sovereignty in international studies."

of ambiguity and doubt too far, they risk emulating the hyper-liberal discourse dominating politics in the late 1990s when they, for example, write that

> "Life depends upon the ability to question and traverse cultural limitations, thus to expand the resources that might be put to work in the autonomous constitution of self and selves."[24]

The assertion that life *depends* on cosmopolitanism appears as extreme and doctrinaire, indeed marginalises the life experience of millions (if not billions) of people around the world who do not traverse cultural limitations. More critically, Ashley and Walker's philosophical approach can be read as closely related to the social conditions, the individualism and liberal multiculturalism of late 20th century capitalism and its promotion of constant change and mobility. An explanation for this curious lack of self-reflection (given the authors' perception of this lack in others), which is also apparent in other post-modern writings on sovereignty, lies not so much in faulty epistemological foundations, but rather in their research methods. These lack any deep, empirical connection with the social processes (discursive and otherwise) that are argued to be continuously constructing, undoing and reconstructing sovereignty. What is needed in this sense is not a return to positivist empiricism, asserting that only what can be measured can be true. Of importance is the realisation that it is possible to observe the effect of social constructs on people's behaviour; and that it is also possible to explain people's behaviour through the existence of otherwise intangible social constructs. This means that while it might not be possible to *measure* the impact of, for example, gender stereotypes or indeed sovereignty, it is possible to explain certain practices as being grounded on and simultaneously producing these abstract, social concepts.[25] While post-modern writers often acknowledge this point and call for more in-depth, ethnographic research on the questions they raise, they themselves unfortunately hardly ever carry through such research, particularly in IR.

It is also curious how little historical depth many post-modern writings on sovereignty contain, despite post-modernists' repeated criticism of (neo)-realists' unhistorical reification of sovereignty as constitutive. Even Cynthia Weber's seminal post-modern

---

[24] Ibid., page 392

[25] Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller, "Political Power beyond the State: Problematics of Government," *The British Journal of Sociology* 43, no. 2 (1992); Peter Miller and Nikolas S. Rose, *Governing the present: administering economic, social and personal life* (Polity Press, 2008).

work on sovereignty *Simulating Sovereignty* does not demonstrate deep historical awareness of sovereignty's evolution as an organising principle of power.[26] Weber equates the historicity of sovereignty with the "countless forms of state sovereignty" that "coexist in modern global political life", criticising that neo-realists cannot explain the "shifting basis of sovereign authority expressed by the displacement of monarchical sovereignty by popular sovereignty". While the latter point is in no doubt correct, it is astounding that Weber's own historical horizon seems to end with 'Westphalia'; that she does not appear to be able to escape the image of an international system of sovereign entities and that from her writings it still appears as if sovereignty, in some form or other, has always existed. As mentioned above, it appears that these analytical shortcomings are rooted in the broader failure of constructivist IR scholars, who eschew the large-N statistical research conducted by their positivist colleagues on epistemological grounds, but have failed to develop research methodologies of their own and largely remain mired in purely theoretical debates.

The most recent wave of writings about sovereignty by IR scholars saw a surge of interest in the ideas of the early-20th century scholar Carl Schmitt, and in those of the contemporary philosopher Giorgio Agamben (Agamben's theories about exclusion are discussed in further detail below). Schmitt's writings and the most original of the extrapolations from his theories are notable and important because they trace the genealogy of sovereignty to its roots in the divine and highlight how certain contemporary ideas and practices related to sovereignty still display emotional connections to the sacred.[27] Other authors focus on Schmitt's continued relevance to the concept of sovereignty space and how the enclosure of territory functions at the heart of sovereignty's form of political organisation.[28] Unfortunately, given Schmitt's own concern with locating sovereignty, many Schmittians focus on his most famous dictum that sovereignty is located where the decision for the exception (i.e. to take exception to the law/the norm) takes place. This frequently leads to the familiar,

---

[26] Cynthia Weber, *Simulating sovereignty: intervention, the state and symbolic exchange*, Cambridge studies in international relations (Cambridge University Press, 1995).
[27] Schmitt, *Political theology : four chapters on the concept of sovereignty*; Paul W. Kahn, *Political Theology Four new chapters on the concept of sovereignty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).
[28] Carl Schmitt and G. L. Ulmen, *The nomos of the earth in the international law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum* (Telos Press, 2003); Wendy Brown, *Walled states, waning sovereignty* (New York: Zone Books, 2010).

extremely abstract considerations about sovereignty that may contain some meta-philosophical value, but tell us little about the politics through which sovereignty is maintained.

Sovereignty, migration and ethnography

An interesting example of how the existence of refugees destabilises mainstream international relations discourse is provided by Emma Haddad who, writing from the perspective of the 'international society' school of thought, argues that refugees disturbs the nation-population-territory nexus upon with sovereignty relies.[29] Refugees are a necessary 'side product' of the modern system of nation states argues Haddad, who regards this situation as a moral and political disappointment, as it fails to guarantee the rights of all citizens of earth. Haddad's argument is exemplary for mainstream IR discourse, because although she touches upon a situation that is paradoxical in this discourse's understanding of sovereignty, its epistemological and ontological limitations prevent her from being able to explain the puzzle. Haddad writes that sovereignty posits migrants into "the gaps between nation-states"[30] , but cannot critically examine how these 'gaps' are constructed through the self-same discourse of sovereignty, "modernity's dominant spatial story"[31] and state-centric representation of the world. Haddad fails to examine in greater detail the concepts and imaginations on which the exclusion of refugees from sovereign space rely, nor does she investigate enough the bureaucratic routines through which the externality of refugees is created and the purity of the inner sovereign space constantly maintained. While she points out some aspects of international law and the maintenance of borders, she does not look at how the lives and spaces of refugees are structured by sovereign practices. Although she write *as if* the in-between 'gaps' that migrants inhabit physically exist, she does not identify the puzzle of their location – which breaks through sovereignty's inside/outside - and of their construction, and what they might tell us about the whole, imagined system of sovereignty.

---

[29] Haddad, "The refugee: the individual between sovereigns."; Emma Haddad, *The refugee in international society : between sovereigns*, Cambridge studies in international relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Emma Miriam Haddad and European Institute (London School of Economics and Political Science), "Between sovereigns: the refugee in international society" (Ph.D. (London) thesis 2004 LSE., 2004).
[30] Haddad, "The refugee: the individual between sovereigns.", page 297
[31] Soguk and Whitehall, "Wandering Grounds: Transversality, Identity, Territoriality and Movement.", page 676 and 681

An interesting example of empirically grounded work about migration and sovereignty is the edited volume *Sovereign Bodies: Citizens, Migrants, and States in the Postcolonial World* by Hansen and Stepputat.[32] Most contributors to this volume employ a strong element of critical/constructivist theory and at the same time keep a firm grip on the historical and current struggles, which sovereign-creating practices often consist of. For example, an analysis of a large refugee camp in Tanzania, based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork, explains the creation and maintenance of the camp as sovereign-producing practice. Through the physical separating out of the refugees, clarity of who constitutes the true citizenry is created, "the foundation of biopolitical sovereignty", and through the creation of the exceptional camp space, the state can hand over the refugees to others to govern without losing face.[33] The chapter describes various strategies deployed by the state that maintain the exceptional, non-permanent character of the camp so that the refugees can continue to be constructed as located outside the country's population. Such grounding of constructivist ideas in ethnographic fieldwork provides powerful explanations of social phenomena that cannot be explained by positivist methods based on rational choice theories, and presents a convincing counter-vision of social science research than those presented by statisticians. Compared to post-modernist analyses that eschew in-depth data collection, these works based on ethnography go much further in describing and understanding the construction of sovereignty through practices and discourse. The assertion that there is a "'weakness' of everyday stateness" in post-colonial states, which is "often countered by attempts to make state power highly visible" provides a useful 'lense' through which to understand the Syrian setting in which this thesis' argument unfolds.[34]

A similarly inspiring example of applying ethnographic data to an analysis of power relations is provided by Ilana Feldman in her book *Governing Gaza,* in which she uses evidence collected in ethnographic and archival fieldwork to investigate the

---

32 Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat, *Sovereign bodies : citizens, migrants, and states in the postcolonial world* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005).

33 Simon Turner, "Suspended Spaces - Contesting Sovereignties in a Refugee Camp," in *Sovereign bodies : citizens, migrants, and states in the postcolonial world*, ed. Thomas Blom Hansen (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005)., page 318

34 Hansen and Stepputat, *Sovereign bodies : citizens, migrants, and states in the postcolonial world.*, page 1-36 ; see also Mark E. Denham and Mark Owen Lombardi, *Perspectives on third-world sovereignty : the postmodern paradox*, International political economy series (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996).

production of authority in Gaza during the British Mandate and subsequent Egyptian Administration.[35] Feldman, curious about how government was sustained under adverse conditions and about how it shaped and was itself shaped by people and places, argues that in the absence of legitimate rule, which both the British and Egyptians lacked, authority in Gaza was created through the form, shape and habits of the daily practices of bureaucracy. Feldman illuminates how bureaucratic practice is itself productive of government form, intent and direction and highlights the microphysics of power that appear in the most ordinary of actions and prove the importance of the mundane. Feldman's archival research focuses on the system of filing installed by the British and continued by the Egyptians, and looks at the rules and regulations that ensured conformity in the form and content of files. These disembodied rules gave files an authority and also shaped and structured the behaviour of civil servants. Further, the large collection of information on the population created power, as information about an individual was directly linked to state benefits, punishments, employment opportunities and so on.[36] While Feldman does not specifically focus on sovereignty, her method of data collection and analysis is highly applicable to an investigation of power's "infinitesimal mechanisms"[37], including those that construct sovereignty.

While, as shown above, a small number of international relations and politics scholars have ventured into ethnographic research to investigate sovereignty, an even smaller number of anthropologists have conducted full-blown ethnographies of spaces and practices in and through which sovereignty is constructed. A highly thought-provoking and convincing piece is the study "Sovereigns and citizens in close encounter: airport anthropology and customs regimes in neoliberal Ghana", in which the American anthropologist Brenda Chalfin presents her research on "how the aura of sovereign ultimacy is sustained and internalized" by customs agents, who "configure, replicate, and renew the ability to rule" and "come to be known and felt as a source of rule over others".[38] Through adopting a research perspective that looks at more than official administrative procedures, and observes the actual practices

---

[35] Ilana Feldman, *Governing Gaza : bureaucracy, authority, and the work of rule, 1917-1967* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

[36] Ibid., page 41

[37] This phrase was coined by Foucault in his lecture series at the College de France, Foucault, Bertani, and Fontana, *"Society must be defended" : lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*.

[38] Brenda Chalfin, "Sovereigns and citizens in close encounter: Airport anthropology and customs regimes in neoliberal Ghana," *American Ethnologist* 35, no. 4 (2008)., page 519-538

through which regulations are implemented in human encounters, Chalfin argues that "the "sovereign," as subject, symbol, and sentiment as well as a system of sanction…opens up to investigation".[39] Chalfin's focus on borders, widely recognised as a crucial element in the sovereign edifice, also emphasises the challenging role that migrants, defined mainly by having crossed a state border, have in the daily performance of sovereign practice. Transnational actors, argues Chalfin, present the greatest challenge to the distribution of state authority and therefore become targets of special interventions. State sovereignty, Chalfin suggests, is produced through the intimate knowledge that state agents collect about the mobile citizenry, which allows them to translate abstract regulations into concrete techniques of governance, shaping the field of action of the travellers. As will be highlighted below, Chalfin's approach is closely inline with the research and analysis methods aimed at in this thesis.

Aihwa Ong is another American anthropologist working on sovereignty, whose empirical and theoretical approach is highly relevant to this thesis. In her analyses of the economic integration of the east Asian 'tiger' economies into the global market, Ong develops a way of thinking about sovereignty as a "political order produced by an assemblage of administrative strategies".[40] Ong shows how states adapt their internal policies on population and economic management to the needs of the neo-liberal world market and highlights the existence of various levels of sovereign power. She argues that the "exercise of power depends on a variety of technologies that target populations as well as territory in order to solve problems of wealth, growth, and security".[41] In her research on the techniques and disciplinary practices through which citizenship is created for new Cambodian immigrants to the US, Ong finds that they are subjected to bureaucratic codifications and administrative rulings that govern how they should be assessed and treated and how they should think of themselves. Ong extends her research to cover the immigrants' interaction with the public health service and finds that the migrants resist the American nurses' attempts to convince them to govern their bodies in a particular way.[42]

---

[39] Ibid.
[40] Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as exception : mutations in citizenship and sovereignty* (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2006)., page 101
[41] Ibid., page 100
[42] *Buddha is hiding : refugees, citizenship, the new America*, California series in public anthropology ; (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003)., page 91

Anthropological approaches thus demonstrate the possibility to empirically investigate the social construction of sovereignty, argued for so convincingly by constructivist IR theorists. Such investigation is made possible through the observation of certain human practices that can only be explained with reference to the sovereign ideal that informs these actions. By researching what kind of procedures and encounters individuals and communities, whose identities do not easily fit with the narrative of sovereignty are subjected to, it becomes possible to understand how sovereignty is upheld in the face of numerous and constantly occurring human actions that challenge and undermine it. This thesis argues that treating sovereignty as a purely abstract concept, as even critical IR theory has done, can only be the first step towards understanding how sovereign power functions and how the hegemonic topography of the state is reproduced in the international. To understand why and how state sovereignty remains as a key organising principle, despite social changes that have displaced the state from a number of arenas it formerly dominated, the critical, theoretical framework of sovereignty needs to complemented with empirical field research into the techniques, applied across a range of social domains, through which sovereignty is maintained. To date, apart from the realisations that the meaning of sovereignty is historically contingent, that it stipulates imagined, ideal conditions which are routinely ignored in a game of organized hypocrisy and that sovereign entities rely on techniques of 'othering' to retain a stable identity, sovereignty is still treated as an abstract mystery in IR writings. This work addresses this gap with an ethnographic research project that is explicitly based on a framework of critical readings of sovereignty from a politics/IR perspective.

The following sections address two key topics that arise from the above-mentioned literature, and which explain important ideas and practices on which the construction of sovereignty relies. The first topic concerns exclusion and the way it is mobilised conceptually and physically to maintain sovereignty. The exclusion of people from particular territories and communities, the exclusion of governments from each other's territories and the exclusion of non-sovereign notions of space are all important concepts related to the order of sovereignty. Secondly, there emerges the argument, already alluded to above, that sovereign power does not spring from a single, central source, but is created through diffuse social relations and through the self-governance of people. This point is of particular relevance to the research method

of this thesis, and its argument that the construction of sovereignty can be experienced and observed in every-day life. Both themes are elaborated in greater detail in the following paragraphs, again by drawing on an interdisciplinary range of literature.

The exclusion of sovereignty

Critical theorists of modern sovereignty argue that sovereign truths and sovereign spaces are based on the systematic exclusion of certain ideas and people, who fall outside of the sovereign identity and possibly pose a threat to it. Through exclusion the sovereign identity can remain stable. Who and what is constructed as excluded/external and by which mechanisms is the target of much scholarly enquiry, as critical theorists believe that answers to this question can deliver explanations on the workings of power structures and thus for a number of social phenomena, such as, for example, who gains access to resources or why states formulate particular policies.

The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben has perhaps taken the analysis of sovereign exclusion furthest and argues that sovereignty *includes* those that it has to reject, only for the purpose of excluding them.[43] According to Agamben, in order to function as a defined space, the sovereign order not only has to exclude certain life forms, but has to highlight and perform this exclusion constantly, otherwise the effect of the exclusion as an identity building mechanism would end. Thus, sovereignty is built on an 'inclusive exclusion', which constantly constructs certain members of its society as external to its order, a construction that re-affirms its stability and truth. Research into this question of inclusive exclusion has shown how, for example, it has applied to women or colonial subjects, who in the past were part of society but later excluded from political participation; their exclusion from it constantly emphasising the superiority of those allowed to participate. The situation of migrants and refugees has also been analysed from this perspective.[44] Scholars have also investigated how

---

[43] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo sacer : sovereign power and bare life* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998); *State of exception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[44] Ishan Ashutosh and Alison Mountz, "Migration management for the benefit of whom? Interrogating the work of the International Organization for Migration," *Citizenship Studies* 15, no. 1; Catherine Dauvergne, "Making People Illegal," in *Critical beings: law, nation and the global subject*, ed. Peter Fitzpatrick and Patricia Tuitt (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

sovereign exclusion applies to space, for example with regards to refugee camps, which are located on a state's territory but administered by international agencies.[45]

The above mentioned anthropologists/sociologists Hansen and Stepputat follow Agamben in arguing that the right to exclude is a sovereign privilege and that 'inclusive exclusion' remains crucial to sovereignty's physical and imagined reproduction. Hansen states that

> "The expulsion of someone who used to have rights as a citizen, or simply to categorize some individuals in a society as a form of life that is beyond the reach of dignity and full humanity and thus not even a subject of a benevolent power, is the most elementary operation of sovereign power".[46]

A number of scholars use such insights about exclusion to explain how and why migrants violate the notions of nation-space, identity, and security inherent in the sovereign state. These authors argue that migrants challenge underlying notions that construct sovereign spaces, such as the notion of citizenship, or national homogeneity or the stability of human existence as such. Their arguments provide important theoretical insights into how the imagination of sovereignty is constructed and performed and what categories and concepts belong to it. Liisa Malkki, in her brilliant book *Purity and Exile*, which concerns the formation of historical-national consciousness among Hutu refugees in Tanzania, argues that the "national order of things" and refugees are mutually constitutive. For while refugees subvert it, they are also "made meaningful by the categorical order itself, even as they are excluded from it".[47] Interestingly, Malkki offers an explanation for why there are so few studies on refugees and the international: as refugees are not classified or classifiable in this order, the literature on nations and nationalism is silent on them. Malkki therefore touches on what makes refugees so dangerous to sovereignty and to the fragile legitimacy of states based on homogeneous nations: it is the fact that the contemporary nation-order always contains the possibility of cosmopolitanism –

---

[45] John Allen, "The Whereabouts of Power: Politics, Government and Space," *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 86, no. 1 (2004); Nancy D. Munn, "Excluded Spaces: The Figure in the Australian Aboriginal Landscape " in *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture*, ed. Setha M. Low and Denise Lawrence-Zuniga (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003).

[46] Hansen and Stepputat, *Sovereign bodies : citizens, migrants, and states in the postcolonial world.*, page 17

[47] Malkki, *Purity and exile : violence, memory and national cosmology among Hutu refugees in Tanzania.*, page 9

represented by migrants -, which destabilises nationality as a moral and essential trait. Malkki argues insightfully that the international system is based on the nation as a culturally hegemonic form, which has become naturalised and is therefore regarded as legitimate. The nation, according to Malkki is a "powerful regime of classification, an apparently commonsensical system of ordering and sorting people into national kinds and types", it is a "continual, taken-for-granted exercise of power". She continues with several very useful points about the effects of the international system as a 'hegemonic topography' and a 'powerful regime of order and knowledge'. The national order of things is "a class of phenomena that is deeply cultural and yet global in its significance".[48]

While Malkki's analysis of migrants' position in the international forms only the introduction to her book, the political scientist Peter Nyers makes it the focus of his entire study.[49] Nyers argues that the sovereign state's claim to monopolize violence also includes a monopolization of all that is political. In this sense, sovereign power captures and over-codes human existence into its own logic of relations of inclusion-exclusion. There is therefore a tension between all that is captured, and the 'political excess', which evades or flees such practices of capture.[50] Nyers demonstrates the variety of ways in which refugees are allocated characteristics such as speechlessness, invisibility and passivity that are the obverse of the sovereign identity of citizenship, and argues that this allocation excludes them from sovereignty's space. Importantly, Nyers also argues that the categories, according to which sovereign power/knowledge regulates life by classifying only certain persons as citizens and fully human, remain ambiguous. This ambiguity remains hidden as long as it is unchallenged; migrants bring it to light and unhinge the trinity of state-territory-nation. Nyers believes that in the sovereign order only the citizen equates the fully human, and that the presence of migrants, humans who are not citizens, shatters this continuity between human being and citizen and therefore destabilizes a core tenet of sovereign power:

> As the modern political imagination remains fixated on the citizen as the authentic political
> identity (…) it is not surprising that refugees (as the absence of that identity and

---

[48] Ibid., page 5-12
[49] Peter Nyers, *Rethinking refugees : beyond states of emergency*, Global horizons. (New York ; London: Routledge, 2006).
[50] Ibid., page xiii

subjectivity) are stripped of all political agency and deemed temporary, "emergency" situations.[51]

The instability that migrants bring to the sovereign state's position as the supreme power over territory and population means that their relationship with state apparatuses of control is a particularly relevant site to study the construction of sovereignty. Yet although the conceptual tools that these arguments about migrants and sovereignty develop are highly useful; in the Syrian context in which this thesis unfolds, they only apply to a limited degree. In Syria, the construction of modern sovereignty is incomplete and the concept of citizen and migrant not clearly demarcated. Indeed, as will be shown, the interventions by other states and UN-institutions in the lives of Iraqi migrants in Damascus introduced modern sovereign practices to Syria, spreading new forms of exclusion and governance.

As referred to above, a further important aspect of sovereignty's exclusionary mechanism applies to space and territory.[52] The principle of territorial exclusivity, which rewards sovereign states the right to be the supreme power in their territory under international law, is recognised as the basis of modern sovereignty. While in practice this principle often does not apply and is not a useful way to understand sovereign power, it draws attention to the perceived importance of territorial boundaries and territorial exclusion. Arjun Appadurai discusses the importance of the social construction of territory in his analysis of the tension between migration and the modern nation state.[53] Appadurai argues that as nations are being articulated in translocal spaces, nation is becoming separated from territory. Although he does not focus on exclusion explicitly, his description of sub- and supra-state social spaces shows the importance of the social production of space for territorial sovereignty. According to the narrative of sovereignty, only as long as a state's territory maintains its hegemony as the dominant social space that people believe in and whose boundaries they respect, can territorial sovereignty be maintained. Appadurai argues that the social production of locality emerges through people's attachment to their

---

[51] Ibid., page 41

[52] James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta, "Spatializing States: Toward an Ethnography of neoliberal Governmentality," *American Ethnologist* 29, no. 4 (2002); Arjun Appadurai, "Sovereignty without Territoriality: Notes for a Postnational Geography," in *The Anthropology of Space and Place*, ed. Setha Low and Denise Lawrence-Zuniga, *Blackwell Readers in Anthropology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).

[53] Appadurai, "Sovereignty without Territoriality: Notes for a Postnational Geography."; Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions in Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

neighbourhoods, local streets, times and places of meeting and always presents a challenge to the needs of the nation-state for regulated public life. Now, as international movement of people and goods has accelerated to unprecedented degree, diaspora communities, border zones, refugee camps or migrant hostels all present spaces that link localities in different states; they are trans-local. Social activist networks or transnational religious formations are further examples of such trans-localities that undermine states' claims that their territory and its boundaries are the prime locus of citizens' lives and loyalties. In this situation, territory becomes a crucial marker of sovereignty, as states have little else to monopolize. Physical and imagined threats that undermine the "isomorphism of people, territory and legitimate sovereignty" that is the "normative charter of the modern nation state", are therefore met with severe attempts to control them.[54]

Socially constructed exclusions, by marking parts of the population as different and unworthy of political participation, or by marking localities as lying outside the imagined sovereign space, thus emerge as a crucial battlegrounds in the struggle for sovereignty and open further research avenues to find explanations for how and why migration and the spaces in which migrants live are of such importance for state control.

Sovereignty in everyday life

As a second theme of importance, critical examinations of sovereignty show that sovereignty does not spring from a single, central sovereign source, arguing that this frequently implicit concept is a fallacy. Sovereignty, according to this argument, should not be understood as a centralised node of power, sitting in the 'middle' and 'above' society, but rather as being exercised through an infinite number of locations and social relationships.

Writers on this topic owe an intellectual debt to Foucault, whose lecture series at the Collège de France in the 1970s launched a critical assault on mainstream understandings of sovereignty and state power, which are of continued relevance to current theorising. Foucault's arguments about sovereignty only emerge as a side product of his analyses of other social phenomena, are scattered throughout his

---

[54]Appadurai, "Sovereignty without Territoriality: Notes for a Postnational Geography.", page 346

publications and do not present a coherent body of thought. Of importance are his explanations of the evolution of state power Europe since the early Middle Ages, which argue that new technologies, conquests, population growth, forms of economic production and changes to beliefs and philosophy gradually displaced the divine sovereignty of God and King as legitimacy and foundation of the state. Most famously, he provides an explanation of power as discipline, which is exercised over populations through the state apparatuses of security, education, health, law and economy, and results in their self-governance. One of the most important conclusions arising from the idea of power as discipline concerns the type of research method that needs to be employed to investigate power. Discipline is a process in which persons learn what behaviour is to be understood as good and will go unpunished; it is highly individual and personal, requiring very detailed social interventions conducted through close social relations. Collecting evidence of how these interventions function can best be conducted through ethnographic tools; either through direct observation and interviews, or archival and documentary research of sources in which such social interventions are recorded.

Countless authors have built on Foucault's notion of governmentality in their explorations of how states are established as the ultimate power over the individual and society.[55] One very useful concept of 'social sovereignty' emerges from an essay by Robert Latham, in which he argues that sovereignty is more firmly located in structures of social relations than in agents (while both are mutually constitutive).[56] Latham argues that the reason that states have become so closely associated with sovereignty is their historical development into "remarkable machines for centering social sovereign structures around them".[57] Latham introduces the concept of *domains* of sovereignty, such as economy, healthcare or law. The construction of these domains depends on mechanisms (such as technologies, positive law, constitutions and administrative tools) and on the capacity of rulers to deploy agents (such as

---

[55] See for example Didier Bigot, "Security and Immigration: Toward a Critique of the Governmentality of Unease," *Alternatives* 27, no. Special Issue (2002); Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Ole Jacob Sending and Iver B. Neumann, "Governance to Governmentality: Analyzing NGOs, States, and Power," *International Studies Quarterly* 50, no. 3 (2006); Cynthia Weber, "Desert Designs: Design, Citizenship, and Political Acts of Citizenship With/Out Community" (paper presented at the Citizens without Community, London, 2010).
[56] Robert Latham, "Social Sovereignty," *Theory Culture Society* 17, no. 4 (2000).
[57] Ibid.

professionals, the military, public servants and so on) to utilize these mechanisms. He argues that sovereignty can attach to a wider range of structures than those of the state and that it is a body of social relations that shapes spheres of life, which operate within or across state boundaries. Crucially he states that

> "Engines that generate social sovereignty involve action that constitutes or maintains structures of relations (such as the passing of legislation, the construction of classification systems and the collection of statistics). Engines that are generated by social sovereignty emerge as repertoires of agency manifested especially in roles and identifies specific to a domain (such as tax payer, patient, immigrant or consumer)." (my emphasis).[58]

There are a number of problematic points in Latham's argument; his conception of the state and 'the social' is confusing and his distinction between agents and structures and their relation with the state are unclear. However his points about the close connection between ideas, located in codified social relations, and the repertoires of agency through which they transform into daily-lived experience are important. Latham's argument clarifies that the site of sovereignty's reproduction, its diffuse source, is located on the one hand in beliefs and in the other hand in the actions that these beliefs produce.

A highly relevant research piece into such micro-strategies through which sovereignty becomes lived experience is provided in a paper about the daily workings in a UK migrant-detention facility.[59] Hall's paper focuses on how the facility's personnel acts out their roles as the "'guardians' of the sovereign frontier between inclusion and exclusion" and how the central task of classifying and categorizing the detained migrants is achieved through techniques of scanning and scrutinizing.[60] In Hall's view, the detention of migrants is a mechanisms that allows the sovereign narrative to continue, because it hides the expulsions and violent struggles, the 'grinding mechanisms' of sovereign power. The actual lived processes through which the political status of a migrant, whether s/he is allowed to form part of the 'inside' or is to be expelled unmourned, is determined, presents sovereignty's exclusionary mechanisms in all their banality and violence. In the detention centre, the ideas of national purity, security and stability become translated into the routines of body-

---

[58]Ibid., page 7
[59]Alexandra Hall, "Bodywatching: Attention and Indifference in a British Immigration Removal Centre," (Department of Geography Durham University, 2009).
[60]Ibid., page 6

searching, vigilance and note-taking by detention officers, including the physical and psychological toll these processes have on both migrants and their guardians. Hall's piece showcases the combination of critical, constructivist analysis and ethnographic fieldwork that this thesis aims for; her arguments combine elements of post-modern theory, but show awareness to the particular time and place, with its contingent social and economic context, in which her research takes place. This analytic approach allows Hall to make use of her data to deliver far more than classic anthropological description; she can mobilize it to present convincing evidence for her theoretical points.

A further strong example of research into the small, every-day techniques that produce sovereignty is presented in various writings by James Ferguson and Akhil Gupta, most clearly in their article "Spatialising States".[61] The authors are interested in the construction of state hierarchies, i.e. how the impression that power springs from those 'higher up' or from the 'central' government is created. Arguing that such perceptions of verticality and encompassment are created through routine bureaucratic practices, they use ethnographic data from a state-run, rural development project to illustrate their argument. The data shows, for example, how statistical record keeping enables senior state officials, who have access to the records of all projects within a district, to survey a large terrain, which produces the impression of encompassment or centrality of the state. While senior officials often conduct surprise control-visits of local projects, enabled through their possession of a jeep, local project workers can only visit headquarters at circumscribed times; through this process the impression of the centrality of the state officials is re-enforced. A further important point made by Ferguson in various writings is his proposal to "extend the discussion of governmentality to modes of government that are being set up on a global scale".[62] Here, Ferguson is referring to techniques and regulations of institutions such as the WTO and the IMF, however arguably his idea can be extended to UN agencies and other humanitarian actors. The relevance of these actors to the construction of sovereignty lies in their complete adherence to sovereignty's narrative, including its practices of exclusion, identity and spatial construction. As will be shown in this

---

[61] Ferguson and Gupta, "Spatializing States: Toward an Ethnography of neoliberal Governmentality."; James Ferguson, "The anti-politics machine," in *The anthropology of the state: a reader* (Blackwell Publishing, 2006); Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992).
[62] Ferguson, "The anti-politics machine."

thesis, UNHCR's programmes of refugee registration and resettlement, which are based on the same procedures globally, attempted to produce the identities and behaviour of Iraqi migrants in line with the principles of state sovereignty.

Questions of method

As already discussed in the sections above, this thesis is broadly located in the interpretive tradition of social science enquiry; however also takes some influences from critical international relations theory. The following paragraphs will set out the epistemological assumptions on which this thesis' overall approach to knowledge and analysis of the human world is based, and will also briefly explain the methods and principles followed during field research.

Interpretive, materialist and critical theory

Scholars working in the interpretive (or hermeneutical) tradition argue that the social world of humans differs fundamentally from the natural world of chemical elements and physics, mainly because humans are self-reflective beings of intentional action.[63] From this realisation flows the argument that it is not useful to apply natural science research methods to social science enquiry, which has been the dominant approach since the 1950s, especially in the United States. This position contains a critique of positivist science, which argues that experimental hypothesis-testing can discover recurring patterns of human behaviour that are widely applicable across social and historical contexts. More broadly, the interpretive position expresses scepticism towards the historical process of the Enlightenment and the related unbridled belief in human reason, equated with technical manipulation of nature, as a way of bettering the world. This is not to say that the hermeneutical position is not also a product of the Enlightenment-attitude, which is characterised by a questioning, critical mindset towards the contemporary human condition.[64]

The search for robust models and parsimonious theories, extracted from large-N statistical studies and designed to allow predictions about future actions is deeply misled, as such studies necessarily rely on abstractions from history and culture that

---

[63]Gabriel A. Almond and Stephen J. Genco, "Clouds, Clocks, and the Study of Politics," *World Politics* 29, no. 4 (1977); Paul Rabinow and William M. Sullivan, *Interpretive social science - a second look*, ed. Paul Rabinow and William M. Sullivan, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).
[64]Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?," in *Interpretive Social Science A Second Look*, ed. Paul Rabinow and William M. Sullivan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

render them meaningless. Instead, researchers should aim to understand the meaning that human beings attach to their actions, through which explanations for social phenomena emerge. Foucault in particular calls for an approach that is "genealogical in design and archeological in method", and urges attention to minute social changes rather than focussing on universalising models or structures.[65] As it is impossible for the researcher to extract herself from the social world she inhabits, the search for an objective, neutral position vis-à-vis the human research objective is futile. Aiming to discover fixed laws that govern human, social existence is a fallacy, because the meaning of human action changes from time to time, from place to place, from person to person. The most a researcher can aim for is to interpret human behaviour against a particular historical and cultural backdrop and apply her collected knowledge, intuition and imagination to present suggestions about how to explain certain social phenomena. This last point summarises this thesis' approach to knowledge about the human world.

The epistemological and ontological bases of interpretive science fit very well with this thesis' methodological outlook. But hermeneutics' emphasis on inter-subjectivity and meaning are not fully adequate tools to support the argument for the social construction of state sovereignty, which requires some grounding in a theory of the international. Further, the argument that bureaucratic techniques and administrative procedures incorporate power relations also transcends the interpretive scholar's search for meaning and involves a theoretical position that takes into account more strongly the material existence of humans and how it shapes their lives. A second important argument on which this thesis relies is therefore that human life is rooted in its material existence; that is to say that human beings' bodily and historical experience places limits on their social life and subjectivity. While Marx' famous slogan that the "Sein bestimmt das Bewusstsein" is too insistent on material experience as the cornerstone of subjectivity, his argument that how humans work, eat, suffer and play fundamentally influences how they interpret the social is correct. The crucial aspect arising from this realisation in terms of methodological debates, is that an interpretive position does not necessarily translate into anti-empiricism and purely abstract theorising. Although interpretive scholars are necessarily constructivists, as they believe that explanations of social phenomena have to be

---

[65]Ibid., page 171

sought in conjunction with what humans believe, many nevertheless ground their analysis in an interpretation of empirical material. The crucial connection between the physical and the constructed emerges from the position that human beings' beliefs are reproduced or at least stand in a close relation to their physical actions that can be empirically observed. This conviction inspires a requirement for in-depth, ethnographic field research, which allows the researcher to observe at least some of the most basic material relations in the context of study.

A fantastic example of such an approach is shown in Geertz' article "Deep Play", which interprets the social meaning of cock fights in Bali.[66] Geertz' argument that the meaning of these fights goes far beyond popular entertainment is made highly convincing through the in-depth ethnographic material that it is based on. Geertz's observations and participation in these fights, and his consequent analysis, lead him to the conclusion that the fights play a crucial social role, as they reflect Bali's social hierarchy and the Balinese way of dealing with emotions and violence. Through joining the fights, Balinese men learn and reproduce their social reality, which thus gets reinforced. But as mentioned above, the international aspect of this thesis, which mainly concerns inter-state relations and state boundaries, requires a theoretical grounding that extends inter-subjectivity and the extremely local. Some aspects of critical international relations theory, especially its Gramscian-inspired version developed by Robert Cox, provide ideas and concepts for how to approach the international from an interpretive and materially grounded perspective.

Eminent IR scholar Robert Cox formulated the basic tenets of a critical IR method in a number of essays.[67] According to Cox, critical theory questions the origins of political order, rather than taking its institutions and power relations as constitutive. Instead of subdividing the world into discreet, fixed entities, critical theory seeks to understand how the perceived parts and whole of the order are connected through processes of change. Importantly, critical theory takes into consideration historical experience and development and is aware that theory itself is a product of time and

---

[66]Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," *Daedalus* 101, no. 1 (1972).
[67]Robert W. Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 10, no. 2 (1981); "Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations : An Essay in Method," *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 12, no. 2 (1983).

perspective and can never be objective.[68] In this it differs substantially from neo-realist methods, which seek to establish timeless concepts and stable, causal mechanisms to explain the world. Cox argues for the possibility of considering the world order as a whole, but warns against reifying a world system made up of stable, unchanging units (which is how realist international relations theory conceptualises states). Eloquently he calls on international relations' theorists to be

> "Beware of underrating state power, but in addition give proper attention to social forces and processes and see how they relate to the development of states and world orders. Above all, do not base theory on theory but rather on changing practice and empirical-historical study, which are a proving ground for concepts and hypothesis."[69]

This position allows for conceptualising the world order in its complexity, based on constant – and of course never fully graspable – human action, change and historical experience. While Cox's critics justifiably argue that he in turn reifies critical theory and his ideas about human emancipation (failing to reflect on their historical conditionality and hidden values), it is his view of the connection between the necessarily abstract world order and human practices that this thesis draws on. Cox acknowledges the debt that he owes to Gramsci's concept of (national) hegemony, created through particular social relations and maintaining an unequal power dynamic between different classes.[70] Extending this concept to the international allows for a conceptualisation of how the global spread and continuation of the sovereign-state model also has to do with the way it redistributes power and resources (coercion and consent) at local levels. In the following chapters of this thesis, this theoretical approach enables an analysis, for example, of the way the Syrian state made use of Iraqi migration to bolster its sovereignty abroad and the role that the large-scale financial flows from donor states to Syria played in maintaining the sovereign ideal.

Ethnographic fieldwork

This work is based on a six-month research stay in Damascus, Syria, which was informed by one previous six-month and several short-term visits. During this time, I

---

[68]Andrew Linklater, "The Transformation of Political Community: E. H. Carr, Critical Theory and International Relations," *Review of International Studies* 23, no. 3 (1997); "The Question of the Next Stage in International Relations Theory: A Critical-Theoretical Point of View," *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 21, no. 1 (1992).
[69]Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory.", page 128
[70]Antonio Gramsci, Geoffrey N. Smith, and Quintin Hoare, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (Lincolnwood: International Publishers, 1971).

collected information about the general living conditions of Iraqi migrants, and about the interventions that the Syrian state, humanitarian actors and other states made into Iraqi migrant lives. Such interventions included, for example, the obtaining of residency permits, the requesting of detailed personal information by international organisations and the resettlement programmes of a number of states. As research methods I relied on ethnographic participant observation and semi-structured interviews, mainly with Iraqi migrants and UN and NGO professionals. A smaller number of interviews were conducted with Syrians, who possessed particular expertise or experience of Syrian state power and processes. Overall, information was obtained directly and indirectly of around 80 Iraqis and humanitarian experts. Although ethnographic research is necessarily carried out in a local setting, a recent trend has applied this method to global phenomena, embedding it in the world system.[71] It is according to this strategy, that this thesis combines ethnography with an analysis of the social production of sovereignty. Ethnographic participant observation involves structured observation of a particular social setting in which the observer participates to varying degrees. A researcher might choose to observe an event from the margins (moderate participation), engage in most areas of her informants' life (active participation) or become a full member of the group studied (complete participation).[72] The research for this thesis made use of all these categories of participation, depending on the varied situations encountered. From the outset the overall aim was to spend as much time with as many informants as possible to learn about Iraqi migrants' lives in Damascus. The goal to maintain meaningful relationships with at least a significant portion of informants automatically limited their number.

Through long-term observation, ethnographers aim to understand and record as accurately as possible the daily routines of their informants, the value they attach to their activities and why they conduct them. Participant observation is therefore a tool for data collection *and* a form of analysis, which has as its aim a more systematic understanding of the culture of a particular population or site . The primary way of capturing data in participant observation is through maintaining extensive field notes,

---

[71]Zsuzsa Gille and Sean O. Riain, "Global Ethnography," *Annual Review of Sociology* 28(2002); George E. Marcus, "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24(1995).
[72]Kathleen Dewalt and Billie Dewalt, "Participant Observation," in Handbook of Cultural Anthropology, ed. Russel H. Bernard (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 1998).

and during my time in Damascus I recorded dozens of conversations, impressions and interviews . Field notes are of primary importance and much has been written about how the notes should be maintained and preserved.[73] While continuing as the mainstay research method in anthropology, participant observation has also attracted criticism from different camps. Debates have focused on three main areas of criticism: firstly, the problem of the researcher's own biases and how they affect his or her observation, secondly, how the researcher's presence affect people's behaviour and thus distorts findings and thirdly, the ethical problems attached to participant observation. Arguably, all three criticisms are valid points and cannot be fully eradicated, however by using certain techniques, the researcher can minimize their impact.[74] Different ethnographers will always focus on different aspects of observation: while one will perhaps focus on spatial elements of an event and note down related details, another will focus on the emotions in an interaction, another on the present social hierarchies and so forth.[75] As laid out above, the achievement of an objective, Archimedean research perspective is neither realistic nor desirable. Instead, when presenting results of ethnographic research, authors should describe their own, personal position in the field and make the related restraints explicit to the reader as far as possible.[76] Various authors argue that only by spending extended periods of time in the company of informants is it possible for the researcher to develop such rapport with informants that they will be at ease around her and be open to nosy questions being asked of them and having a stranger in their midst. While this is clearly crucial, it is also important to realise that the reaction to and relationship built with the observer also forms part of the research and is not an aspect that should be hidden or glossed over. Finally, participant observation also poses a number of ethical problems, for which it has garnered criticism and of which the researcher needs to be aware. The principle problem lies in the tension between developing the above-mentioned trust and even friendship with one's informants and at the same time observing them scientifically for one's research. As a guiding rule, informants should

---

[73]Russel H. Bernard, *Research Methods in Cultural Anthropology* (London: Sage, 1988); Russell H. Bernard, *Handbook of methods in cultural anthropology* (Walnut Creek, Calif. ; London: AltaMira Press, 1998).
[74]Dewalt and Dewalt, "Participant Observation."; Martha Feldman, Jeannine Bell, and Michele Tracy Berger, *Gaining Access: A Practical and Theoretical Guide for Qualitative Researchers* (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2003)., page 27-34
[75]Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995)., page 7-11
[76]Dewalt and Dewalt, "Participant Observation.", page 273

be made aware that they are being observed for a particular research project and should be informed as to the nature of this project. During my research in Damascus, I was always open with informants and friends about the purpose of my stay, however also experienced repeatedly the feeling of cheating or deceiving informants, who had become friends, and who probably often forgot that in the evenings, I would record what they had told me. By ensuring that all fieldnotes were anonymized and hidden in particularly secure software on my laptop, I at least was able to feel certain that nothing that they told me could be accessed by third parties. Researchers clearly should be aware of the potentially unequal power dynamic that exists between them and their informants and should be wary of any expectations that they might raise, be they emotional or material. Finally, many anthropologists urge researchers to share their findings in one way or another with the community that they have worked in, be it through a workshop with their direct informants or a seminar at a local university – a number of such options are discussed in the literature.[77] While I hope to share the academic results with some informants, in Damascus I volunteered as a teacher for an organisation preparing Iraqi teenagers for university in the US and have supported a number of informants when they ran into legal problems relating to their residency in Syria.

Conclusion

As set out above, this thesis presents an analysis of the social construction of sovereignty in a particular setting, that of Iraqi migration to Damascus. By drawing on writings about sovereignty from modern writers such as Arendt and post-modern critics such as Ashley and Walker it establishes sovereignty as a historically contingent form of political organisation, connected to particular ideas about territory, population and government. State sovereignty developed from the political formation of European medieval monarchies, whose sovereignty was understood and legitimised by contemporary theorists in reference to the divine and god's order. In the 14th century, the idea of sovereignty as an indivisible and absolute power, without which the existence of a state was doomed, first emerged in the writings of Jean Bodin. The growing territorialisation of monarchic power in the 15th century, which gradually

---

[77]Feldman, Bell, and Berger, *Gaining Access: A Practical and Theoretical Guide for Qualitative Researchers*; Christopher B. Barrett and Jeffrey W. Cason, *Overseas Research: A Practical Guide* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997)., page 120-122

displaced the complex, medieval web of independent entities to focus all power on the king or queen, was accompanied by theories of sovereignty which linked territory, population and monarch into a single body politic, which was based on human rationality, rather than the divine (see for example Hobbes' Leviathan). The theorists of the popular revolutions in the US and France rejected the previous, absolutist ideas about sovereignty, and developed ideas about communal sovereignty and popular will. Yet they did not succeed in producing a fundamentally new theory of sovereignty to accompany the rapid social changes across the globe. This thesis follows Foucault's dismissal of most current theorising about sovereignty as *"utterly incongruous"* with the forms of power and political organisation on which it is based today.

The critical eye that post-modern IR scholars cast on the scholarship of sovereignty since the 1990s led to several important insights about how sovereignty was constructed. Ideas about the social exclusion, the physical and intellectual barriers on which sovereignty was maintained in politics and the academy began to circulate. The figure of the migrant, and migration as a broader social phenomenon, was recognised in many of these writings as a crucial site for the construction of sovereign borders and exclusions, as migrants challenge a number of important concepts on which sovereignty rests. Yet partly due to the inherently theoretical research methods employed by most IR scholars, these writings remained highly theoretical and told little about the physical practices that maintained sovereignty in daily life. Supported by anthropological studies of how sovereignty-related ideas are performed and experienced in a variety of locations, this thesis argues that the daily-life practices that establish and contest sovereignty can be observed through ethnographic field research. Recently, such research has been used to explore, for example, how custom officials at an airport translated legal concepts of sovereignty into work routines and treatment of passengers, showing how sovereignty becomes a lived experience and is reinforced when challenged by a mobile citizenry that undermines ideas about territoriality and nationhood. Other studies have focused on the bureaucratic systems through which states exercise sovereign authority or on the categorisation and management of space that construct locations as lying outside of the sovereign body politic. By recording and analysing the sovereignty-reproducing techniques applied to Iraqi migrants in Damascus by states and international organisations, this thesis

makes it possible to understand how sovereignty endures and transforms in light of challenges such as migration.

The theoretical approach of this thesis is broadly located in the interpretive tradition of social science, assuming that no objective position of researcher towards object of study is possible. As meaning in the human world is constantly changing from person to person and place to place, the search for fixed rules that govern human behaviour is futile. Instead, the researcher has to apply knowledge, experience and imagination to suggest solutions for social puzzles against a particular historical backdrop. Yet in addition to awarding importance to interpretation and variable meaning, it is important to recognise the materiality of life, which fundamentally influences human existence and the way humans understand their world. Interpretation can only succeed when it is based on an understanding of the physical life circumstances of the people that it seeks to study. From this approach flows the necessity of empirical research that this thesis calls for. The six-months fieldwork for this thesis was carried out in Damascus using participant observation and interviews with particularly well informed stakeholders, mainly Iraqis and employees at international organisations. Direct and indirect information was collected from around 80 Iraqis and around 20 in-depth interviews conducted. The arguments and conclusions set out in the following chapters are drawn from hundreds of pages of field notes and interview transcripts, analysed through a thematic approach and a close reading of the material.

The following chapter structure unfolds as follows. Chapter two presents an overview of the research setting, and a broad analysis of the phenomenon of Iraqi migration to Damascus. By showing the very different practices through which the Syrian government chose to govern Palestinian and Iraqi refugees, a first example of the construction of domestic and international sovereign spaces through practices is examined. Chapter three analyses the role of the Syrian state in Iraqi migrant lives in greater detail. The numerous examples of how the Syrian government ensured the presence of state sovereignty in the daily life of Iraqis are used to make the argument that in Syria, state sovereignty was constructed through very different social relations than those assumed by the 'sovereign ideal'. Chapter four focuses on UNHCR and the organisation's interventions into the management of Iraqi migration from the perspective of sovereignty. The chapter argues that UNHCR's programmes were based on the 'sovereign ideal' of international law and the unity of territory,

population and government and in this way presented a number of contradictions to the way Iraqis were integrated into the Syrian body politic by the Syrian state. Chapter five considers the involvement of other states, especially of donor states in Europe and the US in the management of Iraqi migrants to Syria. An overview of this involvement is followed up with a more detailed analysis of the US and of Germany, and how each state's procedures and regulations categorised and governed Iraqis through constructions of sovereignty. Chapter six returns to the humanitarian sector and analyses the role of international NGOs. INGOs were a new phenomenon in Damascus and the interactions between their staff and Syrian ministries gave insights into how sovereignty-constructing practices become transformed through the interactions between actors, who interpret the meaning and content of state sovereignty differently. The way that INGOs portrayed Iraqis according to the sovereign ideal is also discussed, due to the illuminating contrast this portrayal made with actual reality of Iraqi life in Damascus.

Chapter 2

Damascus, Iraqi Migrants and the Researcher's Position in the Field

Before setting out to Damascus to conduct the field research for this thesis, I read a number of handbooks on ethnographic research. I had previously lived in the city for six months while working as a journalist, and felt that I was already relatively familiar with its environment. Yet the literature on ethnography, with its emphasis on the importance for a researcher to be aware of, and critically reflect, her own *position* in the field, invited me to reassess my knowledge of the city. Such awareness was deemed crucial to avoid accepting personal perceptions as objective knowledge and to be aware of how one's age, gender, marital status, clothing or time would influence the research process.[78] The relevance of positionality came home to me when re-reading a field note taken after a first visit to the Damascene suburb Jaramana, where I would later live for several months. While the note's descriptions of the area's physical features contained nothing surprising, the comment that *"the longer I walked around, the more paranoid I started feeling with regards to being watched by the authorities"*[79] now struck me as very different to the much more relaxed attitude I felt after Jaramana had become my temporary home.[80] A few weeks after I had walked the neighbourhood's streets on a daily basis, my interpretation of its space had significantly changed from what it had been during the first visit. This change surely occurred due to my adaptation, but perhaps also due to subtle changes in how Jaramana's inhabitants received me in their neighbourhood once I had become a familiar sight. Perhaps also (and perhaps not) local intelligence officers, once they had checked my presence and decided that I was of no of importance, refrained from

---

[78] Barrett and Cason, *Overseas Research: A Practical Guide*; Pierre Bourdieu, "The Berber House," in *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture*, ed. Setha M. Low and Denise Lawrence-Zunigais (Malden: Blackwell-Wiley, 2003); Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*; Feldman, Bell, and Berger, *Gaining Access: A Practical and Theoretical Guide for Qualitative Researchers*; Setha M. Low and Denise Lawrence-Zunigais, eds., *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture*, Blackwell Readers in Anthropology (Malden: WIley-Blackwell, 2003).

[79] All quotes extracted from field notes and interviews are italicised to set them apart from quotes taken from the literature.

[80] Field note 140910b

paying the attention they had given me during my first visit. This episode highlighted the intensely personal experience of field research and the difficulty with which arguments and description are extracted from observations and interviews. While this thesis' key points rely on relatively undisputed events witnessed during research, they are nevertheless also an interpretation of these events that another person might not have arrived at. To better explain the argumentations' underlying reasoning and the experience that informs it, it is useful to begin it with a 'thick' description of the circumstances in which field research was undertaken. This thick description is the purpose of this chapter.[81]

The chapter begins with an introduction to the cityscape of Damascus, and the general living conditions it presented to its varied population in 2009 and 2010. The challenges of Damascus' urban sprawl, dotted with government propaganda, were a daily reality for every person who crossed the city and spent some days there; so were the geographical realities of desert climate and of the dry Qasiun Mountain, hovering over the city's centre. Secondly, the chapter presents a description and analysis of the city's social-scape, with the goal of introducing the way that the expression of social identity in Syria was linked to national, regional and global politics, which translated into local techniques of governance. Thirdly, an overview of Iraqi migration to Damascus will attempt to demonstrate on the one hand the key parameters of Iraqi life in the city and on the other the key assumptions that informed the contemporary discourse about Iraqi migration to Syria – among Iraqis, Syrians and foreign aid workers. Lastly, the fourth section of this chapter discusses my particular experience and position in the field, highlighting those elements of which I was keenly aware from the start, others that I became aware of during and after research and, naturally, leaving out those that did not, and might not ever, occur to me.

The cityscape of Damascus

According to the Syrian government's Central Bureau of Statistics, central Damascus and its suburbs, which form an administratively separate area called 'Damascus Countryside' ('dimashq rīf'), were, in 2009, home to around 4.3 million people.[82] The bureaucratic distinction between the two areas stems from a time when Damascus was

---

[81] 'Thick' description is an anthropological term that refers to descriptions of human behaviour and the context in which it takes place, with the aim to clarifying this behaviour's meaning to the reader.
[82] Website of the Syrian Buerau of Statistics: http://www.cbssyr.org/

a compact city surrounded by fields and farms and had not yet developed into today's urban sprawl, in which the now developed suburbs are linked to the centre by motorways, lined with low-rise, often illegally constructed habitats.[83] Damascus' rapid population growth has not been accompanied by related political or bureaucratic reforms, which is also apparent from the city's overloaded infrastructure and failing public services.

Centre, suburbs and the old city

The continuing administrative separation between centre and suburbs, which privileged central Damascus in terms of government attention and investment, was reflected in design and architecture. Whereas central Damascus exhibited quite careful urban planning, such as tree-lined boulevards, homogeneous groups of apartment buildings and decorated city squares, suburbs were often characterised by much rougher infrastructure, unfinished roads and buildings interspersed with undeveloped land and narrow, uneven lanes.[84]

Two extremes – a central and a suburban square

---

[83] Khoury, Philip S. "Syrian Urban Politics in Transition: The Quarters of Damascus During the French Mandate." International Journal of Middle East Studies 16, no. 04 (1984): 507-40.
[84] The newer phenomenon of expensive, gated-community style, suburban developments, which are fully designed and planned, are somewhat exceptional to this observation (see for example the newly developed area of luxury flats in the Kafer Sousseh area). Nevertheless, even these areas sometimes also display signs of incompleteness and rough building works.

Central areas also enjoyed a much better availability of services, such as garbage collection, water and electricity supply; of education, health and leisure facilities, and public transport. While central streets were swept daily by government employees pushing large, metal trolleys, suburban areas were much less well maintained, to the degree that in some areas garbage festered in unofficial dumps between buildings. Central Damascus was home to the French, German and Spanish cultural centres, offering language classes, exhibitions and cinema programmes, a number of high-end hotels, private galleries and public museums, and hosted governmental buildings and embassies. While some of the wealthier suburbs were served by upscale restaurants, and many private schools and universities were also located in new developments out of town, in the poorest suburbs all of these services were absent.

An exceptional urban space was presented by Damascus' old city, 'dimashq al-qadīma', which in 2009 had shrunk in relative size to a tiny part of the city's surface and lay outside of the centre-suburb divide (administratively it formed part of the central Damascus governorate). The old city's exceptional position arose from its architecture (that of a medieval, walled city), its status as a tourist attraction and as a symbol of national pride, and its protection under the UNESCO world heritage programme. The area was a popular place for foreign language students to find accommodation and to spend leisure time, and, in the past 10 years, had developed into Damascus' entertainment mile, as more and more ancient houses were renovated and turned into restaurants, cafes and hotels. These renovations were linked to the rediscovery of the old city as a source of pride and heritage, as well as a commercial

opportunity, after decades of neglect.[85] The old city also housed the Ummayad Mosque, a world-famous monument considered the fourth holiest place in Islam, which was a focus for tourists and, particularly on Fridays, worshippers (Friday is the Muslim holiday). Several of Damascus' oldest and most famous markets were located in close vicinity to the mosque, which were often crowded with shoppers from around the world. These different characteristics of the old city combined to the effect that it was much more well-known than other neighbourhoods, and most of my Syrian, Iraqi and international interlocutors had visited it at least once, if not regularly. The first three months of my fieldwork I rented a room in the old city, sharing with the landlady, her mother and two French women.

Heavy Traffic

While many of the narrow lanes in the old city were only accessible to pedestrians, any person venturing beyond them had to navigate Damascus' very heavy traffic, which only subsided at night and on holidays. Streets were constantly filled with yellow taxis, a common form of public transport, mini-busses serving fixed routes, picking up passengers along the way, state-owned buses and cars. Large motorways crisscrossed the city and motorised transport was the main means of moving around; mopeds were a rare sight and bicycles even rarer, generally only used for short distances and only by men. Luxury cars such as BMW, Mercedes or Porsche were also rare, however their numbers appeared to have been growing since a few years, due to recent easing of import restrictions and growing concentration of wealth; most cars were Korean imports. Air pollution, compounded by dust during dry weather, was heavy throughout the centre; the cleaner air of the more distant suburbs was often remarked upon by inhabitants as the key, if not only, benefit to living there. Buildings in the city centre were blackened from fumes, emitted by cars and in winter by heating stoves, which ran on diesel oil and released the fumes unfiltered into the air.

Buying a private car was very expensive in Syria, due to a punishing tax regime. As an example, one of my Syrian friends with a good job in the private sector in 2009 bought herself a seven-year old Korean car for USD 10,000 (the monthly average

---

[85] Christa Salamandra, *A new old Damascus : authenticity and distinction in urban Syria*, Indiana series in Middle East studies. (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2005). Faedah M. Totah, "Return to the Origin: Negotiating the Modern and Unmodern in the Old City of Damascus," *City & Society* 21, no. 1 (2009).

wage for a Syrian civil servant at that time stood at under USD 300). Many people therefore rode privately-operated mini-busses (called *serviis* or *micro*), public busses or taxis. Trying to squeeze onto a bus at rush hour or waiting as already full micros passed without stopping, or eventually hailing a taxi in frustration, was a frequent experience for myself and many people I observed and interviewed. While bus or micro fares were low at SYP 10 (around 15 US cents), a short taxi ride could quickly amount to SYP 50 (around 1 USD), and a ride across town to SYP 100. Taxi drivers were considered by all my Syrian, Iraqi and international acquaintances (and by myself) as notorious cheats, inflating their prices especially for foreigners, with whom it was easier to claim a broken taximeter and to charge a random, inflated price. Several of my Iraqi interlocutors mentioned, sometimes laughingly, sometimes angrily, that once they had mastered the Syrian dialect, they always pretended to be Syrian when riding a taxi, to avoid being cheated. As the transport system was only moderately well integrated, walking lengthy distances along busy roads often became necessary to access the nearest bus stop or taxi stand. Such trips often added significant time to public transport, and contributed to the tiring experience of journeying around the city.

Living and shopping

Generally, Damascene neighbourhoods did not clearly distinguish between residential and commercial zones. A frequently encountered neighbourhood design consisted of one or two central arteries lined with shops, restaurants, internet cafes, beauty salons and hairdressers, from which residential areas fanned out to either side. Although commercial activity was concentrated along the main streets, all manners of shops would still be found on the quieter streets between apartment blocks. Supermarkets offering a wide range of goods were rare and considered expensive; food shopping was generally conducted at local shops focused on one item, such as greengrocers, butchers, fishmongers, bakeries, sweet and dried-goods shops. Most residential blocks also had one small corner shop covering basic needs items. Most personal goods and services were thus sold through small, individually-owned outlets, in which the owner himself often served, or his relatives. The small number of existing chain-stores, such as a small, local chain of upmarket cafes, malls and supermarkets were all located in expensive neighbourhoods and catered to the growing numbers of expatriates living in Syria, other wealthy foreigners and Syrians. Certain specialised commercial areas existed, grouping together dozens of shops all concentrating on the same goods (such areas are referred to as 'markets' in Arabic). For example, after I had searched intensively for a large bath towel all over town, eventually I was advised to visit a specialised 'market' in the old city; and indeed, once there, found several streets of shops selling only towels and linen.

Propaganda

One aspect common to all neighbourhoods, whether central or suburban, residential or commercial was the presence of presidential and Baʿth party propaganda. Portraits of the current president Bashar al-Asad adorned walls, government buildings, billboards, murals, shop walls and car windows. Mostly, they showed a portrait of the president from the chest upwards, but the style of the portray varied: sometimes, he was shown simply wearing a brown suit and tie, sometimes he was in full military gear including aviator sunglasses and cap, more recently he was also portrayed against a background of Arabic calligraphy, giving him a pious air. The latest development in Syrian propaganda art were modern, hard-plastic billboards (the kind that in the UK are

integrated into bus stops), which show the president strolling towards the viewer, waving, together with a slogan such as "we are all with you".[86] Painted images or photographs of Bashshar al-Asad's late father, Syria's former president Hafiz al-Asad, and Bashshar's late older brother Basil al-Asad were also frequent; Hafiz al-Asad was occasionally presented in form of a statue or bust. Frequently, Hafiz and his two sons were shown together, wearing military caps and looking stern. Another, less frequent image was a joint-portray of Bashshar and Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hizbullah; this one I only ever saw adorning cars and as smaller posters. Another rarer image showed Bashshar as the family man surrounded by wife and children. Many of the presidential images were painted on official buildings and in this way highlighted the frequency of state- and party-affiliated institutions around town. These ranged from large complexes for ministries, to smaller buildings for unions, police or military stations, schools, training and research institutions and various others, all being a constant reminder of the dominance of the president and the party over all state and many other institutions governing public life.

Lisa Wedeen in her famous book *Ambiguities of Domination* presents an analysis of Syrian government propaganda during the 1990s, and her argument that it served to 'clutter' the imagination and the public arena, filling every nook and cranny and leaving no physical or mental space for other representations was still valid in 2009 and 2010.[87] To demonstrate the effect of this 'cluttering', the appearance of a large number of Iraqi election posters in advance of Iraq's national elections in March 2010 came as a surprise, if not shock to me. The sudden presence of large photographs of politicians other than Asad seemed incongruous and strange.[88] A similar feeling of surprise overcame me on the two occasions that I travelled by taxi from Damascus to Beirut, when shortly after the border large banners advertising various politicians appeared. The sudden absence of Asad's images, and the plurality of pictures, served (to me) as a much stronger marker that I had crossed into another state, than the lengthy border proceedings. Interested in the long-term effect of the Syrian government's 'cluttering', I asked three Syrian acquaintances about whether they

---

[86] Observations around Damascus in 2009 and 2010
[87] Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of domination : politics, rhetoric, and symbols in contemporary Syria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).
[88] During Syrian parliamentary elections, Syrian MPs also advertise to voters, including posters with their photographs. However the campaign by Iraqi policitians was much more intense and included much larger photographs and banners that what I had witnessed during Syrian elections.

were still consciously aware of the propaganda when moving around Damascus. Two replied that yes, they always noticed it, one of them pointing out the newest images, characterising them as *"provocative"*. The third however stated that for him, the posters and billboards simply formed part of the city's backdrop and that he never consciously considered at least the visual aspects of the propaganda. Although such informal answers and observations do not reveal much about the overall effect of the propaganda, they pointed out its importance as a technique through which Syrian state agents exercised state sovereignty. Apart from images, the visual aspect of the propaganda included slogans, mainly those of the Baʿth party ("unity, freedom, socialism"), but also others, often designed to address various particular social groups, be it students, Palestinians or…Iraqis:

عراقي أنه وجنسيتي عراقية
ولا والله مايبدلها بكل جنسية
فمنهو من العرب إلي فتح بابه بوجه إبن العراقية
بس الأسد وشعب سوريه
ويباقي العرب يردون إلا فيزة رسمية

"I am Iraqi, I have Iraqi citizenship and do not want any other. Only al-Asad and the Syrian people opened their doors to Iraqis, the rest of the Arabs ask for an official visa."

Climate

Damascus was founded on the banks of the river Barada, which together with seven side arms formed an oasis surrounding the city.[89] Today, both river and oasis are nearly dry and heavily polluted, due to the rapid increase of the city's population in the past decades. Only when travelling up the north-eastern motorway towards the suburb of Qudsīa, along the tree-lined valley cut by the Barada, was it possible to imagine how Damascus must have once opened up to a fertile plain, surrounded by arid mountains. Old photo books about Damascus showed children swimming in the

---

[89] Ross Burns, *Damascus: A History* (Oxford: Routledge, 2007).

Barada as late as the 1980s. But at the time of field research, the Barada flowed through the city in a concreted canal, often only as a trickle and generally full of plastic bags, dead cats and sewage. During the spring of 2009 water levels suddenly rose to a gushing stream, as the snowmelt from the mountains came rushing down. But this was an exception: water reserves were so depleted that all areas of Damascus suffered water cuts at least occasionally and in some areas the provisions were so low or of such bad quality that drinking water was bought from street merchants driving around in water trucks.[90]

Arid plains and mountains of yellowish earth surrounded Damascus to the north, south and east; to the west lay the lusher Anti-Lebanon Mountains, which also provided the city with rain in winter. Summers were hot and dry in Damascus, with temperatures reaching over 40 degrees Celsius in July and August, in winter temperatures dropping towards zero, with rain, wind and dusty storms quite frequent. My field research was conducted between October and April, which meant that I benefited from the most pleasant times of the year in fall and spring, but that I also suffered through the surprisingly cold winter. Although the actual temperatures were not below anything I had experienced in the past, the poor insulation in the apartment I rented made even moderately low temperatures hard to bear. The usual heating option in Damascus homes was the so-called Sūbīa, a fuel-burning stove set up in the middle of a room with a pipe leading outside. Our flat was equipped with an ancient air-conditioning system (considered superior to the Sūbīa) but it often did not work and failed to properly heat the flat. All heating options were considered expensive in Syria, especially since the governments' recent reductions in subsidies had led to a huge increase in fuel costs, and as nearly everyone tried to save on heating, I rarely encountered a properly warm room anywhere during winter.

The socialscape of Damascus

Moving away from geography and infrastructure, the following section turns to a brief introduction to Damascus' socialscape, to give an idea of the social environment in which my field research was conducted. Social aspects of life and research can never be fixed realities to be analysed or understood in their entirety at any point in time. The aim of this section is to introduce events and practices that shaped the city during

---

[90] Observations in Damascus, early 2010

the time of my observation, and to discuss how in turn, the shape of the city affected the lives of its inhabitants. This analysis will serve to make the argument that practices and space can be explained with reference to the ideas that give rise to them, and that vice versa, ideas can be also be explained with reference to observed behaviour. This discussion is presented via an analysis of two Damascene neighbourhoods, Yarmuk and Jaramana. Firstly, the physical shape and 'look' of the Palestinian urban camp Yarmuk will be outlined. This 'look' was closely linked to national, regional and international policies concerning Palestine, which, in Yarmuk, were transformed into local action. Here, it became possible to observe the translation of abstract ideas, which influenced such local policies, into concrete human behaviour. More importantly for this thesis, due to the exceptional place that Palestinians occupied in Syria and the region, their lives had become an area in which the Syrian government intervened to confirm the Syrian states' sovereignty both at home and abroad. Yarmuk's space became an arena in which to observe sovereign-creating practices by the Syrian government. Secondly, the focus moves to the suburb of Jaramana, an area that had by 2009 been strongly shaped by recent Iraqi migration. The expressions of Iraqi identity in Jaramana and how they affected the urban space were again explained with reference to the techniques through which the Syrian government was managing Iraqi migrants and implementing Syrian state sovereignty. Presenting the analyses of these two neighbourhoods side by side conveys a sense of how Damascus as a city was also, and crucially, shaped by its imagined infrastructure of social identities, which was connected to, inter alia, divisions in wealth, education, the relationship of the local population to the government, and religion. This infrastructure was not visible to the casual tourist. But to any person living in the city for more than a few weeks, it would become strikingly obvious, from hearing Damascenes speak about different neighbourhoods or from experiencing herself how her identity changed in different areas: from wealthy tourist, to admired and envied cosmopolitan student, or to rejected stranger. Yarmuk and Jaramana were only tiny examples of this hugely complex social infrastructure, but serve as good examples, as they demonstrate how in Damascus, social identity did not only strongly influenced opportunities and choices, but was also tightly bound to and dependent on national and regional politics. Many of my research informants frequently referred to stereotypes and prejudices against particular social identities or complained about being discriminated against on the basis of their religion or nationality. Some

interlocutors complained about frequent, intrusive questions about their religion and/or nationality by acquaintances, which they found intrusive and rude. The crucial point to arise from these identity-related observations is a confirmation of identity's fluidity and of how quickly the mode through which identity is expressed and imprinted changes according to circumstance. Often, I could observe how the *meaning* of an interlocutor's identity changed when narrated against different contexts. For example, while 'being Iraqi' was regarded by my friend Hassan as a source of frustration, discrimination and negativity with regards to his chances for education, employment and travel, it became a source of pride when visiting an Iraqi restaurant and explaining Iraqi cuisine.

Neighbourhoods: Yarmuk

During my second week in Damascus in October 2009, as part of a general exploration of changes to the city since my last, long-term stay in 2007, I paid a visit each to the Palestinian urban-camp Yarmuk, and to Jaramana, a suburb known for its large population of Iraqis. The field notes taken at the time, and the additional impressions collected during many subsequent visits show a number of interesting differences between the two areas. While a direct comparison between Iraqi and Palestinian refugees is hardly useful from a policy perspective, the purpose of the comparison here is simply to analyse differences between Damascene neighbourhoods, and to show how strongly they are linked to the different roles that different population groups played in Syria's political edifice and in the construction of the body politic.

Yarmuk, a densely populated suburb, lay around eight km to the south of central Damascus. Depending on the traffic situation, a public transport journey from the city centre to Yarmuk lasted around 30-45 minutes. Yarmuk was created as an unofficial Palestinian camp in the 1940s and Palestinian national and political identity continued to be expressed in a highly visible, established and explicitly political manner throughout Yarmuk. Although at the time of fieldwork most of the area's inhabitants were Syrian, Yarmuk's streets were dotted with posters celebrating Palestinian martyrs and the liberation struggle. Offices of Palestinian institutions such as the Palestinian Liberation Army were present on the high street and the Palestinian Hospital was a central landmark in the area. Yarmuk's high street was officially

called Palestine Street, many side streets were named after Palestinian villages and many shops and offices in the area had explicitly Palestinian names such as al-Quds (the Arabic name of Jerusalem). The Palestinian colours were frequently displayed on posters and walls and the whole area had a politicised feel with regards to the continuing struggle for the liberation of Palestine. Yarmuk's space served as a link to the Palestinian homeland and shaped the way second, third and fourth generation Palestinians, born in Syria, experienced 'Palestine', its heritage and politics.[91] However Yarmuk's space could also be analysed as an expression of the way the Syrian government chose to integrate Palestinians and Palestine into the Syrian state, and how Syrian sovereignty was performed in relation to the Palestinian issue, both internally and externally. This issue was highlighted during a conversation with one of my Palestinian acquaintances, a man who had worked with various Palestinian organisations and had significant experience in dealing with Syrian state agents and bureaucracy. One evening, I remarked to him that I had noticed that more young Palestinians appeared to be interested in politics than their Syrian counterparts. Yazan[92] explained that because of the Syrian government's support for the Palestinian liberation struggle, Palestinians, in certain areas, had more freedom to discuss and get involved with politics than Syrians. For example, he told me with an ironic smile, if his organisation were interested in running a workshop on human rights, the government would not allow it. However if the workshop were framed as support for the human rights of Palestinians, they would have a much better chance in going ahead. Yazan's point was supported by the fact that displaying support for the broader Palestinian liberation struggle was an important element of the Syrian government's foreign and domestic strategy for creating legitimacy. Through portraying itself as a protector of 'Palestine' in its different manifestations the Syrian government reaffirmed the sovereignty of the Syrian state, its existence as a separate sphere of control, both overseas and at home. Palestinian identity, life and space in Syria was therefore closely tied to and shaped by sovereignty-creating practices of the Syrian state. It was in this light that the strong expression of Palestinian politics in Yarmuk could be partially explained in the Syrian context, in which public, political

---

[91] Laleh Khalili, "Grass-Roots Commemorations: Remembering the Land in the Camps of Lebanon," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 34, no. 1 (2004); *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine: The Politics of National Commemoration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Hadia Hakim, "Palestinian Identity-Formation in Yarmouk: Constructing National Identity through the Development of Space," (Irvine: University of California Irvine School of Social Sciences, 2009).
[92] All names of interlocutors have been changed.

statements other than loyalty to the president and Syrian patriotism were otherwise not tolerated.

Yarmuk also had a distinctly conservative, Muslim atmosphere and was a poor area: its buildings and roads showed many signs of dilapidation and age. Walking along some of the area's more narrow side streets, I noticed how dirty and poor they were, as field notes recall.[93] Unlike other parts of Damascus, central Yarmuk had not experienced a boom in new buildings, with the exception of a large, recently built or renovated mosque. The vast majority of women at the time of my visits wore headscarves and many also wore the long, simple and loose jackets preferred by conservative families. The growing social conservatism in Yarmuk was mentioned during my conversation with Yazan. Referring to this increased piety, he stated that *"this has been happening since the failure of Oslo"* adding that ten years ago, Yarmuk had been much less conservative than central Damascus, a situation that had now been reversed. Other informants linked the growing piety of Yarmuk's Palestinians to the growing influence of Hamas on Palestinian politics.[94] Such observations exemplified how national, regional and international policies influenced changing, local practices and spaces in Yarmuk. They also highlighted how the Palestinian situation in Syria ruptured traditional understandings of sovereignty as a neat division between territories, government and populations. Palestinians in Syria were a 'space' used by different state actors to manifest their sovereignty via a number of techniques that continued to construct Palestinians as exceptional in the Syria population. In line with this argumentation, it was interesting to note that Syrian government propaganda was notably less frequent in Yarmuk than elsewhere around the city. On the other hand, the presence of international actors, such as UNRWA, the UN agency responsible for Palestinians, and foreign aid donors was *more* visible, indicating the larger amount of international intervention in the area.

Neighbourhoods: Jaramana

Like Yarmuk, the suburb Jaramana also lay to the south of central Damascus. A bus journey from central Damascus to Jaramana took around 20-30 minutes. Until around 10 years ago Jaramana was relatively sparsely populated, retaining fields, small farms

---

[93] Field note 16 January 2009

and a rural character, and the area had a mixed population of mostly Christians and Druze. Since the upsurge in Iraqi migration in 2006, Jaramana had become known as a neighbourhood dominated by Iraqis; the influx contributed to a building boom that had seen all but a few of Jaramana's remaining fields vanish. In early 2010, perhaps half of Jaramana's apartment blocks were visibly new and often left unfinished, while parts of its previous infrastructure, such as an old water tower, small fields and the occasional farm shed, were overtaken by the urban growth and left obsolete. The apparent randomness in urban planning, emphasised by the absence of paved roads between five-storied apartment blocks and the sudden appearance of parcels of farmland or open, sandy squares between brand-new residencies, also gave Jaramana an atmosphere of transience and change. Unlike the official and government-sanctioned Palestinian presence in Yarmuk, in Jaramana the existence of Iraqis was made visible only through private means, such as the Iraqi names of restaurants and shops and the small-scale sale of Iraq paraphernalia, such as flags or key rings, and Iraqi food. Streets in Jaramana were full of such signs of Iraqi-presence, restaurants called Mosul or Baghdad were the most easily recognisable, whereas Iraqis also recognised outlets of Baghdadi restaurant chains. During my visit in 2007, I had seen half-destroyed or covered up shop-signs in Jaramana and had learnt that Syrian security forces had demanded that Iraqi shop-owners display their nationality less visibly (notably, Iraqis were not officially allows to open companies in Syria). Since that time, the authorities' position on this matter clearly had changed, as Iraqi names were now displayed frequently. As my fieldwork progressed and I became more familiar with Iraqi culture, I also recognised more practices and signs that marked Jaramana as 'Iraqi'. The sale of Samūn, a type of Iraqi bread, was a frequent sight, as were adverts announcing the sale of other, particular Iraqi goods. The large number of travel companies advertising journeys to Iraqi cities were further signs marking the Iraqi character of Jaramana, and, more indirectly, the large number of real estate agents pointed to the existence of a transient population seeking rented accommodation. Jaramana was also the only place in Damascus where I saw second-hand clothes shops (the area had two or three), which, as I later learned, were connected to the fact that many Iraqis, once selected for resettlement or immigration, were keen to sell those goods that they could not take abroad. In contrast with Yarmuk, generally no signs of Iraqi political activity were visible in Jaramana and there was no sign of any official support for the Iraqi presence from the Syrian or any

other government (the above-shown photograph of a pro-Syrian slogan referring to the Iraqi situation was a rare, and interesting, exception). Syrian government propaganda in Jaramana was highly visible: one of Jaramana's main squares was called 'President's square' (Saḥat al-Raīs, with a bust of Hafiz al-Asad) and it was noticeable that along with new pavements and buildings, several of the new-style billboards showing Bashar al-Asad had been built along Jaramana's high street. There were no signs or posters that expressed any particular opinion on the American-led invasion of Iraq, on the current political situation in Iraq or any other signs of Iraqi politics. One day, Jaramana's Iraqi identity was brought home to me in a particularly striking fashion during a visit to a mobile telephone shop. While waiting for the attendant to charge my telephone, I noticed to my surprise a rack with accessories showing images of Saddam Hussein in leader's pose. My surprise stemmed firstly from seeing such an unusual and blatant display of political preference, as I had found that, at least publicly, Iraqis in Syria were generally keen to avoid any form of political statement linked to the current situation in Iraq. Secondly, the violation of the Western media's taboo to praise Saddam, and the realisation that some people in Jaramana would *voluntarily* purchase pro-Saddam propaganda in an environment where they were not obliged to demonstrate allegiance, came as a shock to me, showing, no doubt, the extent to which I had unconsciously bought into the idea that the invasion of Iraq had been a moment of liberation. The point of narrating this vignette here is simply to emphasize that the expression of Iraqi identity in Jaramana's space was produced by individual, private action rather than through the actions of organisations or state institutions, as was possible in Yarmuk.

As in Yarmuk, the particular way that Iraqi identity was expressed in Jaramana could be explained partly with reference to the way that the Syrian government was choosing to integrate Iraqis into Syrian territory and population. Life in Jaramana was an expression of how the Syrian government managed Iraqis migrants in relation to the Syrian state, and about how the government was intervening in this newly emerged Iraqi space. For example, by making it very hard for Iraqis to obtain long-term, legal residency permits, the Syrian government was not only reaffirming the Syrian state's existence as a distinct and sovereign legal and physical territory, it had also struck a particular relationship with UNHCR, which cited one of the central reasons for its intervention in Syria the lack of secure residency for Iraqis. At the

same time however, the Syrian government welcomed and encouraged its portrayal as a generous host to Iraqi refugees, through which Syria's moral credentials as a state were being boosted on the international stage, and which also ensured gratitude and acquiescence of the Iraqi migrants. This combination of precariousness and tolerance through which the Syrian government governed Iraqi presence in Syria was reflected in the way that Iraqi identity was expressed in Jaramana: private and non-political, transient and changing, but visible and vibrant non-the less. As will be elaborated in later chapters, such broad, sovereignty-linked interventions of the Syrian government were interspersed with marked events, in which Syrian sovereignty would be displayed in full force in relation to Iraqi life and space, such as during the Iraqi election campaign in March 2010, when suddenly, Iraqi election posters flooded Jaramana in an obvious display of Syrian tolerance towards the political process in Iraq. It is also important to note the role that Iraqi migrants in Syria played in Syrian-Iraqi governmental relations, in which they could be used to either express friendship or hostility; this point will be elaborate in further chapters.

With regards to religion, Jaramana had a discernibly mixed character. The residency of Druze, Christian and Muslim people in the neighbourhood was visible through the presence of differing dress styles, religious symbols worn as jewellery or tattoos, the celebration of different religious holidays, differing shop opening times and the sale of religion-specific food items, such as halal meat or alcohol. The different degrees of piety and conservatism on display on Jaramana's streets added to the area's atmosphere of openness and lack of coherent community. More than once I remarked to acquaintances that Jaramana's transient or 'new' character allowed me to keep a low profile as a researcher. For unlike in other quarters, where landlords often lived in the same building as their tenants and neighbours knew each other since decades, in Jaramana such close social ties were less frequent or restricted to certain roads. As the other residents of the newly built apartment block I came to inhabit all appeared to be of differing backgrounds and largely ignored each other, the sudden arrival of two foreign students attracted less attention than it might have otherwise. Despite the fact that Iraqis in Syria had become a key opportunity of foreign humanitarian activity, it was interesting to note that the presence of foreign organisations in Jaramana was not highly visible. The only identifiable sign was that of the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (a Syrian government institution), despite the fact that a number of other organisations

were active in Jaramana in school rehabilitation and community services. Again this situation could be explained with reference to the Syrian government and the way it decided to perform Syrian sovereignty, which continued to maintain foreign organisations in a situation of limbo and fear, not allowing for obvious signs for their activity, and again, ultimately, this decision could be understood in terms of the unclear and uneasy space that Iraqis inhabited within the Syrian body politic.

Iraqi as refugees, migrants and guests in Damascus

At the time of field research Iraqi migration to Syria was many things. It was a discourse, a political development, a human tragedy and a funding opportunity. It was an individual and a collective experience, involving Iraqis, Syrians, state officials from around the world and humanitarian aid workers. It was a field covering as many physical locations as imaginary spaces, creating and breaking through material and ideational boundaries. To approach Iraqi migration in all its complexity was impossible and emphasized our limited ability as humans to perceive the world in its entirety, and consequent desire to categorise, simplify and limit. The following sections can only touch on a small number of the myriad meanings of Iraqi migration to Syria. The goal is therefore to introduce the reader to the complexity encountered during field research, to the various voices, positions and opinions heard and how they contributed to the nuanced understanding of sovereignty that this thesis hopes to express. The paragraphs run through the key pillars around which the political, humanitarian, academic and day-to-day conversations I encountered about Iraqi migration revolved, and provide a critical analysis of how these ideas link to the sovereignty-creating interventions taking place in Iraqi lives in Damascus.

Key Issues

A central issue regarding Iraqi migration to Syria at the time of research was the relative paucity of systematic knowledge about it. The UNHCR compiled basic statistics about those Iraqis registered with the organisation and had sponsored a few smaller-scale studies on particular questions however no large-scale surveying of the population had been undertaken. [95] The Syrian government resisted attempts by NGOs

---

[95] See for example UNHCR Syria, "UNHCR Syria Update Autumn 2010," in *UNHCR Syria Updates*, ed. UNHCR (Damascus: UNHCR Syria, 2010); Jeff Crisp et al., "Surviving in the city A review of UNHCR's operations for Iraqi refugees in urban areas of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria," (Geneva:

to conduct independent studies.[96] The most basic fact about Iraqi migration to Syria, namely how many Iraqis actually lived in Syria, remained in dispute, as in 2009 it became clear that the very large figures published by the Syrian government and quickly adopted by NGOs and the UN had been heavily inflated.[97] The fact that several NGOs in 2010 continued stating figures of 1-1.5 million Iraqis in Syria on their websites points to the way such numbers were linked to the funding and legitimacy of the humanitarian sector. But mostly, the absence of statistical knowledge concerning Iraqi migration and the dispute over the existing figures drew attention to the different governing techniques of the Syrian state and humanitarian actors. Humanitarian actors relied on as detailed and transparent information about Iraqis as possible to determine Iraqis' 'needs' and to mount biopolitical interventions targeted at intimate areas of Iraqi life.[98] The fact that Iraqis were distributed across Damascus and therefore much harder to access than if they had been concentrated in camps was a concern for humanitarian actors, as it made such interventions much more difficult to accomplish.[99] For the Syrian government on the other hand, the absence of independent numbers was a means to create a monopoly of knowledge, through which funders and NGOs could be influenced. The Syrian government largely governed Iraqis through creating a situation of limbo with regards to their residency, via bureaucratic and surveillance mechanisms. These techniques did not rely on statistical figures, but on a number of other measures, discussed further below in this thesis. A further important development regarding Iraqi migration to Syria was that since 2007, it had led to the unprecedented opening of Syria to humanitarian activity. At the time of field research, around a dozen international NGOs, focused on Iraqi refugees, were active, all having registered after 2007. Previous to 2007, Syria had been nearly completely closed to the operations of foreign NGOs and this change presented a significant political process. While all NGOs were required to sign a

UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service, 2009); Ali Ali and Kamel Dorai, "Under the Radar, but not invisible: Iraqi Activity in Syria's informal economic Sector," (Damascus: UNHCR, September 2010); UNHCR, UNICEF, and World Food Programme, "Assessment on the Situation of Iraqi Refugees in Syria," (Damascus: UNHCR UNICEF World Food Programme, March 2006).
[96] Enza Di Iorio and Martine Zeuthen, "The Benefits of Engaging and Building Trust with a Reluctant Government: The Experience of Community Center for Iraqis in Syria," in *Iraq Study Group*, ed. Refugee Cooperation (Middle East Institute, Washington DC, 2011).
[97] Conversation with expert on Iraqi migration, 29 October 2009
[98] The word 'needs' is placed here in quotation marks, as in humanitarian parlance, it refers to a small spectrum of material and educational lacks, rather than needs in a general sense.
[99] Crisp et al., "Surviving in the city A review of UNHCR's operations for Iraqi refugees in urban areas of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria." ; Interview with UNHCR official 21. January 2010

Memorandum of Understanding with the Syrian government (via the Syrian Arab Red Crescent) and were tightly controlled, their presence nevertheless introduced certain liberal governing practices previously absent from Syria. Initially, NGO operations were restricted to working with Iraqis only. However in 2009 and 2010 programmes began to include services for Syrian beneficiaries, usually expressed in percentages (20% Syrian, 80% Iraqi beneficiaries, for example), as it was a widely accepted principle that programmes focused on refugee populations should also deliver aid to underprivileged local people, to avoid fuelling resentment.[100] Notably, only smaller NGOs had been allowed to operate and no large American or any British NGO had been granted licences.

When thinking about Iraqi migration to Syria it was important to be aware of its financial aspect. While both the Syrian government and the humanitarian sectors stressed that Iraqi migration had been a burden for Syrian state budgets and consumers, due to the increased consumption of subsidised goods and rising real estate prices, the impact of Iraqi migration on the Syrian economy had not been thoroughly assessed and was not possible to estimate, due to a lack of economic data. From observations it was clear that Iraqis brought with them enormous amounts of cash and investment, and that for every Syrian paying higher rent, there was also a Syrian collecting it. From anecdotal evidence it was also likely that Iraqi migration contributed to increasing trade between the two countries. And whereas there was no clear evidence that the Syrian state had had to heavily invest in building new infrastructure for Iraqi migrants, humanitarian aid flows have been substantial, amounting in 2009 to at least USD 130 million.[101] As this money paid the salaries of international and Syrian employees in the aid sector, and funded clinics and schools in Syria, it also created interest in its continual flow, which partially explained some elements of the discourse surrounding Iraqi migration.

The humanitarian sector

---

[100] Mary B. Anderson, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace - or War* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc, 1999).
[101] The UNHCR budget in 2009 alone amounted to around USD 130 million, an employee at the European Commission in Syria stated in a conversation that the EC had contributed around USD 80 million in the same year. ; Field note 091009.

The humanitarian sector's discourse about Iraqis was dominated by its view of Iraqis as refugees, as people who were in need of protection, aid and a *durable solution*.[102] This vision was captured in the words of Janet Lim, UNHCR's Assistant High Commissioner, speaking during the launch of UNHCR's regional plan for Iraqi refugees in January 2010:

> *"Despite very difficult circumstances and their large numbers it can be said that Iraqi refugees have received the basic protection and assistance…that they so urgently needed when they fled and which they continue to need today. … The majority of Iraqis displaced in the region have the possibility to remain albeit temporarily and to have the protection space. They have access to health and education services and the most vulnerable have access to limited financial assistance…and in some cases to solutions such as resettlement, while the others wait for the possibility of return."*

This focus on vulnerability not only blended out those Iraqi migrants who had not registered with UNHCR, but also led to a curious blindness of humanitarian actors to those elements of Iraqi migrant lives that emphasised integration, self-help and continuation. For example, it was curious to hear several UNHCR officials repeat that Iraqis could not survive in Syria because they were not allowed to work, as in my daily observations, I constantly came across Iraqis who were employed despite the official ban. Similarly, I knew of and had seen many Iraqis running restaurants or shops, or receiving substantial rent payments from the Iraqi state and who were materially not worse off than Syrians in a similar situation. Further, the strong focus on vulnerability also led to an inflated interest among humanitarians in instances of extreme deprivation among Iraqis, such as the focus on prostitution of Iraqi women and children, regarded as the most vulnerable and most difficult to access beneficiaries. On the other hand, there was a clear reluctance on behalf of humanitarian actors to tackle questions regarded as political, first and foremost the pressing issue concerning the absence of long-term residency rights and the occasional deportation of Iraqis. A further analysis of these puzzles, which can only be mentioned in passing here, is provided in chapter three on UNHCR.

Syrians and the Syrian state

---

[102] UNHCR strives towards providing one of three durable solutions for refugees: voluntary return, integration or resettlement. UNHCR, "UNHCR Resettlement Handbook," (Geneva: UNHCR, November 2004).

Syrian speech, writing and behaviour towards Iraqi migration I encountered was often contradictory, reflecting a mix of feelings and opinions of Arab solidarity, xenophobic prejudice, regional politics and tolerance. One of the most notable facts was that both Syrian government officials and other Syrians rarely used the Arabic word 'refugee' ('lāji'') when talking about Iraqis. While the government's news agency SANA regularly used the term 'refugees' when reporting on Iraqis, in public appearances, Syrian officials referred to Iraqis as brothers or guests; the unease about the term 'refugee' was possibly linked to fears that it could have implied a comparison with the Palestinians in Syria, the original refugee population, and, therefore might have conferred a certain status onto Iraqis, and the impression that the Syrian government accepted Iraqis to stay long term. The official position of the Syrian government in its interactions with other governments and international agencies, was that Iraqis were expected to return or move on elsewhere. Yet apart from the support for UNHCR's resettlement programme and the opening towards NGOs, actions by state institutions in Syria's domestic space rather signalled greater tolerance and patience.

The single speech witnessed during fieldwork in which a Syrian state official referred to Iraqis as refugees made an explicit comparison between the 'two occupations' in the region – that of Israel in Palestine and that of the US in Iraq.[103] Despite this couching of Iraqi migration in such terms of Arab solidarity, the Syrian government also frequently portrayed Iraqi migrants as a financial burden and a threat to social peace and prosperity. For example, an article by Syria's deputy foreign minister Faisal al-Miqdād begins by stating that

> "This heavy number of arrivals has had an extreme effect on all facets of life in Syria, particularly on the services which the state offers to citizens. There has been a sharp increase in the cost of living and the unexpected weight of numbers has had dramatic impacts on the infrastructure and the economy."*[104]*

Government documents also made reference to increasing crime rates, associating this development with Iraqis.[105]

---

[103] This speech was held in January 2010, during a UNHCR conference in Damascus.

[104] Faisal al-Miqdad, "Iraqi refugees in Syria," *Forced Migration Review* Special Issue, no. June 2007 (2007).

[105] Syrian Arab Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Paper presented by the Government of Syrian Arab Republic to the International Conference on Addressing the Humanitarian Needs of the Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons inside Iraq and in the neighbouring Countries," in *International*

In casual conversations and interviews, Syrian acquaintances and friends showed a mix of unease about Iraqi migration and feelings of pity and solidarity. The following comments of two female, Syrian interlocutors demonstrate these mixed emotions in exemplary form. Both women regularly interviewed Iraqis during their work with a local, catholic charity and the International Organisation for Migration ('IOM'). One of the women first talked about Iraqi suffering in a compassionate tone, stating that she *"saw young Iraqi teenagers, 13 years, arrested for prostitution and actually she was trafficked and in a terrible situation, traumatised".* A few minutes later she chimed into her relatives' description of Iraqis as notorious cheats and liars, adding that *"Iraqis lied incredibly often"*, *"more than the Lebanese when they were displaced during the 2006 war"* and that even she, as a lawyer, *"was fooled by them and had to be very smart to know whether they were telling the truth".*[106] The meanings Syrians, in both official and private capacity, attached to Iraqi migration were thus ambiguous, reflecting quite neatly the government's political standing on the matter. Xenophobia did not translate into widespread anti-Iraqi violence, however conversations often revealed mutual distrust and a common Iraqi complaint concerned their experiences of being cheated by Syrians, who were aware that as foreigners, Iraqis were ignorant of local prices.[107] Interestingly, the reasons for the sudden increase in Iraqi migration were rarely mentioned spontaneously by Syrians during my conversations, neither the US-led invasion, nor the sectarian civil war.

Iraqis

Given the large variety of wealth, education, religion among the Iraqi migrant population in Damascus, and the different life experiences of men and women, teenagers and children, general statements about how Iraqis viewed their lives in Damascus during 2009/2010 were hardly possible. This brief section reflects on the comments that I heard from or about around 80 Iraqis living in Damascus or travelling regularly to the city. The vast majority in this group belonged to an urban, moderately privileged class, valued education and only expressed moderate degrees of sectarianisms and religious piety. Common to all were feelings of regret, anger,

---

Conference on Addressing the Humanitarian Needs of the Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons inside Iraq and in the neighbouring Countries (Geneva2007).
[106] Field note 091009a
[107] In 2009, minor violent clashes between Iraqis and Palestinians were reported to have taken place in the neighbourhood of Yarmouk.

sadness and incomprehension about what had happened in their country and their neighbourhoods, and most had lost relatives and friends through violence. Many had also experienced violent incidents directly and had lived through various stages of displacement, often in different locations before arriving in Damascus. The dominant presentation of Iraqi experience in Damascus that I encountered among Iraqis themselves was one of lack of perspective and stability, reflected in the two often-repeated phrases of 'mā kū mustaqbal' ('there is no future') and 'mā kū mustammara' ('there is no long-term settlement, i.e. residency'). Similarly the lack of good employment opportunities, which mostly relegated Iraqis to seeking relatively unskilled labour and barred opportunities for many engineers, doctors and lawyers to work in their profession, was often emphasised. Aside from these predominant worries, which often combined with a planned departure from Syria either through UNHCR resettlement or further migration, interlocutors also offered positive assessments of the overall situation in Syria, such as frequent comments about the security of Damascus, the lack of sectarian discrimination and the freedom available for women to move around without being harassed. Few interlocutors associated their stay in Damascus with opportunities; such a perspective was found, for example, among those who had arrived in the city specifically to participate in aid programmes, or who conducted cross-border trade with Iraq, or concerned those families in which male relatives worked in Iraq while the rest of the family stayed in greater safety in Damascus.

Reflexivity and positionality

This last section briefly describes and analyses personal experiences during fieldwork, and the intellectual and emotional responses to it. The reason for adding these paragraphs are not a desire to use the fieldwork experience as a self-finding exercise, but to provide the reader with a thicker description of the context in which my findings were taken.[108] This will not only allow for a smoother unfolding of the narrative of this thesis, as later chapters can reference background material set out here, but also better explain the paths taken by the research, why some people were spoken to and not others, and why some questions were asked, but not others.

---

[108]Jennifer Robertson, "Reflexivity Redux: A Pithy Polemic on "Positionality," *Anthropological Quarterly* 75, no. 4 (2002).

A few months into the field research, I was surprised at how much tension and discomfort I was experiencing, and how strong the ethical dilemmas I had read about proved to be in practice. As already referred to above, I considered myself relatively familiar with Damascus and relished an increased confidence, due to my better language abilities and increased age and confidence. But although overall, measured by the gained material, knowledge and friendships, the fieldwork was a success, I look back on it with feelings of regret, sadness and unease. A simple explanations of these associations could be that I absorbed the negative situation that many of my informants found themselves in. However it appears these emotions are better explained with reference to the particular tensions presented by ethnographic research, exacerbated by the challenges posed by the environment in Damascus.[109] Although I was committed to conducting my research in an ethical manner, I was not so naïve to believe that I would be able to completely overcome the structural hierarchy between researcher and informant. I was keen to offer reciprocity to the Iraqi migrant community, however was also wary to maintain some emotional distance from the extreme suffering that some of my informants had experienced. My aim was to conduct research in a careful, transparent and respectful way, not endangering my participants through unnecessary exposure and avoiding the raising of expectations that I would not be able to follow through on. Despite this quite practical attitude, I soon began feeling disempowered and unable to steer my research according to these principles. The following paragraphs will illustrate some of these tensions by running through four moments of the research process: gaining access, the experience of paranoia, the blurring of research and friendship, and navigating conflicts within the community of research informants.

Gaining access

Before travelling to Damascus, I felt confident that I would be able to establish a field site relatively quickly, as I already had a small network of contacts and had conducted research in the city before. I was aware of the entry of a number of foreign NGOs to Syria and had thought that their presence should significantly ease the research process, and planned to offer voluntary work in exchange for research access to Iraqi

---

[109] Kimberly Huisman, "'Does This Mean You're Not Going to Come Visit Me Anymore?": An Inquiry into an Ethics of Reciprocity and Positionality in Feminist Ethnographic Research*," *Sociological Inquiry* 78, no. 3 (2008).

migrants. For reasons of paranoia (set out below) I did not contact any NGOs before departing for Damascus. Within two weeks of arriving and after conducting a number of initial meetings I realised that my assumptions about being able to work with a foreign NGO had been false. The foreign aid workers I encountered were very fearful of engaging in any behaviour that might draw the attention and/or wrath of the Syrian authorities and were not willing to push the boundaries of government control, which precluded even meetings with foreigners not approved by the government. I reacted to this discovery with incomprehension and anger, as I interpreted the foreign NGO workers' behaviour as hypocritical acquiescence by organisations describing themselves as agents of democracy and positive change. Due to my previous experience of working in Syria I thought that I had a better understanding of what kind of activities could be conducted within the 'red line' than the aid workers, who had often only spent a few months in the country. I also had a hunch, later confirmed through a number of conversations, that some NGO employees to a degree relished the excitement of working in an atmosphere of state repression, as it lent an air of drama and excitement, and therefore importance, to their work.[110] Their behaviour struck me as self-important and cowardly, especially given that Iraqi migrants, in an infinitely more vulnerable situation, were happy to meet me and give interviews. More importantly, I now faced the obstacle of developing a network of Iraqi informants without any institutional affiliation. After not making good headway for several weeks, I fell into a state of panic, thinking that my research might become a failure. Eventually, through support from my supervisor, some lucky turns and perseverance I managed to pull through, however my initial confidence that I would be a successful researcher was shaken.

Blurring boundaries and paranoia

In accordance with my ethical guidelines, whenever I encountered a potential research informant I clarified my position as a research student focusing on Iraqi migration. As I did not possess a research permit, such openness carried a certain risk of discovery and expulsion by Syrian security and immigration officials, but based on conversations with experienced Syrian friends, I decided that a degree of transparency, coupled with a low profile and good reputation, would be a more useful

---

[110] Field note 301009

strategy than creating a web of lies. Despite this openness about my intentions, the boundaries between friendship and research soon began to blur with those informants I began spending significant amounts of time with. Sitting down to take notes on conversations and events, I felt a sense of betrayal, as I was convinced that my informants were not considering that I would be doing this regularly. The act of creating written knowledge about people who trusted and liked me highlighted the hierarchy between us and felt cold and uncaring. Worse, it felt close to what I imagined the spies and informers of the Syrian intelligence services would do; I had at least one friend whose career had been badly affected after someone in her office had filed a 'report' about her.

Ethnographic handbooks recommend that researchers remind informants about their activities by brandishing notebooks or mentioning their university affiliation repeatedly in conversations as reminders.[111] Although I often remembered this advice during informal conversations or observations when boundaries began to blur, I guiltily refrained from following it, in order not to disrupt the flow of information and trust. Over time, especially after I began investing time and effort into voluntary teaching and provided other help to a small number of informants, these negative feelings faded. Nevertheless, a degree of guilt about not using my privileged position to do more, and using my informants' time to advance my own career lingers to this day.

As all Syria-focused researchers who I know, I experienced phases of paranoid fear of surveillance by the Syrian intelligence services. At its worse, such fear manifested itself in the conviction that I was being followed, believing that my mobile phone was tapped or that my landlady or other superficial acquaintances were watching and informing on me. After an unpleasant incident at the border while travelling back from Jordan, when I was accused by border guards of having travelled to Israel and nearly refused re-entry, I experienced nearly two weeks of heightened fear and lack of productivity, as I hardly wanted to leave the house. The more I tackled situations previously thought of as difficult and risky, the more confident I became in my research, and after around three months rarely felt consciously paranoid. But the pervasive fear of surveillance that formed part of everyday life in Syria at that time

---

[111] See for example Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes.

contributed to an overall feeling of lack of control and powerlessness that gradually developed during my fieldwork.

Politics vs. Research

When conducting ethnographic research in a cultural environment different from one's own it occasionally becomes necessary to hide elements of one's personality or beliefs to avoid offence or surprise.[112] In Syria, the social taboos I had to adapt to chiefly concerned questions of religion, gender, and politics. Through previous, negative experiences, I had, for example, learned in Syria not to share freely the fact that I was not baptized and did not believe in god, nor that I was tolerant of homosexuality or extra-marital sexual relations. Not only did I not volunteer such opinions, during interviews and conversations I occasionally also agreed with statements that mildly differed from my opinions in order to create a positive atmosphere and to avoid lengthy explanations. Occasionally I noted, but not contradicted, statements that I felt were morally wrong and that in other circumstances I would have felt morally obliged to oppose. Continuously performing a personality different from one's own is mentally exhausting and unsatisfying and, unless one finds other elements of common ground to bond over, leads to insincerity and deception. I experienced, in different degrees, all of these aspects during fieldwork.[113] The most difficult situation in this respect arose when I became involved in a conflict at an NGO where I volunteered as a teacher, and at which around a dozen of my informants were students or directors. The NGO was a small organisation providing education services to Iraqi high school graduates, helping them to apply to US colleges with scholarships. After around two months of observations, I noticed strong, unspoken tensions between the directors and the young Iraqi students, which culminated in the dismissal of an Iraqi girl from the programme, who had become one of my closest acquaintances of the group. As I interpreted the events surrounding the dismissal as an abuse of highly unequal power relations between the NGO directors

---

[112]Barrett and Cason, Overseas Research: A Practical Guide.

[113] It is interesting to note that many ethnographic handbooks do not mention this aspect of field work, and emphasise the need for trust and positive relationships, without referring to the deception that it inevitably involves on behalf of the researcher. This further leads to the question whether ethnographic work is indeed more ethical than more superficial research in which roles are clear and which does not require the building of relationships of trust. See also Huisman, "'Does This Mean You're Not Going to Come Visit Me Anymore?": An Inquiry into an Ethics of Reciprocity and Positionality in Feminist Ethnographic Research*."

and the Iraqi students, I felt a strong responsibility to intervene and express my concerns to the NGO directors, especially as they constantly spoke about their belief in equality and democracy. On the other hand I was aware that such a step would endanger my access to this carefully developed field site and lead to open conflict, which was stringently avoided at the organisation. Wracked with anger and pity for my friend, who was distraught at the news and felt that her future had been destroyed, I eventually decided to write an open letter to the organisation, which led to a complete severance of contact between the directors and me and my immediate dismissal as a voluntary teacher. The purpose of narrating this episode is to clarify the type of emotional tension and conflicts of conscience and responsibility that can occur during ethnographic research, which necessarily requires close personal relationships with informants. While it certainly formed an apex, the episode points out the wider context of field work, in which I constantly had to renegotiate my understanding and acceptance of certain gender roles, religious beliefs, sectarianism and other worldviews, often in contradiction to what I believed was morally, factually or intellectually correct. The continuous, conscious and unconscious questioning of my identity, ability and knowledge, I believe, is one of the key reasons of the mixed emotions that I associate with the field research today.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a thick, analytical description of the context in which the field research for this thesis took place, and in which its key arguments unfold. To understand sovereignty as lived, localised and individual power relations, it is necessary to understand at least aspects of the rich empirical context that these power relations occur in. Further, to remain true to the ontological, epistemological and methodological beliefs presented in this thesis, it is necessary to alert readers to the individual experience of the researcher and theorist, which made up her position towards research matter and analysis.

Damascus' urban landscape formed the physical reality in which the thesis' field research was undertaken. Its landscape and social-scape were characterised by different levels of wealth, service provisions and governance between town centre and periphery, all aspects reflected in architectural styles, urban design, the amount of garbage on the street and the type of buildings located centrally and in the suburbs.

Heavy traffic and government propaganda in the form of posters, billboards and statues pervaded all of Damascus, however the degree of both also varied from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. Finally, the city's desert climate and its waning water resources were aspects of life experienced by everyone living in the city. Overlapping and intertwining with these physical aspects of Damascus was the city's 'social'scape, the hills and valleys of different classes, different religions, different nationalities and different relationships with the Syrian state. These social identities of people and entire neighbourhoods stood in a dynamic relationship with the 'look' of these neighbourhoods, as they influenced the kind of shops, street names and symbols, religious institutions and so forth present in an area.

Of particular importance to the arguments of this thesis were the varying ways in which individuals and communities in Damascus stood in relationship to the Syrian state. As an example, this chapter analysed how the presence of Palestinians and Iraqis, both migrant communities, yet with a very different connection with the Syrian state, was expressed in the two neighbourhoods of Yarmuk and Jaramana. Life in these neighbourhoods showed how forms of distinctively Palestinian and Iraqi expression were closely linked to the way the Syrian government had chosen to integrate both populations into the Syrian body politic. The different techniques used by the Syrian government to govern Palestinians and Iraqis demonstrated the Syrian state's sovereignty, as they produced Syrian territory as a distinct sphere of influence and controlled the population living on this territory in a particular way. Iraqi life and identity, and the field of Iraqi migration, were constructed differently in the discourse of humanitarian actors, the Syrian state and Iraqis themselves. As the following chapters will argue, given that a person's way of life was closely connected to how her identity related to the Syrian state, and therefore their place within the system of sovereignty, its production was a key, sovereignty-creating moment. For example, UNHCR's framing of Iraqis as vulnerable refugees in need of protection posited them in a different relationship with the state than the Syrian state's frequent portrayal of Iraqis as brothers, or as a drain on resources. While the extremely varied Iraqi migrant population in Damascus made it hard to put forward generalisations, the frequent declarations by Iraqi informants that their life in Syria lacked stability and a future highlighted the techniques of opacity and unreliability of rule on which the government relied to govern Iraqi migrants.

Finally, this chapter outlined aspects of my personal experiences while conducting fieldwork, pointing out a number of important ethical dilemmas and challenges posed by the research environment in Damascus and by the ethnographic method.

Chapter Three

The States on Syrian Territory I: Syria

From the perspective of the 'sovereign ideal', which dominates most thinking about the international, it was the things that the Syrian government did *not* do with Iraqi migrants, which were perhaps of greatest relevance. Unlike what is stipulated, implied and assumed by international migration law, humanitarian rhetoric and much policy and academic expertise, Syrian state bureaucracy did *not* clearly categorize Iraqis as migrants, and Iraqis were *not* slotted into defined bureaucratic procedures that would produce them stringently as foreign citizens, as the 'outside' of sovereignty. As was the case in other areas of state rule in Syria, Iraqis' relationship with the Syrian state depended on individual characteristics, rather than standardised regulations, and was treated as a political, rather than a technical relationship. Rather than rely on pervasive bureaucratic processes to distinguish clearly between national and foreigner, Syrian authorities enforced the same, essential 'red lines' of behaviour towards Iraqis as they did for Syrians, or other foreigners. Considered from the perspective of the 'sovereign ideal' of the nation state, this was remarkable, especially as Syria and Iraq were not enjoying particularly positive inter-state relations or had signed agreements on the free movement of people. In fact, in other policy areas, the Syrian-Iraqi border was strongly enforced and controlled, for examples concerning the entry of foreign fighters into Iraq via Syria. As will be repeatedly argued in this chapter, absence of predictable and standardized bureaucratic state procedures was a key element of the broader governance techniques through which the Syrian government mobilised and enforced domestic sovereignty.

By focusing on the sovereignty-constructing practices of the Syrian state towards different actors, located at different 'levels' of the sovereignty/state imaginary (at the 'grassroots', or the 'international'), this chapter demonstrates how Syrian state sovereignty, and the domestic/international divide, was produced as an *effect* of these practices. Importantly and interestingly, Syrian sovereignty-constructing practices in the domestic realm were based on different social relations than those assumed by the sovereign ideal, which focused on citizenship, representation and the independence of

the law. Conversely, towards international, extra-territorial audiences such as UN representatives, foreign donors, the humanitarian community or foreign journalists, Syrian government agents positioned themselves firmly within the liberal 'refugee' discourse, that is part of the sovereign ideal, and referred to the standard staples of this ideal. In *these* instances, Syria appeared as a unity of territory, government and national population and as a generous sovereign, who, out of humanitarian impulse, had decided to shelter the threatened Iraqi foreigners from the dangerous realm beyond Syria's borders. Through this behaviour, Syrian state agents produced the Syrian state as a sovereign member of the international community, that respected the norms and laws of this community and that therefore had be recognised as a legitimate sovereign. Further, this chapter analyses the role that Iraqi migration played in the inter-state relations between the Syrian and the Iraqi state, as well as the effects of the humanitarian sector on Syrian sovereignty. These different agents managed Iraqis in different ways and thus created transforming, overlapping power relations, through which they not only governed Iraqi lives, but also each other.

The absence of routine and standard in Syrian state institutions lies at the centre of an important difficulty, which concerns the relationship between the Syrian *government* and the Syrian *state*. The practices implemented by Syrian authorities were so varied and personalised that the institutions of state, government and individual became difficult to define, compartmentalise or separate. This characteristic of Syrian politics has been recognised in the literature.[114] The constantly moving location of state/government power could not and should be understood as fixed, as it changed from request to request, from person to person, from official to official, always depending on the particular power relationships at play in a given situation. The malleability and unpredictability of the government-state-individual relationship was a key element of governance in Syria; it was crucial to accept it as constantly changing and to accept that in certain instances, it was not possible to fully separate the three elements in this relationship.

The Syrian state clearly existed as an independent entity through physical structures (ministerial, military and other institutional buildings, border posts, the Syrian flag

---

[114] Volker Perthes, *The political economy of Syria under Asad* (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 1995); "Syria's bourgeoisie and the Ba`th," *Middle East report* 21, no. 3(170) (1991). Eyal Zisser, *Commanding Syria* (London: IB Tauris, 2007).

etc), through relatively constant human relationships and activities (parliamentary elections and meetings, ministerial posts, army service, cabinet meetings, presidential speeches etc), and through state-owned economic assets (state-owned enterprises, customs revenue, weapons/army assets, public hospitals etc). Cabinet reshuffles, enforcement of military service, intensive bureaucratic procedures to legally open a business, passports and state-wide educational procedures marked the existence of the particular, territorially limited order of the Syrian state that was independent of personnel changes or individual power. These structures, which were those of a modern state, modelled on the structures of the former colonial state France, all signified and produced Syrian state sovereignty.

But considering the internal institutional procedures *within* these state structures showed that processes (such as the obtaining of a residency permit, or of a particular document, or signature, or stamp) were not consistent and not defined by routine bureaucracy or the law. Instead, outcomes were often highly influenced by idiosyncrasies, for example by a person's status. Or it could be the case that a particular clerk was not too sure what the correct procedure should be, so he requested different actions from one 'citizen' than a second clerk would ask from another, to complete a particular bureaucratic routine. Or a particular clerk might feel benevolent, or assess a situation differently, or have a better/worse relationship with superiors and therefore act differently. The relationship between the state, present through institutions and legal procedures, and the individual, present through human activity and human relations, was highly blurred in the Syrian context. The personalised aspect of Syrian state structures created a particular form of governance and a particular form of integration of Iraqi migrants into the Syrian body politic, and thus a particular form of state sovereignty. The highly individualised way that state power was applied in Syria resulted in a situation, in which a person's nationality was not the defining feature in his/her relationship with the state, unlike what was assumed by the sovereign ideal.

The blurring in Syria between government, individual and state culminated in the fact that the occupancy of the presidency, Syria's highest executive office, was independent of state procedures and had been captured by a single family, through

personal power relationships.[115] This capture ensured that the person occupying the presidency, an element of the *governmental* structure as designated by the *state*, enjoyed extraordinary personal power and, crucially, did not change.[116] Of importance for this blurring of individual, government and state structure was the fact that the Syrian constitution had been suspended for 40 years and the country was under emergency rule, justified by the latent state of war between Syria and Israel. The emergency law provided a veneer of officialdom to the arbitrariness of law enforcement, and allowed for the recourse to questions of national security by the government, when arresting and convicting opposition figures.[117]

The arguments and description in this chapter unfold within a theoretical framework that draws on a variety of academic writing. Ideas and arguments about sovereignty in post-colonial settings are an important inspiration, as are critical interrogations of sovereignty-construction taken from development studies and post-modern IR theory.[118] Syria-focused literature, both academic and policy-focused, is an important reference, as are analyses of governance in the Middle East, which do away with the dichotomy of democratic/authoritarian, and approach Middle Eastern states from a historical sociology perspective.[119] The chapter is organised into two broad sections.

---

[115] Hanna Batatu, "Some Observations on the Social Roots of Syria's Ruling, Military Group and the Causes for its Dominance," *Middle East Journal* 35, no. 3 (1981); David Lesch, *The New Lion of Damascus: Bashar al-Asad and Modern Syria* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); Alan George, *Syria : neither bread nor freedom* (London: Zed Books, 2003).

[116] Analysts of Syrian affairs often use the shorthand 'regime' to imply the blurring between personal, governmental and state power, but given the terms vagueness, I will avoid it in my analysis.

[117] The emergency rule was clearly relevant, however its importance as an 'independent variable' for the analysis of governance in Syria is low, given that the independent power of the law was generally low in Syria. The emergency law was rather a rhetorical and legal strategy used by government agents to retain power and legitimacy. It also plays a role in Syria's foreign relations, as its continued existence is justified (rightly or wrongly, a matter of debate) by the state of war with Israel. This view of the emergency law was confirmed during mid-2011, when, as a reaction to country-wide protests, the government lifted the emergency laws, yet arrests, torture and killings by the security forces continued unhampered.

[118] See for example Biersteker and Weber, *State sovereignty as social construct*. David Campbell, *Writing security - United States foreign policy and the politics of identity*, Writing security - United States foreign policy and the politics of identity (Manchester University Press, 1992); Dillon, "The Scandal of the Refugee – Some Reflections on the "Inter" of International Relations and Continental Thought."; Mark Duffield, "Governing the borderlands: decoding the power of aid," *Disasters* 25, no. 4 (2001); Barry Hindess, "Neo-liberal Citizenship," *Citizenship Studies* 6, no. 2 (2002); Mark B. Salter, *Barbarians and Civilization in International Relations* (London: Pluto Press, 2002).

[119] For Syria, see for example Raymond Hinnebusch et al., *Syrian Foreign Police and the United States From Bush to Obama*, ed. University of St Andrews Centre for Syrian Studies, St Andrews Papers on Contemporary Syria (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2010); Raymond A. Hinnebusch, *Syria : revolution from above* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2001); Jörg Michael Dostal and Anja Zorob, *Syria and the Euro-Mediterranean Relationship*, ed. University of St Andrews Centre for Syrian Studies, St Andrews Papers on Contemporary Syria (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2008). For the Middle East, see for example Francesco Cavatorta, "The Convergence of Governance: Upgrading Authoritarianism in the

The first part focuses on the interactions between the Syrian state and Iraqis, looking at different bureaucratic and political elements in this relationship. The second part focuses on the interactions between the Syrian state and several international actors also engaged in the management of Iraqi migration. The conclusion draws on both parts to posit the argument that the transformations to Syrian sovereignty occurring through Iraqi migration were part of a broader - if unclear, hesitant and stuttering – move of Syrian sovereignty towards neo-liberal forms of power.

Syrian state sovereignty in the context of post-2003 Iraqi migration

In the months leading up to the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq, mass-displacement of Iraqis into neighbouring countries was predicted as one of the many possible disastrous effects of the war. Highlighting the central importance of population control and management for the construction of legitimacy and sovereignty, the Syrian government reacted harshly to foreign articles and suggestions that it was preparing camps and emergency supplies to receive Iraqi war-refugees. This rejection was based on the view that such preparation could be understood as an implicit acceptance of the coming war, an attack on the notion of staunch Arab nationalism that the Syrian government publically subscribes to. This notion included the view that "since 1948, the Arab nation has decided that it does not leave its land", which underscored how tightly, in this rhetoric, the issue of migration was connected with territory and sovereignty, emphasised by the continuously painful issue of Palestinian displacement since the creation of Israel.[120] Whether the Syrian government had indeed prepared for a mass influx of Iraqis or not, the immediate aftermath of the war did not result in large-scale Iraqi immigration. Large numbers of Iraqis only began arriving in Syria in 2006, when the rapidly deteriorating living conditions in Iraq began to show the extent of the US' failure to ensure political stability, let alone 'democracy' in the country. The particular coincidence of political events and the importance of the Iraq situation for domestic politics in the US and other countries,

---

Arab World and Downgrading Democracy Elsewhere?," *Middle East Critique* 19, no. 3; Raymond Hinnebusch, "Toward a Historical Sociology of State Formation in the Middle East," *Middle East Critique* 19, no. 3; Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*; Reinoud Leenders, "'Regional conflict formations': Is the Middle East next?," *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 5 (2007).

[120] A quote attributed to Buthaina Sha'aban, a senior member of the Syrian government and frequent commentator on Arab affairs, in a reaction to the suggestion that Syria was preparing for Iraqi refugees. Quoted in Bar'el, Z. 2003, 'Solo voices in the Arab chorus', *Haaretz*, 4 April 2003, viewed 7 February 2011, <http://www.haaretz.com/news/features/solo-voices-in-the-arab-chorus-1.13939>.

meant that Iraqi migration became an issue of political mobilisation particularly in the US and Europe, placing pressure on governments to assume responsibility for Iraqi refugees' plight. This in turn led to an enormous influx of donor money into the region, primarily channelled through UNHCR and the EC, which allowed for the creation of a large, vocal and visible humanitarian programme aimed at Iraqis. In the Syrian context, and especially on Syrian territory, this humanitarian activity was without precedent, as Syria had remained largely closed to humanitarian NGOs and had not been the recipient of large-scale international funds. Post-2003 Iraqi migration, which might have remained a regional phenomenon, developed into a much broader social space, involving politics, locations, documents, employment opportunities, funds, and communication across the world and on the internet. Importantly for Syrian politics and production of sovereignty, Syrian governance strategies and treatment of the Iraqis received significant international attention, and had an impact both on Syrian government agents at home and abroad, and on the availability of international funds flowing into the country. The exposure of Syrian politics towards Iraqi migration also turned the issue into one of high importance for relations between the Syrian state and important powers in Europe, the US and the humanitarian sector.[121]

The expansion of humanitarian governance of Iraqi migrants on Syrian territory, as well as the resettlement and immigration policies of other states towards Iraqis, had an effect on the conditions of possibility for the construction of Syrian sovereignty. Syrian society broadly, and Syrian government and public sector agents more specifically, were exposed to the discourse on refugees and migrants used by the humanitarian sector and other states, closely in line with the ideal of modern sovereignty and its particular forms of inclusion and exclusion.[122] The high visibility of Syrian politics towards Iraqis and the interference in these politics by a variety of

---

[121] Geraldine Chatelard, "What Visibility conceals. Re-embedding Refugee Migration from Iraq," in *Dispossession and Displacement. Forced Migration in the Middle East and Africa*, ed. Dawn Chatty (London: British Academy, 2009); Patricia Weiss Fagen, "Iraqi Refugees: Seeking Stability in Syria and Jordan," ed. Georgetown University Institute for the Study of International Migration (Washington DC: Georgetown University, 2007); Salome Philmann and Nathalie Stiennon, "10,000 Refugees from Iraq A Report on Joint Resettlement in the European Union," (Brussels: International Catholic Migration Commission, International Rescue Commitee, May 2010).
[122] Catherine Dauvergne, "Challenges to Sovereignty: Migration Laws for the 21st Century," in *New Issues in Refugee Research*, ed. UNHCR (Geneva: UNHCR, 2003); Malkki, *Purity and exile : violence, memory and national cosmology among Hutu refugees in Tanzania*; Salter, *Barbarians and Civilization in International Relations*.

powerful actors made Iraqi migration to the country such a rich opportunity for the study of the construction and transformation of sovereignty.

Constructing domestic sovereignty: Syrian state agents and Iraqis

One of the most interesting aspects of Iraqi migration to Syria concerned the interactions between Iraqis, Syrian-state officials and Syrian policy making. The consistencies and inconsistencies, congruence and incongruence between these different levels of rule gave insights into how population governance was created in Syria, and how the state and its sovereignty existed through these interactions. Comparing the daily-life experiences of Iraqi interlocutors with state rhetoric about Iraqi plight revealed significant inconsistencies and contradictions. Similarly, comparing the assumptions about Iraqis contained in humanitarian programmes with official state policies, proved key to understanding the different levels on which Syrian state sovereignty was constructed and upheld, most importantly concerning the blurred line between internal, 'domestic' sovereignty and external, 'international' sovereignty.

The lived experience of Iraqis in Syria differed in important aspects from the way Iraqi immigration was constructed as an abstract, social 'field' in media stories, NGO reports and Syrian state presentations and policies. But at the same time, the effects of certain, powerful ideas about how Iraqi life must be going on in Syria, which shaped governmental and NGO interventions in Iraqis' lives, filtered into Iraqi lived reality and affected how Iraqis viewed themselves, what hopes they had, what opportunities they confronted and how they positioned themselves vis-à-vis the Syrian and the Iraqi states. Ideas and physical realities of Iraqi migrants' existence stood in constant interaction and formed a dynamic equilibrium, each influencing the other. The following paragraphs will focus on the Syrian state's presence in Iraqi daily life, both in personal interactions with officers and clerks, as well as on the more abstract level of changes in immigration policies and their enforcement. The aim of these paragraphs is to tease out how Syrian state sovereignty was constructed in these strategies of population and migration management, and to compare these strategies with those stipulated by the sovereign ideal. A further aim is to show the enormous complexities of actions that sovereignty-creation requires, and the delicate beliefs, assumptions and ideas that it relies on.

Iraqis in Syria: visas and immigration rules

The immigration regime governing movement of Iraqis into Syria underwent significant changes between 2006 and 2009, which coincided with the dramatic upswing of Iraqi immigration post-2006, and the increased international attention to the issue.[123] Until early 2007 Iraqis entered Syria without a visa, simply receiving a stamp into their passport upon entry. This ease of access was a remnant of Syrian pan-Arab politics, which officially awarded Arabs a status between foreigner and Syrian, with important benefits such as visa-free travel and much lighter residency and work-permit regulations. In practice, political and other considerations led to considerable variations in how citizens from different Arab states were treated at Syrian borders; during Saddam's times the Syrian-Iraqi border notably opened or closed to migrants depending on the political climate.[124] The growing restrictions on Iraqi immigration since 2007 culminated in a situation in 2010, in which Iraqis had to obtain a visa from the Syrian embassy in Baghdad to transit the border; this visa was only awarded for certain reasons, such as medical treatment in Syria or the pursuit of higher education.

The administrative changes to the immigration regime had a transformative effect on how Iraqis experienced the Syrian state and sovereignty. Those interlocutors who entered Syria before the growing restrictions reported on the ease with which they passed the borders, for example describing their entry as:

"No, the entry was easy. Only the passport...No problem. The people were smiling when we came, the police, they smiled for us and said hello, their style was very nice at the beginning, in 2006, 2005." [125]

Or

"When you left Iraq, was it easy to get a visa at the border?"

"For Syria? Yes, immediately. There was no visa at the beginning. When we came, there was no visa required for Syria. Immediately we entered. They

---

[123] Given the enormous implications and details related to these changes in immigration policy, only a small fraction will be highlighted here. Further details on the matter will be provided in the chapter on Daily Life of Iraqis (chapter XYZ).

[124] Geraldine Chatelard, "The Politics of Population Movements in Contemporary Iraq: A Research Agenda," in *Writing the History of Iraq: Historiographical and Political Challenges*, ed. Ricardo Bocco, J Tejet, and P Sluglett (London: World Scientific Publishers/Imperial College Press, 2011).

[125] Interview with Iraqi man, 14.02.2010

stamped the passport, but we didn't have to pay anything. Now a visa is required, since about two years. The operation at the border was easy then. Yes, very, directly we entered."[126]

In these descriptions, Iraqis encountered the most direct, physical manifestations of state sovereignty – border crossings – in a benevolent manner, with a very weak impact on their actions and behaviour. Bureaucratic and security routines were weak, hardly distinguishing Iraqis from Syrians and marking the transition from one sovereign territory to the next in a soft way. When discussing the question of entry to Syria from Iraq with Iraqis who entered Syria since the increased restrictions, a different image emerged. One mother of an Iraqi girl who had come to Syria in 2009 to participate in an NGO education-programme described the new, elaborate routines necessary to obtain a visa: the obtaining of a fake doctor's report, the dangerous and unpleasant visits to the Syrian embassy in Baghdad, the waiting times and expenses, amounting to around USD 50 per visa, a significant expense for most. Another interlocutor described her transit, which she had arranged through a company specialising in arranging packages covering travel, paperwork, visa and transit. Such a package cost USD 200.

"....they take you in special buses, very clean ones, but it is expensive. And they will give you the visa..."

"Without you having to go to all the different places to get the visa?"

"Yes, they take you in a special bus. When you reach the border, they help you to register and go to the offices and the officials. And it's very, very easy, everyone can do it, but it takes so much time...they sign it quickly, but when they search the car and the bus, they asked us Why are you coming here? and I told them I have a treatment for my eyes for laser, but this is not true. (Laughs)."[127]

These different experiences show very tangible transformations in how Syrian domestic state sovereignty was performed, upheld, created vis-à-vis Iraqi immigrants, through increasingly complicated bureaucratic requirements, changing personal interactions between border guards and migrants, and higher costs. Changing the

---

[126] Interview with Iraqi man, 17.01.2010
[127] Conversation with Iraqi woman, 11.02.2010

practices that constituted the immigration regime for Iraqis presented a direct change to how the Syrian 'inside' of sovereignty was constructed and to how it affected the daily lives of people living in on Syria territory. The examples of petty corruption as a solution to formal requirements again highlighted how legal codes did not hold abstract power per se in Syria, but rather enforced networks of patronage and discrimination against poor people, through which sovereignty was experienced and constructed. A much harder, because less easily documentable puzzle, was the question of how the changes to immigration regulations changed the construction of the 'outside' of Syrian sovereignty on the 'international' level – and what the reasons for the changes were, who decided upon them and with what goal in mind. While the latter question would remain elusive due to my lack of access to Syrian policymakers, some suggestions could be made about the first point. Overall, it was striking that in interviews neither international aid workers, no Iraqis, condemned the increasing restrictions placed on Iraqi immigration by the Syrian state. The restrictions were accepted as a perhaps unfortunate, but immovable event, as a sort of act of the powers that be, whose reasoning could only be guessed at, but given the immovability of the decision, guessing would be quite futile in any case.[128] The reasons for this acceptance and lack of criticism, I argue, can be taken as evidence for how the construction of the international sphere of sovereignty took place through more standardised and globally accepted practices than the construction of domestic spheres of sovereignty. Such standardised and accepted practices included strong borders and restrictions on migration, which led to the unvoiced view that the Syrian state, in strengthening its borders, was only doing what was 'natural' for a state to do, that it had the right to do so and was therefore understandable. The previous openness of Syria's borders became, in this way, again constructed as an exception, rather than, for example, a moral obligation or historically consistent event. From the perspective of the international, and interestingly also from the perspective of many Iraqis interviewed, Syria, by imposing tighter access restrictions, was becoming more like a sovereign state, less of an anomaly and therefore possibly also more acceptable as a member of the 'international community' than when its borders remained open. This example demonstrated the effect of the standards and practices governing behaviour

---

[128] A further reason for the lack of condemnation was that Syria's entry restrictions, compared with all other neighbouring states of Iraq, were still relatively low. Jordan, for example, was criticized frequently for having closed its border to most Iraqis already since 2006.

of state agents in the international spheres, according to which state sovereignty was judged and measured. It further showed how these standards, working at a global level, interacted and influenced local conditions, and in this way contributed to the distribution and dominance of a particular way of politics.

Iraqis in Syria: residency permits

The issue of residency permits was a frequent topic of conversation and worry among the Iraqi acquaintances I made during fieldwork. Given this high profile, it can be argued that the issuing and obtaining of these permits was the chief relationship and encounter between Iraqis residing in Syria and the Syria state, and a key element in the construction of Syrian state sovereignty vis-à-vis Iraqi migration and the 'inside' of Syrian sovereignty. The interesting and puzzling aspect of this relationship was that I never encountered an Iraqi who experienced deportation due to the absence of a residency permit, although rumours of such deportations circulated. Deportations were rather expected, by both Iraqis and international aid workers, in the case of serious, illegal wrongdoing on behalf of an Iraqi, regardless whether s/he possessed a permit. Neither did it appear that Iraqis frequently experienced random checking of their passports for up to date residency permits. The importance allocated to the permit appeared to stem rather from the fact that it was the key, state-related, bureaucratic routine that allowed Iraqis to demonstrate and perform their allegiance to Syrian authority, to show that they were willing to make an effort to conform to the requirements set by this authority and to obtain some form of justification, legality and protection for their stay. The other, related bureaucratic routine of importance concerned the registration with local, municipal authorities and the obtaining of an official, rental contract for an apartment, which was frequently a requirement to receive the residency permit.

Residency permits were mostly issued through the Office of Immigration and Passports, consisted either of a stamp in the passport or a separate ID card, and were mostly obtained and renewed through a personal visit to the office. Most foreigners living in Syria for longer than one month have experience of this office, whose main branch in the busy Damascus area of Baramka consisted of a four to five storied, run-down, dirty, concrete office block in which clerks behind glass windows tended to queues of harangued people trying to figure out how to meet the needs of Syria's

labyrinthine bureaucracy.[129] During my fieldwork, Iraqis could obtain residency permits for a range of reasons, although this range was not easily understood and possibly not fixed. The most frequently encountered justification was having a child registered in school (which afforded a one-year permit for the whole family), also encountered were the seeking of medical services, membership in a professional union, membership of the Ba ͑ th party, the UNHCR protection paper, the payment of bribes and personal connections. Depending on the type of permit and also unclear variations, Iraqis had to renew their permits every year or every three months, however other variations also appeared to exist. Once a permit had expired, and an Iraqi had spent some time without a permit, it was still possible to regularise the situation, however there did not appear to be a standard procedure for this. The relative lack of clarity and varied information (recent experiences and news about how to obtain permits was eagerly exchanged among Iraqis) about residency permits matched the procedures for foreign language students in Syria, who engaged in a similar guessing game and word-of-mouth exchange about how to obtain visa extensions and permit. Whether the result of deliberate opacity, or of bad rule-making in the ministries, or of lack of training among state clerks, the effect of the inconsistency of rule was to insert Syria state sovereignty into daily-life considerations. Through the residency permit issue, the Syrian state became present in Iraqi consciousness as something to consider regularly, as something that required tending, and physical and financial effort. Whether Iraqis considered the obtaining of the permit as a matter of easy routine, or as significant worry (this strongly depended on an individual's situation), all were aware of the matter and had gone through efforts to obtain the permit. As one interlocutor explained:

"At the moment, what kind of residency permit do you have?"

"For the studying issues. About my daughter and before that Sally the same thing, but I told you that Sally finished the secondary school last year and now we depend on Sarti [name of youngest daughter], so now (laughs) she threatens us, if you don't give me something I will (laughs)...

---

[129] Susanne Schmelter, "Erfahrungsbericht Studium an der Universität Damaskus 2009/10," ed. Universität Marburg (Marburg2010). See also the website of the Syrian Studies Association for student experiences on obtaining residency permits http://www.ou.edu/ssa/learn.htm

How often do you go to the immigration office?

(wife adds: "every three months…") "If you have to renew this residency, each year and they told us each time, you have to return back after one months, after...it depends on their rules.

"So sometimes they give you one month, sometimes three months…?"

"..it depends on the rules! For the first year it was not like the last year. Something changes all the time, you know. It depends on something, it belongs to the government."[130]

This quote demonstrates how the residency issue transported Syrian state sovereignty into daily life routines and even family relations. The uncertainty of regulation is highlighted, as is the acceptance of these changes, which were explained with reference to the government, which served as a catch-all explanation for matters beyond control and explanation, for sovereignty.

A further interesting example was provided by the story of an Iraqi friend, a single man, who, after exhausting all legal attempts to obtain a permit, eventually obtained it through a grey-market transaction:

"So how did you find the solution in the end, the solution for the residency permit"?

"The solution, after that, after some time, the union of expatriate photographers, they make a yearly permit. For example the association of poets, those who were in the party, the artists, those groups they make you a yearly permit. So I had a friend, he called me, and asked me whether I had gotten a permit and I told him no, I haven't gotten one. He told me, ok, do you want that I make you an annual permit and I told him 'I wish'. So I gave him 200 dollars, good, I borrowed it from my sister, I told her that I needed money to make the permit. So I paid the 200 and wrote down my name and all the details and it worked out, after a short while, I had the permit."[131]

---

[130] Interview with Iraqi couple in Damascus, 20.02.2010
[131] Interview with Iraqi man in Damascus, 14.02.2010

Unlike the previous narrative, this story shows a different reaction and behaviour solicited by the necessities of upholding and constructing Syrian state sovereignty through human behaviour. The apparent contradictions, that sovereignty was here maintained through the breaking of state law, demonstrated yet again the limits of the 'sovereign ideal' as an analytical concept, according to which this situation would be a paradox. Rather, understanding sovereignty as an unstable system of power relations, constructed through human behaviour and shot through with inconsistencies, personal enrichment, individual exceptions and blurring of supposedly clear boundaries, is a much more useful academic approach to the question.

Iraqis in Syria: police, surveillance and security

One of the characteristics of the Syrian government at the time was its reliance on an extensive, very visible and intrusive internal security/intelligence apparatus to monitor and intimidate the population. Key to the power of this apparatus was the lack of legal remedy against it, as actions by internal intelligence officers were beyond the law. No redress for transgressions against habeas corpus or other human rights were available, at least not along official paths. The focus of this apparatus on protecting the echelons of government, and the patronage networks between government and intelligence personnel, blurred the distinction between state and government to an extreme degree. Paradoxically, internal intelligence were linked to and made use of certain state institutions like the presidency or different ministries, yet the personalised character of its mission and its position outside the law rather made it a part of the current government, or even individual power, rather than a representative of the state. While the behaviour monitored by internal intelligence mainly concerned criticism of government figures rather than the state the punishments meted out often made use of elements of the state, such as deportations, travel restrictions, prisons, withdrawal of licenses or public sectors positions, or law courts. In this latter way, the internal security apparatus functioned as a means of creating Syrian state sovereignty, and this section addresses the role of this apparatus in relation to Iraqi immigration and the construction of Syrian sovereignty in this context.

Overall, most Iraqis in my research group had very little encounters with internal Syrian security forces and did not complain about surveillance or intimidation.[132] This was partly related to the fact that all but two interlocutors did not engage in any activities that would be of interest to security agents, and led low-key existences. When queried about their concerns and fears regarding Syrian police or intelligence officers, most Iraqis interviewed and observed pointed out that all their papers were in order and that they had nothing to fear. A small number of acquaintances, notably those who had had difficulties obtaining a residency permit or were in an otherwise precarious state, expressed fear of random harassment or questioning by security agents. Most Iraqis characterised Syria as a place of safety and calm, comparing it to the disastrously dangerous situation in Iraq after the war, as well as the extreme government repression and surveillance experienced under Saddam's government. Two interlocutors reported home visits by intelligence officers, however considered them 'normal' security measures related to the obtaining of a residency permit, and relatively unobtrusive. One Iraqi acquaintance, a feminist activist who regularly worked as a fixer for foreign journalists, maintained a network of international friends and had travelled abroad to international conferences on women's issues, faced a very much tougher situation. As a consequence of a long, complicated and not quite clear course of events, she had been called in for an unpleasant questioning by intelligence officers, who, she discovered, had created an elaborate file on her life and activities. More seriously, she subsequently discovered that a she was subject to a travel ban and had to apply for permission every time she wanted to leave Syria.[133] Such measures by Syrian intelligence were frequently used against Syrian intellectuals or political activists, including Syrians I had interviewed and was acquainted with. The reason for mentioning them here, is to highlight that Iraqis per se were not subject to increased controls from the security apparatus, but that the same red lines applied to them as to anyone living on Syrian territory, be they Syrian or not. The choice of penalty however, varied according to sovereignty, or perhaps sovereignties: citizens of powerful, well-organised states would face, at the worst, deportation when crossing red lines, as Syrian authorities were aware that anything stronger would create a diplomatic incident. People hailing from states with weak bureaucracies, which were

---

[132] This excludes the paying of bribes to local police or other security officers, which was frequently done for various reasons; while Iraqis (as Syrians) complained about the soliciting of bribes, this was not considered intimidating or threatening.
[133] Conversation with Iraqi woman, 3.11.2009

not concerned about the welfare of single citizens, were treated similarly or worse than Syrians. In the case of the Iraqi activist mentioned above, the choice of travel-ban, rather than deportation, appeared as a particularly interesting construction of Syrian sovereignty. Firstly, because it was so similar to the treatment of Syrian activists and served as another pointer for the lack of exceptionalism awarded to Iraqi immigrants, and the absence of bureaucratic population management based on documents and imagined national identities. Secondly, because it emphasised again the political character of Syrian sovereignty-construction, which focused on individualised relations between 'citizens' and state, rather than standardised, technical, bureaucratic programmes that streamline state-population constructions. The presence of Syria's notorious internal security apparatus in Iraqi daily-life thus emphasised that Iraqis as a category were not singled out through increased surveillance or constructed as foreigners or exception through this measure. Latent fear, awareness of red lines and the potential randomness of government violence was as present in Iraqi life as elsewhere in Syria and functioned as a general device of control, not specifically aimed at migrants. Internal security concentrated on certain behaviours, regardless whether this behaviour was carried out by Syrian nationals or persons with foreign passports.

Iraqis in Syria: labour and investment

The last aspect of the Syrian state's construction of sovereignty towards Iraqi migrants to be discussed is that of Iraqi employment and business. This element is important, as regulating legal access to paid work is a standard element of migration management across the world, and changes in labour regulations mark borders between sovereign territories. Further, as the official prohibition on Iraqi employment and investment played a big role in the humanitarian construction of the image of the penniless Iraqi refugee, as well as in Iraqi narratives about their plight in Syria, employment regulation by the Syrian state was an important part of the construction of sovereignty on different levels. The following paragraphs will present and analyse how the contradictory management of Iraqi employment by the Syrian state served to construct its sovereignty, both towards international and domestic actors.

Upon entry into Syria, Iraqis received a stamp into their passport, stating in English and Arabic that this person was not allowed to work in Syria.[134] Given the frequency with which Iraqis had to furnish their passports (to obtain their residency permits or to obtain humanitarian services), this declaration was not just an instance of Syrian state sovereignty, but also a constant, visual reminder of the exceptional status of Iraqis living on Syrian territory. Humanitarian sector/UN employees would frequently mention the employment ban as an element of the Syrian state's management of Iraqis, and many of my Iraqi interlocutors, notably those with a middle-class/academic background would also point out the employment ban. However, the more observations and conversations I conducted, the more contradictions to this apparently clear prohibition began to emerge, showing a much more nuanced way through which employment/investment by Iraqis created Syrian state sovereignty. Despite the official employment ban, in certain areas of Damascus, signs of Iraqi employment and investment abounded. The majority of my male Iraqi acquaintances had engaged or were engaged in a form of (self)-employment. In these cases, Iraqis mentioned the ban on employment rather as an additional hurdle on the difficult Syrian labour market, for example prohibiting the entry into a skilled/higher-level job such as practicing as a doctor or lawyer or working for the public sector (which in Syria covered the education sector). The ban was, in this way, mentioned in the same moments as broader discrimination against Iraqis or the fact that unemployment of Syrians was already high, or that cooperation and bribery of Syrian local authorities complicated the setting up of businesses. Eventually, I also became aware that some Iraqis were indeed working in skilled jobs, as doctors or professors, and that certain, substantial new businesses had been created by Iraqis. From this perspective, it often seemed that Iraqis faced very similar conditions on the Syrian labour market as Syrians (apart from the important prohibition of entry into the public sector), and that in Syria, skills, money and connections were far more important than nationality for success.

These observations showed that in local, closer personal interactions between Iraqis and state officials, the employment ban was not upheld. The directive (or possibly habit?) of border clerks to stamp Iraqi passports with a 'no work' visa did not

---

[134] It is unclear when this policy began. In 2007, conversations with Iraqis who had then lived in Syria for several years never brought up this topic and pre-existing Iraqi business in Damascus confirmed that during earlier times, Iraqis could access the Syrian employment market legally.

correspond with the activities of municipal or local officials in charge of registering or monitoring businesses, or even with local security agents controlling neighbourhoods. One Iraqi interlocutor, specifically asked about his experience of setting up a small billiard salon, explained his interactions with the local municipality, his landlord and local security. The fact that him and his business partner were Iraqis was not a problem, he stated. What eventually led to the abandonment of the project, despite its popularity with local young men, was that all profits were eaten up by bribes and quasi-bribes, which made the salon unviable. Once again, the Syrian state and its sovereignty were not experienced as a single power with a united purpose, but very much as a construction in multiple location, through multiple agencies and people and as being used for different ends. The "assemblage of technologies" used by Syrian state officials produced an order of sovereignty, but this order could only be defined and understood in moments of time and place as it could change in unpredictable ways. [135] State sovereignty here clearly appeared as an agreed upon belief, constantly reinforced through instances of violence, propaganda and so forth. The micro-techniques and every-day activities through which individuals and institutions mobilised sovereignty to govern and to maintain their power, was not agreed upon and in constant flux.

The effect of this 'grassroots' tolerance of Iraqi work was that Iraqis developed into a dynamic, sustained and visible population in Damascus, enhancing and changing consumption and business patterns in certain neighbourhoods. Far from the humanitarian trope of refugees as helpless human beings in camps, Syrian state/government policies and politics allowed those Iraqis who had the means to build sustainable and occasionally thriving existences on Syrian territory. When questioned about the 'grassroots' tolerance of Iraqi work, Iraqis and Syrians explained this phenomenon with reference to the Syrian government. The brother of my Syrian landlady, who ran a small shoe factory and had employed Iraqis, explained that the government 'closed both eyes' on the matter, as they knew that Iraqis had to make a living somehow. Iraqis referred to the fact that they were only allowed to do low-skilled jobs anyhow (which in fact was not fully correct), which was considered to take the 'threat' out of their activity, some Iraqis also directly stated that they believed the Syrian government wanted to help them. Interestingly, even those Syrians critical

---

[135] Ong, *Neoliberalism as exception : mutations in citizenship and sovereignty.*, page 99

of Iraqi immigration, who believed that Iraqis were taking over low-skilled jobs and pushing down wages, never referred to the possibility of enforcing the employment ban. Overall it appeared that in the imagination of my interlocutors, while preventing Iraqis from entering or remaining on Syrian territory was an option available to the authorities, the stringent enforcement of an employment ban did not figure. In the Syrian and Iraqi context, it appeared fully logical and 'natural' that an Iraqi restaurant owner would turn first to relatives, and then to nearer or further Iraqi acquaintances for staff. Such personal ties and power relations, often running across state borders, co-existed and criss-crossed state related power structures and their power was an accepted element of the sovereign order on Syrian territory.[136] The interactions between Iraqis and various instances and representations of the Syrian state thus presented how, in the daily lives of Iraqis, the space around them was transformed into the domestic, sovereign sphere of the Syrian state, via this infinite and constantly changing collection of human relationships. The basic, physical and difficult to transform elements of the state - borders, ministerial offices and local municipalities – provided the constant reminder of the existence of a separate Syrian territory, making Syrian sovereignty visible and tangible, and representing it both domestically and internationally. But as an order of governance that implemented the abstract notions of state, government, internal and external, Syrian state sovereignty was always constructed on the spot, by human behaviour. This social construction of sovereignty allows for an understanding of sovereignty not as a fixed, timeless and natural order, but as a constantly transforming set of power relations based on a number of dominant beliefs and norms.

Constructing international sovereignty: Syrian state agents and international actors

The emergence of Iraqi immigration as an international humanitarian and political concern brought Syrian government actors into contact with various international and foreign institutions. In their interactions with foreign agencies, other states and media, Syrian state officials constructed the outside of Syrian sovereignty, or its international aspect; the most frequently mentioned example is perhaps how Syrian ministers often

---

[136] Gianluca Parolin, *Citizenship in the Arab World*, IMISCOE Research (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009); Batatu, "Some Observations on the Social Roots of Syria's Ruling, Military Group and the Causes for its Dominance."

portrayed Syria as a generous host to Iraqi refugees, in the face of the severe economic burden they presented.[137] In this rhetoric, presented for example in April 2007 at a UNHCR-sponsored, international conference on Iraqi migration in Geneva, Syria was constructed as a distinct sovereign territory, with a government in control of population movements; Syrian sovereignty was also bolstered by the claims to goodness and generosity, which legitimise the existence of the state.[138] Given Syria's then status as a pariah and designated member of the axis-of-evil, the legitimising potential of Iraqi immigration was seized upon to confirm Syria's acceptance by the international community as a sovereign state.[139] This move was only possible due to the exceptional status that migration was awarded within the sovereign ideal, which stipulates national homogeneity, stability of populations and exclusion of migrants. It demonstrated the presence, in the international sphere of diplomacy and the UN, of a set of standards of the sovereign ideal, against which the existence of a state was judged against. Somewhat ironically, Syria's weak application of this sovereign ideal (in the sense that Iraqi migrants were given easy access) allowed Syrian officials to point out Syrian generosity; in this way they portrayed the Syrian state's management of migration not as 'un-sovereign', but as a generous exception to the rule that Iraqi migrants should, if sovereignty were properly applied, be systematically excluded (even if this rule had never existed or applied to Iraqis in Syria).[140] To quote from the paper presented at the above mentioned conference by the Syrian ministry of foreign affairs:

> "In the spring of 2003 the region witnessed the biggest exodus from Iraq to its neighbouring countries. The Syrian Arab Republic was one of the first countries targeted by this exodus. The Syrian government and people moved to offer a safe haven for the Iraqi brothers and sisters from different spectrums and social affiliations including children, women and elderly, who fled the destruction and dangers inflicted on them. Syria offered and is still

---

[137] al-Miqdad, "Iraqi refugees in Syria."; Syrian Arab Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Paper presented by the Government of Syrian Arab Republic to the International Conference on Addressing the Humanitarian Needs of the Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons inside Iraq and in the neighbouring Countries.".

[138] Ibid.

[139] For some of these negative portrayals of Syria, see for example Barry Rubin, *The Truth about Syria* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); David Schenker, "Syria's Role in Regional Destabilization: An American View," *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs* (October 2007).

[140] These events show the enormous dominance of the sovereign-ideal paradigm, which meant that the world could only understand Syria's treatment of Iraqis (not in camps, not turned back at the border, not handed over to international humanitarian management) as a single, ad-hoc exception to Syrian sovereignty, rather than as a fundamentally different way of managing migration.

offering those refugees all possible help and assistance necessitated by the ties of brotherhood and neighborliness (sic), despite the scarcity of material and financial potentials.(...)It is noteworthy that regulations in Syria do not require an entry visa for Arabs." [141]

The quote demonstrates some of the key contradictions in the construction of Syrian sovereignty. On the one hand Syria is presented as a separate sovereign terrain through reference to its borders, government and people, on the other hand emphasis is placed on the fact that 'Arabs' – a vague identity, incongruous with modern sovereignty – enjoyed visa-free access to Syrian territory. Given the lack of detail however, overall, the image of Syria that emerges from this quote is that of a good, generous and caring sovereign, in which government and people move in unison, happy to allow those living in the dangerous *outside* access to their secure and orderly *inside* territory – classic rhetorical, sovereignty-producing strategies.[142] The Syrian government officials who wrote the speech were demonstrably aware of the values and idealised social relations that the global, sovereign ideal required from a good, liberal sovereign, even if the political reality within Syria did not correspond to these. The use of the term 'refugees', rather than 'brothers' or 'guests' is noteworthy, as it is a departure from standard Syrian government terminology and contains at least a degree of acceptance of the liberal, sovereign and humanitarian categorisations.[143]

Syrian state relations with UNHCR

As the main humanitarian actor focusing on Iraqi immigration located on Syrian territory, UNHCR was one of the most important agents with whom Syrian government officials and state institutions interacted in this context. Despite strong UNHCR lobbying, Syria had not joined the Geneva Refugee Convention, which regulates to a wide extent how subscribing states, required to integrate the convention

---

[141] Syrian Arab Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Paper presented by the Government of Syrian Arab Republic to the International Conference on Addressing the Humanitarian Needs of the Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons inside Iraq and in the neighbouring Countries.", page 2

[142] M. Duffield, "Social Reconstruction and the Radicalization of Development: Aid as a Relation of Global Liberal Governance," *Development and Change* 33(2002).

[143] As the speech was presented at a UNHCR-sponsored conference and was an unprecedented opportunity to portray Syria's generosity and consequent need for donor money, the adoption of the refugee rhetoric can be perhaps understood as tactical, nevertheless it is relevant that the Syrian ministry of foreign affairs decided on an accommodating, rather than defiant approach to the humanitarian community.

into their domestic refugee and asylum law, relate to UNHCR and refugees.[144] Due to this absence of legal formality, UNHCR documents and interviewees regularly maintained that Syria did not have a functioning refugee or asylum policy in place.[145] Consequently, the Syrian state's relationship with UNHCR was governed by astonishingly informal arrangements, given the extent of UNHCR's interventions. Until summer 2010, when UNHCR signed a cooperation agreement with the Syrian ministry of foreign affairs, the agency operated on the basis of relatively informal partnership agreements with relevant ministries, such as the ministry of health or the ministry of education.[146] Also in 2010, UNHCR signed an MOU with the Syrian ministry of social affairs, which regulated UNHCR's cooperation with local associations, as well as a partnership agreement with the Syrian Woman's Union (a quasi-government organisation).[147] This relative absence of formal, legal arrangements even with such a powerfully intervening actor as UNHCR emphasised the extent to which unpredictability and instability served as an element of governance in the production of domestic Syrian state sovereignty, and how this instability blurred the boundaries between state, government and personal power. By denying UNHCR an independent legal standing, Syrian state agents asserted not just Syrian state sovereignty vis-à-vis the organisation, but also the influence of particular ministers and their staff. At the same time, these piece-meal arrangements weakened the notion of the Syrian state as a single, unified institution with a legal existence independent of the sum of its parts (the parts being the decisions of individual ministers). Rather than affirming the existence of an independent sovereign state, as an overall agreement with the Syrian Arab Republic would have done, these ad-hoc agreements with UNHCR confirmed the existence of a multitude of entities, each drawing power from an assumed attachment with the state, ultimately backed up by the implicit understanding/threat that support for UNHCR's operations could be at any time withdrawn. In Syrian-UNHCR relations, Syrian state sovereignty appeared once again as a web of social relations and implicit understandings, which contained certain beliefs about the power of Syrian state institutions, which, while they were not

---

[144] UNHCR, "Country Operations Plan 2007 Syrian Arab Republic," in *UNHCR Country Operations Plan*, ed. UNHCR (Geneva: UNHCR, 2007).
[145] Ibid.
[146] Email communication with Carole Laleve, UNHCR Syrian spokesperson, 08.02.2011
[147] UNHCR Syria, "UNHCR Syria Update Summer 2010," in *UNHCR Syria Updates*, ed. UNHCR (Damascus: UNHCR Syria, 2010).

regularly tested openly, were signalled to UNHCR employees through the harassment of low-level UNHCR associates and NGOs by state security agents.[148]

The flexible arrangements that Syrian state institutions struck with UNHCR also gave the agency room to manoeuvre on Syrian territory, supposedly exclusively ruled by the Syrian state. This manoeuvring created a puzzling situation for an analysis of state sovereignty, which could not be explained from the perspective of the sovereign ideal. From the perspective of this ideal, it appeared difficult to understand why the Syrian state allowed UNHCR to nullify its sovereignty in certain areas of law, public order and population control. As will be argued below, the explanation for this situation lies in the fact that Syrian state sovereignty was created via social relations and forms of power that did not correspond to the expectations raised by the sovereign ideal. This meant that UNHCR's influence over certain spheres of life and indeed over certain decisions concerning the Syrian body politic was not particularly important or threatening to sovereignty in the Syrian context. One interesting example of how UNHCR's activities 'undermined' Syrian state sovereignty concerned the treatment of gay people. Even though homosexual acts were prohibited by Syrian law and Syria state agents regularly cracked down on gay people, UNHCR could extend special protection to gay Iraqis experiencing persecution due to their sexual orientation and prioritise their resettlement to the US.[149] Not only was Syrian state law concerning the public order reversed by UNHCR, but more importantly, the 'conduct of conduct' of persons on Syrian territory was determined on a very basic, and strongly normative level, given the religious and cultural controversy surrounding homosexuality, by UNHCR. Further, given that UNHCR only had a mandate for intervening in Iraqi lives, and could not extend protection to persecuted Syrian gays or other vulnerable Syrians, UNHCR's activities had an impact on the ordering of the population living on Syrian territory and the shape of the body politic. UNHCR's activities led to an imagined 'disentangling' of Syrian passport holders, considered the legitimate resident on Syrian territory, and the alien Iraqis, who needed to be managed through international intervention until their sovereignty-disturbing presence would be somehow neutralised. A similar argument could be made about UNHCR's significant welfare provisions to Iraqis, which continued at a time when the Syrian state did not

---

[148] Conversation with UNHCR Employee, 23.11.2009; Interview with UNHCR manager, 26.10.2009; Conversation with EC employee, 9.10.2009
[149] Conversations and observations in Damascus in early 2010.

provide such services to poor Syrians, even those in greater desperation; and to other areas.

The question of why and how Syrian state agents allowed UNHCR such scope of intervention can be understood and explained by arguing that the UNHCR's areas of intervention, important for sovereignty from the perspective of the 'sovereign ideal', were simply not relevant to and not part of the strategies of power through which the Syrian state constructed its sovereignty. As already referred to above, stringent application of the law was not standard practice in Syria; yet this is often regarded as an important element or even codification of the state.[150] Constant exceptionalism and highly individualised relations with the state were widespread, depending on an individual's particular situation. Therefore, the fact that a gay Iraqi's particular situation, out of coincidental reasons, included access to UNHCR protection, which facilitated a positive resolution of his problem with the Syrian state, was not an affront to Syrian state sovereignty, even though UNHCR favoured this person in direct contradiction to Syrian state law. Other persons on Syrian territory committing illegal acts could perhaps escape the law because of their wealth, or their personal relationship to someone who could manipulate state institutions. Such an analysis of the maintenance of Syrian state sovereignty within Syrian territory makes it possible to understand how sovereignty is truly created in relationships and human activity, especially in Syria, where the legal codifications of the state were weak.

Syrian relations with NGOs

The increased presence of foreign, humanitarian NGOs in Syria was one of the most remarkable aspects of Iraqi immigration. Prior to 2008, foreign NGOs were largely absent from Syria, and the Iraqi issue acted as a door-opener or catalyst for their entry. Over the past few years, the Syrian government's economic-policy statements had pointed towards increased participation of NGOs in the country's economic development.[151] The activities of the president's wife Asma al-Asad in the humanitarian sector had also shown an increasing interest to build a development

---

[150] Schmitt, *Political theology : four chapters on the concept of sovereignty*; Latham, "Social Sovereignty."

[151] Stephen Starr, "Syrian Civil Society Empowerment 2010 New Directions for Syrian Society," *Syria Forward Magazine*, 03.03.2010 2010. al-Asad, Asma. "Inaugural Speech to the First International Development Conference of Syria 2010." Summary of Asma al-Assad's speech to the conference: www.presidentassad.net, 2010.

sector in Syria, focussing strictly on economic and social welfare issues, rather than political empowerment or human rights. This approach, in which basic services are moved out of the state-sector to third parties, is a standard element of neo-liberal economic development and has been observed in other Middle Eastern countries, notably Egypt.[152] The move towards economic deregulation led to open disagreements among Syrian government figures, pitching more traditional Baʾthists, concerned about the effect on poverty and Syrian industry, against the 'modernisers' favoured by the president.[153] It is therefore possible that the Iraqi issue was a convenient opportunity for the 'modernisers' to allow the registrations of foreign NGOs. Initially foreign NGOs were to provide services only to Iraqis; towards the end of my field research, it was becoming clear that services were also increasingly provided to Syrians, if on a very small scale. With around a dozen, medium-sized NGOs active, overall NGO activity in Syria remained relatively low in 2009 and 2010.[154] The growing NGO presence and the political struggles and processes surrounding it, highlighted the practices through which Syrian state sovereignty was transformed. Secondly, as will be set out below, the contradictory interactions between Syrian state agents and NGO employees – sometimes repressive, sometimes lauding and applauding – also served to explain further how Syrian state sovereignty emerged from this relation.

Unlike the relations between the Syrian state and UNHCR, NGO relations with the state were codified and formal. For an international NGO to become active in Syria, it needed to obtain formal approval from the Syrian ministry of foreign affairs, before being able to sign an MOU with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, a quasi-governmental organisation associated with the ministry of Health (this MOU was the legal document authorising the NGOs activities). The registration process was notoriously difficult and lengthy. According to interviews and observations, NGOs had to wait for at least one year to obtain the required paperwork.[155] Once operations had begun,

---

[152] Salwa Ismail, *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarters. Encountering the Everyday State* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Dostal and Zorob, *Syria and the Euro-Mediterranean Relationship*; Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*.
[153] See for example the open criticism by the former head of Syria's economic planning commission Tayssir Raddawi against Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Dardari; Raddawi was subsequently fired from his position by presidential decree. *Syria Comment Blog*, 30.10.2009.
[154] UNHCR Syria, "UNHCR Syria Update Autumn 2010."; Katherine Kraft, "Two Changing Spheres: NGOs and Iraqis in Syria," ed. Middle East Fellowship (Brea, CA: Middle East Fellowship, 2008).
[155] Ibid.; Interview with employees of International Medical Corps in Damascus, 19.10.2009

organisations were subjected to regular and intensive control by ministerial staff and security agents; rumours about the extent of state harassment circulated among humanitarian workers, often mentioned with hushed excitement, as the 'dangers' of working in Syria lent their work importance and a degree of adventure.[156] Harassment by security forces (such harassment ranged from obvious surveillance to interviews with police or intelligence personnel) generally targeted low-ranking NGO or UNHCR staff with direct and regular contact with Syrians or Iraqis. Foreigners were more rarely harassed then Syrians or Iraqis, who were relied upon to relay the message to their foreign colleagues or managers.[157] Senior UNHCR officers were never harassed and, gathering from the public meetings I witnessed and interviews, were treated with respect and even gratitude and/or praise for their work. This discrepancy demonstrated the different ways sovereignty was constructed in interaction with different actors: open harassment of senior UNHCR manager was eschewed, given the likelihood that this would have weakened Syrian sovereignty, in terms of Syria's international image as a stable state that adhered to international rules of engagement with senior foreign public servants. Harassment of persons whose plight would not engage international interest and who possibly harboured grievances against the government that could mobilise them into public action strengthened Syrian state sovereignty, as the induced fear served to uphold internal acquiescence and the impression that the people living on Syrian territory were happy with the representation provided by the Syrian government; all necessary attributes of a truly sovereign state.[158] In the case of NGOs, targeted harassment and control served to check the activity of a sector nominally independent of state-interference and with a reputation for democracy-promotion and human rights advocacy. Foreign NGOs could also be easily construed by opponents as foreign agents with hidden agendas inimical to Syria; their perception as political actors, rather than technical operators, was emphasised by the notable absence of British or large American NGOs, two countries with which Syria has had historically difficult relations, especially in the aftermath of the Iraq war. Instead, the NGOs allowed to operate represented a selection of relatively small French, German, Danish, Turkish, Spanish and Italian

---

[156] Conversation with Jordanian academic, 30.10.2009
[157] Several conversations with NGO employees.
[158] Hindess, "Neo-liberal Citizenship."

and two small US NGOs (whose US identity was interestingly obscured in UNHCR documents).[159]

The entry of NGOs to Syrian territory contained a transformative element for Syrian state sovereignty and presented a difficult political issue for the government. In terms of international sovereignty, the presence of a vibrant NGO-sector would signal to the 'international community' the Syrian government's tolerance of plurality and thus increase the impression of its representativeness and its sovereign credentials. Further, NGO activity would suggest that the Syrian territory had now also arrived among those governed by the Washington consensus of liberal economic rule, an additional signal that the Syrian government was rational and interested in increasing economic dynamism and thus the welfare of its people.[160] In this way, NGO presence bolstered Syrian sovereignty vis-à-vis powerful states in Europe and in the US, which, at best, could lead to the lowering of the economic sanctions, mitigate the possibility of future military interventions and lead to financial pay-off in terms of donor money and other donations (as was already happening in 2009/10). For the construction of domestic sovereignty, NGO presence was much more tricky and possibly destructive. NGOs and its foreign employees could attract international attention to negative social, political and economic conditions in Syria and undermine the credibility and legitimacy of state institutions, as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch regularly did. This concern explained the intimidation by state officials of NGO employees, who were made to fear that their operations may be easily shut-down in case of official displeasure. As the crack-down and aftermath of the brief 'Damascus Spring' showed in 2001, the Syrian government was adamantly against the development of a politicised 'civil society' focused on transforming the relationship between the people living on Syrian territory and the Syrian government.[161] The 'civil society' that the government's moderniser's were trying to foster, should rather serve

---

[159] The two American NGOs present, International Rescue Committee and International Medical Corps, both focused on relatively technical, emergency relief programmes, that did not contain elements of human rights or democracy promotion.

[160] Duffield, "Development, territories, and people: consolidating the external sovereign frontier."; Hindess, "Neo-liberal Citizenship."

[161] George, *Syria : neither bread nor freedom*; Zisser, *Commanding Syria*. Lesch, *The New Lion of Damascus: Bashar al-Asad and Modern Syria*.

to bolster the regime's legitimacy by providing welfare and promoting Syrian 'civilisation'.[162]

Syrian relations with Resettlement/Donor States

Around three years after the 2003 Iraq war, due to political pressure, the US and a number of European countries began offering permanent immigration to tens of thousands of Iraqis. Some immigration applications were processed through the countries' own immigration or asylum procedures, but most went via UNHCR's resettlement programmes in Jordan, Lebanon an Syria. In this programme, UNHCR selected Iraqis for resettlement and matched their file with a particular country that had offered resettlement slots for Iraqis. According to UNHCR's guidelines, resettlement was considered an option for those Iraqis, for whom return or integration was permanently impossible.[163] The resettlement states, all 'Western' states, were also the main contributors to UNHCR's annual budget, the US's contributions outstripping those of all other states by far.[164]

Analysing the involvement of these states in the management, categorisation and territorial distribution of Iraqi migrants via the burgeoning humanitarian sector in Syria, is important for our understanding of the construction of sovereignty in this context. The activities of other states provided a crucial link between the rhetorical and relational constructions of sovereignty, and the material, political impact of these constructions. The resettlement programme implied that the Syrian state did not guarantee the survival and social fitness of Iraqi migrants, and judged that integration was not possible for most Iraqis in Syria. This judgement justified the intervention of the international community, which was considered necessary to rescue Iraqis from the Syrian context, where they presumably remained without the effective protection of a sovereign. Syrian state sovereignty was constructed as lacking and incomplete, as to achieve 'protection' Iraqi migrants had to be sent to better, proper states. In this sense, the resettlement programme (together with the other humanitarian

---

[162] Claudie Fioroni, ""Société civile" et évolution de l'autoritarisme en Syrie : le cas du Syria Trust for Development " (Master's Thesis, Institut de hautes études internationales et du développement, 2010).

[163] As already discussed in chapter four, these criteria were vaguely applied, as UNHCR mainly sought to fill the quotas that resettlement countries offered.

[164] In 2009/10 the resettlement states were: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, New Zealand, Portugal, Sweden, UK and US. In 2009, the US contributed over 35% of UNHCR's Iraqi budget, followed by the EC and European countries.

interventions) presented an "expansion of the Western sovereign frontier" through humanitarian interventionism.[165]

In the resettlement programme UNHCR (and IOM) clerks pre-selected Iraqis for resettlement, matching them to a particular resettlement state and its criteria. As described by a UNHCR manager in charge of resettlement:

"...because each country has their own criteria that are not necessarily matching what we are considering as resettlement criteria. And so we have to compare and see ok, this case is good for this country, this case is good for that country, we look into a variety of elements...(...)...these people come to us with their requirements so we see ok, this is what the Dutch want, this is what the Norwegians want, this is what the Americans want and then we balance it out. Of course, the most important thing is the best interest of the refugee."[166]

This quote shows the delicate negotiations and complex considerations that went into the decision of where an Iraqi person would finally be sent. Questions related to domestic space and politics of resettlement countries clearly formed part of the 'international' question of accepting Iraqi migrants from Syria, showing how the construction of sovereign borders and exclusions went completely beyond the assumed separation of domestic and international. Further, it showed how the way that resettlement countries chose to welcome or reject Iraqi migrants, changed the composition of Syria's population of migrants, which showed the direct, political impact that the resettlement programme, justified by Syria's lacking sovereignty, had.

Once the UNHCR selection was complete, the final stage for Iraqis in the process was an interview with resettlement-state officers, on Syrian territory, who passed the final judgement whether an Iraqi would be allowed to resettle or not. The US and EU countries sent immigration missions for this purpose, in the case of the US the interview was conducted by a member of the Department for Homeland Security on mission in Syria. This process demonstrated how the particular criteria of resettlement states, according to which a person would be allowed to transcend the limbo-state of refugeehood and become rehabilitated as a citizen, and, more concretely, be allowed to access their territory and population, translated into governance/sovereignty-

---

[165] Duffield, "Development, territories, and people: consolidating the external sovereign frontier."
[166] Interview UNHCR manager, 21.01.2010

creating practices carried out on Syrian territory. Such phenomena have been referred to as 'overlapping' sovereignty, however this spatial metaphor is only moderately helpful.[167] Rather, observing the resettlement process should help us understand sovereignty as a construction, as an ideas-practice complex that resulted in Western state agents' 'conducting the conduct' of Iraqis in Syria according to their states' criteria of sovereignty and citizenship. The sovereign ideal emerged through this practice of categorising and territorially redistributing Iraqi bodies according to ideas about who would make a good sovereign citizen, and who could not be rehabilitated in this manner.[168] Given the transformative political power of these interventions by resettlement states, it was interesting to note how little Syrian state officials or institutions were involved in this process. The lack of involvement of Syrian state practices was highlighted by a further quote from the above-mentioned interview with a UNHCR manager:

> *"So, once the submission to the resettlement country is made our participation in the resettlement process stops…(…)…but we are still following up on that process because technically from the submissions point to the departure part they are still in Syria, they are still under UNHCR's responsibility."*

Even though physically *("technically")* present on Syrian territory, Iraqis were clearly imagined as located in a conceptual place that was not Syrian sovereignty; this became explainable from within the sovereign ideal's perspective that the Syrian state was denying Iraqis citizenship and was thus denying responsibility for them. Syrian sovereignty over Iraqis on its territory became completely hidden in this construct, making the intervention of other states necessary and logical. According to the indirect information I was able to gather during fieldwork and from Syria-focused literature, Syrian state or government officials were not primarily concerned about the influence the international community was wielding via the humanitarian sector.[169] Instead, humanitarian/welfare services were expanding into the Syrian health and education sector, via actors nominally focused on refugees. Given the Syrian

---

[167] J. Anderson, "The shifting stage of politics: new medieval and postmodern territorialities?," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 14, no. 2 (1996); Keith Aoki, "Considering Multiple and Overlapping Sovereignties: Liberalism, Libertarianism, National Sovereignty, "Global" Intellectual Property, and the Internet," *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 5, no. 2 (1998).
[168] Dauvergne, "Challenges to Sovereignty: Migration Laws for the 21st Century."; "Making People Illegal."; Hindess, "Neo-liberal Citizenship."
[169] No interviews with Syrian government officials were conducted.

government's history of invoking foreign intervention as a source of the country's troubles, this lack of concern required explanation. I argue that this explanation lay in the fact that *some* elements in the relationship between donors/ humanitarians and Syrian state officials allowed for a performance of Syrian state control and power. This performance overrode in certain key moments the construction of Syria as an ineffective state that needed outside help, which the humanitarian intervention implied, and allowed Syrian state official not just to 'keep face' but awarded them benefits. The high-level public meetings, training seminars for public servants, the UN conferences, donor coordination meetings and positive media attention related to the humanitarian and resettlement effort provided Syrian representatives with heightened importance and a place among the 'international community', which so often shunned Syria. Publically, Syrian state officials, humanitarian sector workers and donor state representatives applauded each other on the Iraqi refugee effort, and high praise was consistently given to the Syrian government for its efforts. The construction of the sovereignty-boosting narrative 'Syria has generously opened its door to refugees created through the disastrous US-invasion of Iraq, which it even opposed, and requires some assistance to help these poor refugees' obscured the way that the humanitarian sector presented Syrian sovereignty, at the same time, as incomplete and ineffective. The expansion of humanitarian activity in Syria and the powerful distinction it carried with it between developed and underdeveloped countries had the potential for a lasting construction of Syrian sovereignty as 'underdeveloped'.[170] As a middle-income country with a state-dominated economy Syria remained somewhat of an anomaly in the developed-underdeveloped dichotomy. The process of marking Syria as underdeveloped through the creation of a humanitarian sector, and the associated meanings for Syrian state sovereignty, was therefore particularly illuminating and interesting.

Syrian-state relations with Iraq

Iraqi migrants were widely considered as a political bargaining chip in Syrian-Iraqi state relations. Many Iraqis interviewed feared that a souring of Syrian-Iraqi ties could lead to their expulsion or at least create trouble for them. Several events and observations supported the idea that in Syrian-Iraqi diplomacy, Iraqi migration was an

---

[170] Since the beginning of the popular uprising against the government in March 2011, and the brutal crackdown, the future of the humanitarian sector in Syria is highly uncertain.

openly politicised phenomena and not a technical problem that required management and bureaucratic/welfare intervention. This presented a significant difference to the approach of humanitarian agencies, and pointed to the depoliticising effect of humanitarian actions, in which open political bargaining and power-jockeying becomes replaced with neutral-sounding interventions through which the outcome of these interventions appear as inevitable and natural, rather than as the result of (political) choices.[171] Despite the easy access for Iraqis to Syrian territory and the associated blurring of territorial exclusivity on this 'human' level, Iraq migration was also, on other levels, used by the Syrian government to enforce its sovereignty vis-à-vis its old rival Iraq. This was evident from the entry-restrictions placed on Iraqi state agents and interests, and from the way the Syrian government made use of its right for exclusive control over territory and borders when it came to persons that the Iraqi government wanted extradited or arrested. Such persons, former members of the Saddam Husayn-regime and high-ranking Baʾthists, enjoyed the protection of the Syrian state and in this way became a location of Syrian state sovereignty vis-à-vis Iraq. Pointedly, when Iraq's then Prime Minister Maliki requested the hand-over of certain persons sought by his government, the Syrian president reminded him that for ten years, Syria had provided asylum to Maliki, refusing to extradite him to Saddam Hussein. This rebuff signalled continued Syrian sovereignty over such matters, and a humiliating, indirect comparison between Maliki and Saddam Husayn.[172] Highly insightful events concerning the construction of Syrian sovereignty in relation to Iraq occurred during the Iraqi parliamentary elections in March 2010, in which Iraqis living in Syria were allowed to vote. The process alone, which was not conducted via postal voting, but at voting stations set up in schools/other suitable buildings, was remarkable in terms of the construction of sovereign spaces (especially in the absence of meaningful and free parliamentary elections in Syria). To the surprise of many observers of Syrian politics, in the weeks preceding the elections, Iraqi election posters began to appear in Iraqi-dominated neighbourhoods, and eventually even in central areas of Damascus.[173] Jaramana, the Iraqi neighbourhood I was most familiar with, was soon covered in a blizzard of posters and large banners strung across the

---

[171] James Ferguson, *The anti-politics machine - "development," depoliticization, and bureaucratic power in Lesotho* (Cambridge University Press, 1990); Ferguson, "The anti-politics machine."; Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Fear* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006).
[172] Andrew Lee Butters, "Can former Iraqi Baathists in Syria ever go home?," *Time*, 27.09.2009 2009; Sami Moubayed, "Syria offers Maliki a life jacket," *Asia Times*, 16.10.2010 2010.
[173] Observations in Damascus March 2010, the election poster in a central area refers to Bab Tuma

street, dwarfing the familiar pictures of Asad *père et fils*. The posters usually showed the face of the individual candidate, the district that s/he was standing for, the name of her/his party and possibly some national or religious slogan. A variety of candidates, from bare-headed women to religious sheikhs, and parties, were visibly contesting.

Interviews with Iraqis living in Jaramana confirmed that in addition to the posters, Iraqi party-activists were conducting door-to-door canvassing of Iraqis living in the area. The Iraqi embassy had begun issuing information about how to vote several months previously and information about where to vote spread by word of mouth. Through a comparatively elaborate selection process, the electoral commission hired Iraqis as security guards and voting assistants, paying as much as USD 100 per day; one of my interlocutors successfully applied and earned USD 300, over a months' rent, in three days. A common assumption (later confirmed by voting results) was that Iraqis living in Syria favoured the opposition candidate Ayad Allawi and his coalition the Iraqi List, a secular man representing secular politics. A further widespread assumption was that Allawi was also the preferred candidate of the Syrian government; but notably, all parties were allowed to advertise. During voting, which took place on 5-7 March 2010 across Damascus, no intimidations or restrictions by Syrian government agents were reported. In this election process, Syrian and Iraqi state sovereignty appeared as intertwined and mutually dependent. The mainstays of the 'sovereign ideal', territory, borders and population, did not appear as defined, or fixed categories of analysis. 'Iraqi' or 'Syrian' locations emerged 'on the spot', where election officials decided to locate them. A Syrian school was turned into an Iraqi voting station, manned by Syrian and Iraqi state officials, without much ado. Sovereignty became real through the persons who went to vote to this school, who in that moment became identified as Iraqi – a sovereign category – and who, through their imagined link with a far-away, national and sovereign territory, were allowed to influence the politics on this territory. The sovereign ideal awarded these voters an imagined link of solidarity and nationality, and a tangible right to influence the government on this particular territory. Conversely, Iraqis who did not decide to vote, who wished to give up their nationality and would have been happy to adopt the Syrian or any other nationality, weakened, through their actions, the construction of the sovereign ideal. Syrian-Iraqi state relations, in the context of Iraqi migration, again showed how practices and activities could simultaneously contradict and

confirm the sovereign ideal. Different levels of interaction played a role for these constructions. Syrian-state related activities aimed at Iraqis living on Syrian territory often contradicted the social/political relations assumed by the sovereign ideal. Syrian-state activities aimed at persons associated with the 'international community' or representatives of foreign states on the other hand performed and confirmed the values, ideas and politics stipulated by the sovereign ideal, even if the corresponding, lived reality in Syria, did not.

Conclusion

This chapter presented an analysis of how the practices of the Syrian state constructed and transformed Syrian state sovereignty the context of Iraqi migration to the country. The first section analysed how the Syrian state's sovereignty over Syria's domestic space emerged as an effect from different interactions between Syrian state institutions and Iraqi migrants. Firstly, the changing regulations controlling Iraqi entry to Syrian territory were discussed. Until 2007, Iraqis enjoyed easy, visa-free access to Syria, whereas since 2007, it has become increasingly complicated for Iraqis to obtain the now necessary visa. These regulatory changes had a significant impact on how Iraqis experienced the most basic, physical form of Syrian sovereignty, that of Syrian border posts and guards; earlier migrants spoke of the friendly, easy reception they received, while later migrants described the growing hurdles they had to overcome and a tougher, formalised crossing of the actual border. These examples showed how changing bureaucratic requirements transformed the appearance of Syrian state sovereignty in Iraqi daily life. Secondly, the question of residency permits, which was an important, often-discussed element in Iraqis' interaction with the Syrian state, was analysed. The uncertainties and frequent changes to the rules surrounding residency permits meant that they became a vehicle through which Iraqis were constantly reminded of Syrian state sovereignty, and Iraqis' status of toleration, rather than legal guarantee. This randomness of rule also confirmed how in Syria, the state did not appear through the law, but through the absence of regularity and as a source of continuous insecurity; in this, Syrian state sovereignty appeared as a very different form of rule than that stipulated by the sovereign ideal and many modern theories of sovereignty. Thirdly and fourthly, the issues of Iraqi access to the Syrian labour market and policing of Iraqis were discussed.

The chapter's second section analysed how Syria's *international* sovereignty was performed and constructed in the context of Iraqi migration. The political developments that turned Iraqi refugees into an international, humanitarian concern in the aftermath of the 2003 Iraq invasion, brought Syrian state officers into contact with international humanitarian agencies and the wider 'international community'. The development of a humanitarian sector in Syria was an unprecedented opening of the country to international NGOs and humanitarian presence. In these encounters, Syrian state officials constructed Syrian state sovereignty, via a narrative that presented Syria as a unity of territory, population and government that extended a generous and protective hand to the Iraqi aliens fleeing the chaos outside of Syria's secure and defined borders. This section firstly focused on the interactions between Syrian state institutions and UNHCR, which had developed a large portfolio of programmes to manage Iraqi migration. Given the breadth of UNHCR's interventions, it was astonishing that the agency maintained a relatively informal relationship with the state, via ad-hoc MOUs with several ministries, rather than an overall, detailed agreement with the government. This situation ensured that the Syrian state's sovereignty towards an external power appeared invested in separate institutions and powerful individuals, who drew their power from an official link with the state apparatus, but also from their personal networks and relationship with the president. Sovereignty was here clearly an effect of an 'assemblage' of power relations, which maintained UNHCR in a position of insecurity and dependence, but also allowed the institution room to manoeuvre on Syrian territory. Once again, this governance over UNHCR showed that Syrian state sovereignty was not based on the social relations and legal regulations assumed by the sovereign ideal. Indeed, occasionally UNHCR's programmes nullified Syrian sovereignty, for example when the agency extended special protection to gay Iraqis, who would have been considered criminal under Syrian state law. For the functioning of Syrian sovereignty, the concept of legality was simply not relevant, as a person's relationship with the state depended on individual characteristics, not neutral, legal categories. Secondly, this section focused on international NGOs, of which around a dozen had been allowed to operate in Syria for the first time in 2007/8. The opening of Syria to NGOs on the one hand boosted the state's international standing and sovereignty, as it presented Syria as a liberalising state that allowed independent organisations focused on human rights to operate, and that accepted Western ideas about development and care for the

population. On the other hand NGOs were also a risk to Syria's international sovereignty, as they signalled that the Syrian state was not able to care for its population and was an underdeveloped country. Syrian ministries thus kept NGOs under much stricter control than UNHCR and initially only allowed the organisation to work with Iraqis. Lastly, this section considered the Syrian state's relationship with Iraq and with donor states. The latter had a significant impact on the management of Iraqi migrants in Syria via their funding and their participation in the resettlement programme for Iraqis.

Overall, this chapter argued that the maintenance and enforcement of Syrian domestic sovereignty relied on different forms of power than those assumed by the sovereign ideal. Rather than being codified in law, bureaucratic routine and fixed institutions, the Syrian state became present in daily life through the creation of insecurity and randomness of rule. Yet when constructing Syria's international sovereignty in interactions with international agencies and institutions, Syrian government officers displayed a definite awareness of how to perform the ideal of liberal sovereignty, by presenting Syria accordingly. The international attention and intervention focused on Syria's handling of Iraqi migrants, created new occasions, interactions and spaces for Syrian state officers and institutions to construct and enforce Syrian sovereignty, and allowed for an observation of their practices, and their sovereignty-creating effect.

Chapter 4

The humanitarian Regime of Sovereignty I: UNHCR in Syria

One of the consequences of the sudden increase of Iraqi migration to Syria in 2006 was a rapid expansion and intensification of UNHCR operations in the country since early 2007.This expansion led to a number of fascinating political developments in Syria, which previously had been largely isolated from post cold-war humanitarian discourse. Focusing on these political developments, this chapter develops the argument that UNHCR's legal framework and practices were based on a particular understanding of sovereignty and a particular understanding of the social relations that should underpin it. UNHCR's interventions in Iraqi life in Damascus reflected and produced these understandings, and shaped Iraqi life accordingly.

The argument is complicated by the fact that UNHCR itself is not a static organisation and has undergone significant changes in the interpretation of its mandate in the past twenty years. UNHCR's legal framework, in particular the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention, is based on ideas of national sovereignty prevalent in the first half of the 20th century, of a world of powerful, clearly demarcated nation states, in which the government-citizen relationship is envisaged as one of protection and responsibility.[174] But since the 1990s UNHCR has been transforming into an organisation with broader humanitarian and interventionist operations, and has become part of the dominant discourse of today's global elites, which merges economic deregulation, humanitarianism and international law into a set of beliefs about how the world should be governed.[175] This discourse, confusingly referred to by authors as 'post-liberal sovereignty' or 'global sovereignty', contains a changed understanding of national sovereignty and the role of the international community, which is often cast as confronting sovereignty, for example in the case of

---

[174] UN *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*.
[175] Gil Loescher, "The UNHCR and World Politics: State Interests vs. Institutional Autonomy," *International Migration Review* 35, no. 1 (2001); Michael Barnett, "Humanitarianism with a Sovereign Face: UNHCR in the Global Undertow," *International Migration Review* 35, no. 1 (2001).

humanitarian intervention undertaken by the 'international community' in a sovereign state. [176] In Damascus, UNHCR's operations produced Iraqi identity in a complex manner that revealed on the one hand the organisation's historical understanding of state sovereignty, of borders, of citizens, territory and government, and on the other also demonstrated how far UNHCR had moved away from the narrow framework provided in the 1951 Refugee Convention. Formal UNHCR rhetoric categorised Iraqis in Syria as refugees, in need of protection, which remained a vague term. This categorisation displayed UNHCR's incorporation of the ideal of state sovereignty: Syria and Iraq were understood as two separate, sovereign territories, whose borders clearly demarcated distinct forms of rule, national identity and citizen-government relations. Once a citizen had lost the protection in her home-state and had been forced to flee due to this loss, UNHCR discourse assumed that its intervention became necessary to enable the refugee to slot back into the system of state sovereignty, in which she floundered and floated, as long as no state would protect her by awarding her a sovereignty-conform identity.[177] Iraqis were cast in these terms by UNHCR Damascus.[178]

In 2009/10 UNHCR programmes in Damascus clarified that in practice, protection translated into a concern for the physical welfare of Iraqis and a focus on those matters that would enable them to become self-sufficient, economically stable persons: education and access to jobs. This mobilizing of protection blended out any questions of *political* protection (in relation to which the Refugee Convention was designed) and raised two interesting points: firstly, that UNHCR was adapting to the Syrian government's oppression of political freedom and secondly, that UNHCR's humanitarian discourse and conceptualisation of refugees as non-political bodies with chiefly physical needs, made this adaptation astonishingly easy and blurred the common distinction between authoritarian and liberal. *This* problematique was linked to UNHCR's post-1990s expanded humanitarian role and its adoption of humanitarian

---

[176] Dimitris Papadopoulos and Vassilis Tsianos, "How to do sovereignty without people The subjectless condition of postliberal power," *boundary 2* 34, no. 1 (2007). Michael Barnett, "Sovereignty, nationalism, and regional order in the Arab state system," in *State Sovereignty as Social Construct*, ed. Thomas Biersteker and Cynthia Weber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Kalpana Rahita Seshadri, "When Home Is a Camp Global Sovereignty, Biopolitic and Internally Displaced Persons," *Social Text* 26, no. 1 94 (2008).
[177] UNHCR, "UNHCR Resettlement Handbook."; "UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2011," ed. UNHCR (Geneva: UNHCR, July 2010).
[178] IRIN News, "Starving to survive: Iraqi refugees resort to desperate measures," (Dubai: IRIN, 2 January 2008).

governance techniques that depoliticised 'beneficiaries' of aid across the globe.[179] Both elements of UNHCR's discourse (the classic, sovereign ideal and humanitarian governance) explained the techniques of management and rule that the organisation deployed in its operations in Syria, which are a further focus of this chapter. The relevance of these techniques lay not only in what they revealed about humanitarian values and ideas, a focus that has been developed relatively extensively in the literature.[180] In the Syrian context, they also indicated that humanitarian actors were vehicles for the introduction of particular forms of governance that were previously absent from Syria. These governance techniques transported norms and ideas about national state sovereignty and thus alluded to one mechanism through which transformations of sovereignty occurred locally in reaction to globally dominating ideas and practices. On the other hand, UNHCR's own reflections on its Middle East operations also showed how the organisation was adapting to the characteristics of the regional states, thus illustrating the intensely dynamic character of such transformations that do not, as is often assumed in critical literature, simply flow from the powerful metropolis into the post-colony, but through constant exchange. [181]

This chapter unfolds in four sections. The first section gives an overview of UNHCR's operations in 2009/10. Section two analyses UNHCR's largest programme, the resettlement operation, which allocated Iraqi refugees to a number of countries that had agreed to receive a certain number as permanent immigrants. The third section looks at UNHCR's broader humanitarian programmes and the fourth, short section provides a special focus on the techniques UNHCR used to manage Iraqis, arguing that they blur common understandings of liberal and authoritarian.

---

[179] The word 'beneficiaries' is placed into quotation marks, as it used as an example for the way humanitarian rhetoric depoliticised the victims of humanitarian disasters, which often result from distinct political constellations. Through calling these victims 'beneficiaries', a neutral, technical term that emphasises their role as passive recipients of charity, their political role, preferences and choices are hidden.

[180] Michael Barnett, "UNHCR and the Ethics of Repatriation," *Forced Migration Review*, no. 10; Stephen Hopgood, *Keepers of the Flame: Understanding Amnesty International* (Ithaka: Cornell University Press, 2006); Mark Duffield, Joanna Macrae, and Devon Curtis, "Politics and humanitarian aid," *Disasters* 25, no. 4 (2001); Alan J. Kuperman, "The Moral Hazard of Humanitarian Intervention: Lessons from the Balkans," *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (2008).

[181] Crisp et al., "Surviving in the city A review of UNHCR's operations for Iraqi refugees in urban areas of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria."; Internal Audit Division UNHCR, "Audit Report UNHCR Iraq Situation in Syria," ed. UNHCR Internal Audit Division (New York; Geneva: UNHCR, April 2009).

An overview of UNHCR's operations in Damascus

In 2009/2010 UNHCR in Syria operated three main sites in Damascus, all of which had been newly developed since 2007. Their set-up, detailed below, reflected the contradictory and ironic relationship of UNHCR/UNHCR employees with their 'beneficiaries', in this case mainly Iraqi refugees. The contradictions of this relationship will be familiar to most analysts of humanitarianism, in which the continued existence of desperate people ensures simultaneously the existence of well-paid and prestigious jobs for expatriates, whose stated raison d'être is the amelioration of the desperate people's poverty or fear. In Syria, as elsewhere, the most senior UNHCR employees were the furthest removed from contact with Iraqi refugees, a situation mirrored by the spatial organisation of the UNHCR sites. The more lowly and badly paid UNHCR staff were either Syrian or Iraqi, and were those with most contact to 'beneficiaries'. During visits to UNHCR facilities I witnessed how difficult UNHCR employees often found 'dealing' with Iraqis, sometimes treating them rather as annoying petitioners rather than persons with a right to UNHCR's services. High in their upper-floor offices in separated buildings, senior UNHCR staff were shielded from any such stressful encounters.

In terms of this organisational hierarchy the most important site was a newly built, modern, four-story office block on a main road in Kafar Sūsa, a rapidly developing area around 1km from Damascus centre. The block was set around 50 meters back from the road in an unpaved building site of mud and rubble, and housed the central decision-making facilities of UNHCR in Syria, the offices of senior and middle-ranging UNHCR managers, meeting rooms, a cafeteria in a small garden and, in the cellar, a small number of window-less and cell-like interview rooms. Entry occurred through a metal gate and a reception area, where friendly receptionists sat behind two desks, asked visitors for their IDs and handed out visitors' badges. The building's relatively elegant corridors and walls were richly decorated with UNHCR posters and adverts displaying emotional portraits of refugees and words such as 'courage', 'hope' or 'strength'. Offices were set up in the familiar manner of desks, computers and files and the typical hierarchy of increasing office size and comfort according to managerial rank was visible.

The other two UNHCR sites were completely different in architecture and atmosphere. Both concerned the processing of Iraqi refugees and were key locations in which encounters between UNHCR officials and Iraqis took place. One was located close to the central office block, however in a more removed and rundown site directly on a moderately busy side road. In this one-story building, simply constructed from corrugated iron, plywood and tarps, UNHCR-registered Iraqis could seek different services each day of the week (Tuesdays – enquiries regarding resettlement status, Wednesday – legal aid etc). The centre had a small, roofed, outside waiting-area and two separate entrances for men and women, through which one proceeded past a metal detector and into the waiting area, which had a warehouse feel (no pictures of hopeful refugees here) and rows of white plastic chairs. While there was no cafeteria or garden, informal vendors offered soft drinks and snacks and there was a water fountain. As demand for the services offered often outstripped the available space, there was regularly a large crowd of dozens or sometimes hundreds of Iraqis standing outside of the building, waiting until the number they had been allocated would be called up, allowing them to proceed inside. This overcrowding and the long waiting times contributed to an atmosphere of disorganisation and lack of consideration for the attending 'beneficiaries'. The third main site consisted of a large warehouse complex 25 km outside of central Damascus in the suburb of Dūma. This was where UNHCR conducted new registrations, (the process through which Iraqis became recognised as refugees and received their protection paper) and where various kinds of clerks conducted the interviews with Iraqi families and individuals that were required during the registration and resettlement process. This facility, which was UNHCR's largest registration facility in the Middle East and possibly the world, was also used for the distribution of food aid and consisted of warehouse halls, several large waiting rooms and smaller interview rooms.

In addition to these main sites, UNHCR also ran a network of around 80 so-called 'outreach volunteers', all of whom were Iraqi women functioning as messengers between Iraqis and UNHCR. Each volunteer was responsible for a particular neighbourhood and was in charge of alerting UNHCR to Iraqi poverty, and of spreading information about UNHCR's programmes, by leaving her telephone numbers with local shopkeepers or wardens, and word of mouth.[182] UNHCR had

---

[182] Interview UNHCR volunteer, 01.11.09

developed this group in response to the absence of humanitarian NGOs, through which the organisation usually conducts aid programmes in a refugee crisis, when in 2007 it started responding to increased Iraqi migration. The lack of so-called implementing partners in Damascus had left UNHCR initially without means to contact and collect information about the Iraqi community, making it difficult to target available assistance. The volunteers, who received a small monthly compensation for their expenses, met every two weeks at the UNHCR office. While speaking very highly of the volunteers and of the usefulness of this system, a senior UNHCR official also described it as heavily time consuming, due to the need to closely monitor the volunteers to prevent any abuse or misconduct.[183] UNHCR was also indirectly present in the field through its funding of NGO programmes, after the Syrian government began licensing such organisation in 2007 (in 2009/10 around a dozen NGOs were operating, most of them on a small scale). For example, UNHCR set up and funded six community centres in neighbourhoods with Iraqi concentrations, which were later handed over to the NGO Danish Refugee Council and ran in cooperation with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. These centres offered various training and counselling courses and sessions. UNHCR was the central funding vehicle for NGOs in Damascus. Finally, UNHCR's also engaged in high-level and *"quiet"* diplomacy to lobby its position with regards to refugees, and organised regional conferences and training workshops attended by government and other public officials.[184] By organising charity concerts and festivities focused on the theme of Iraqi refugees the organisation raised its profile among Damascene elites and the media. A biannual UNHCR Syria update, around 10 pages long, provided regular statistics on recent developments and various puff pieces on the organisation's activities.[185]

Numbers and Challenges

---

[183] Interview with Zahra Mirghani, Head of UNHCR Community Services, 26.10.09
[184] Crisp et al., "Surviving in the city A review of UNHCR's operations for Iraqi refugees in urban areas of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria."
[185] Syria UNHCR, "UNHCR Syria Update April 2008," in *UNHCR Syria Updates*, ed. UNHCR (Damascus: UNHCR Syria April 2008); UNHCR Syria, "A Round Up of 2008," in *UNHCR Syria Updates*, ed. UNHCR (Damascus: UNHCR Syria, 2009); "UNHCR Syria Update Autumn 2009," in *UNHCR Syria Updates*, ed. UNHCR (Damascus: UNHCR Syria, 2009); "UNHCR Syria Update Summer 2010."; "UNHCR Syria Update Autumn 2010."

In 2009/10 UNHCR Syria employed around 200 staff, probably making it, according to one experienced UN consultant, the organisation's second largest operation after Thailand.[186] The resettlement programme, discussed in detail below, was the largest, employing around 60, followed by the three departments of registrations, community services and protection. These numbers were the result of a very rapid scaling up, as in March 2007 UNHCR still operated from a small office in central Damascus with no additional site and a dozen or so staff.[187]

UNHCR's latest biannual update of summer 2010 states that it was at that time managing 151, 907 Iraqis (54, 054 families), who had registered as refugees since 2007. This presented a downward revision from UNHCR's last update in Winter 2009/10, which had reported 218, 363 registered individuals (71, 107 families). While resettlement accounted for some of this trend (since 2007 21,018 Iraqi individuals have departed for resettlement according to UNHCR figures), UNHCR also "inactivated" the files of 15,900 individuals who had not had any form of contact with UNHCR during 2010, assuming that these persons were no longer resident in Syria.[188]

With regards to registrations of refugees, in late 2009 UNHCR Syria appeared to be critically examining the practice, adopted by UNHCR in February 2007, that all Iraqis outside of Iraq would be considered as refugees on a prima facie basis.[189] This move had been explained by UNHCR with the pervasive insecurity in central and southern Iraq and the sudden arrival of large numbers of Iraqis in neighbouring countries, with no available staff to interview them. Given that in 2009/10 the security situation in Iraq was improving, UNHCR Syria was, according to a spokesperson, piloting status determination interviews with new arrivals from certain provinces.[190] According to its own statistic, UNHCR was still registering over 1000 Iraqis as refugees each month between January and July 2010.

In UNHCR circles the Iraqi refugee operation, which also involved UNHCR offices in Jordan and Lebanon, was regarded as exceptional, and indicative of the challenges that UNHCR had to grapple with to address the troublesome issue of urban refugees,

---

[186] Interview with UNHCR status determination officer, 4.10.09.

[187] Observation during a previous research trip in March 2007.

[188] UNHCR Syria, "UNHCR Syria Update Summer 2010."; "UNHCR Syria Update Autumn 2010."

[189] Under standard procedures, persons wishing to register as refugees undergo so-called status determination interviews, which determine whether the person truly faces a *"well-founded fear"* as set out in the Refugee Convention.

[190] Interview with UNHCR spokesperson Farah Dakhalla, 26 October 2009.

i.e. refugees who do not reside in camps, in the future. These challenges included the lack of formal refugee legislation and UNHCR endorsement in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan and the precarious standing of UNHCR activities, which were tolerated, rather than guaranteed. In this scenario, UNHCR could not roll out the *"international standard"* it liked to uphold, but had to negotiate with governments about how far they would adapt to such standards.[191] A further challenge concerned the fact that the presence of Iraqis in Damascus was obscured due to their dispersion in the urban jungle, which made it much harder for UNHCR to intervene than if they had been in camps. Urban refugees were the subject of a divisive, special UNHCR policy, due to their 'exceptional' position.[192] The absence of camps was repeatedly mentioned by UNHCR officials and publications as a key difficulty, given that camps made it so much easier for UNHCR officials to assess, inform, supply and control a refugee population. Lastly, the final challenge associated by UNHCR with Iraqi migration to be mentioned here, was that a large percentage of Iraqis in Syria hailed from the well educated, middle class and were therefore much harder to satisfy with regards to living conditions and more difficult to manage. In the words of one UNHCR manager working on the resettlement process:

> *"This is very different compared to an illiterate refugee population. These people ask questions and ask for information, they voice concerns and have expectations, they understand the process to a certain level. Also, this is the largest refugee operation UNHCR has and it is very different than a camp… In a camp, I can go around, I know what is going on, but here it is not possible to know."* [193]

This quote demonstrates the connection between having knowledge about and having power over a population and crystallises the unequal power relationship between

---

[191] Crisp et al., "Surviving in the city A review of UNHCR's operations for Iraqi refugees in urban areas of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria." From the perspective of UNHCR this appears to be an issue of state sovereignty, in which governments, reluctant to deal with the political implications of integrating a group of outsiders, make use of state privileges to refuse international refugee rights. However in the Syria context, this view contains a serious misunderstanding about how the Syria state practices its sovereignty with regards to *all* people living on its territory. In Syria, approved legislation carries only weak power, whereas a mix of wary laissez-faire, unreliable tolerance, state patronage and violence are the techniques of governance upon which the production of sovereignty relies. In this sense, the Iraqis are in fact integrated into the order of sovereignty in Syria, however this order does not correspond to that version of sovereignty contained in the standards of UNHCR

[192] UNHCR, "UNHCR Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas," (GenevaSeptember 2009).

[193] Interview with manager of the UNHCR resettlement unit, 21. 01. 2010

UNHCR and the Iraqi population. UNHCR's anxiety about feeling out of control was due to its lack of information about the Iraqi population in Damascus. Similarly, Iraqi demands for information about UNHCR processes were attempts to obtain knowledge and power, and the unease expressed about this restful refugee population and attempts to empowerment vis-à-vis the organisation, showed UNHCR staff's limited desire to truly empower its 'beneficiaries'.

UNHCR and sovereignty

UNHCR receives its mandate from the UN General Assembly, to ensure the protection of refugees worldwide through various measures, including the lobbying of governments and the instructing of private organisations to assist in the task. The relevant UN documents define a refugee as a person, who, due to fear of persecution on race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is unwilling or unable to avail himself of the protection of his home country.[194] This definition sits, as do the documents as a whole, fully within the discourse of the sovereign ideal, in which reified territories, borders and populations are represented through the similarly fixed UN technocrat, who executes the will of the nation embodied in a set of bureaucratic and legal rules. From this perspective on sovereignty, refugees are an anomaly, a living proof that the nation-government-sovereignty link has broken down or possibly never existed, resulting in the illogical situation that a government or a nation is persecuting its own people.[195] UNHCR and the 1951 Refugee Conventions sit like a band-aid on international legislation, a corrective tool within international law, as an after-thought following the realisation that the firming up of post-empire national sovereignty was creating exclusion and concentrated violence, rather than islands of peace.

The inadequacy of the refugee convention, with its focus on the individual perception of fear of persecution, and its silence on situations of generalised violence has been recognised.[196] The case of post-2003 Iraqi migration, in which many people fled a situation of general insecurity that resulted from a mix of targeted persecutions,

---

[194] *Statute of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)*; *Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*.
[195] Haddad, *The refugee in international society : between sovereigns*.
[196] Mohamed K. Dorai, "Le Renouveau de la Question de l'Asile au Proche-Orient: l'Exemple des Refugies Irakiens en Syrie" (paper presented at the Migrants Craints et Espoirs, Le Monde Diplomatique Carrefour de la Pensee, 2008).

criminality and the actions of the US army, particularly highlighted the short-fallings of the convention. But the key reason behind the convention's discrepancy with real-life refugee situations is its understanding of sovereignty. If the convention would recognise that forced migration is not a result of the *breakdown* of the sovereign ideal, but often a product resulting from attempts to create it, or occurs in political settings where this ideal does not apply, then it would call into question the entire, universalising system of international law and the UN, and its claim to peace, security and human rights.

UNHCR in Syria did not apply international law by the letter, for example by accepting Iraqis as prima facie refugees. But the sovereign ideal was observable in full force in the organisation's resettlement and humanitarian programmes. To become deserving of resettlement abroad, regarded both by UNHCR staff and most Iraqis as the ultimate prize, Iraqis had to prove in great detail the foundations of their fear of persecution, their lack of (pro-Saddam/anti-American) political activity, their poverty and suffering. The more vulnerable and lacking of governmental protection a person was considered to be according to UNHCR criteria, the more likely resettlement and aid would be forthcoming. In accordance with the understanding of the sovereign ideal (and its absence), the more Iraqis lacked any of the characteristics of a *citizen*, the more likely they would be regarded as true refugees and therefore in need of UNHCR's help. The intellectual puzzle and political relevance of this treatment of Iraqis in Syria by UNHCR, lay in the fact that in Syria, the relationship between state, government and population was not as assumed by UNHCR's concept of sovereignty. Sovereign citizens, governmental protection and nation were all ideas only weakly recognisable from the lived experience of people on Syria's territory, be it that they carried Syrian or Iraqi passports. Through its programmes, UNHCR was transporting aspects of liberal sovereign identity into the lives of Iraqis living in Syria and into the Syrian political context.

Local legal context

An analysis of the local legal context in which UNHCR operated in Syria shows the relationship between UNHCR and the Syrian state and how the two actors influenced and limited each others practices. The Syrian government's production of sovereignty limited UNHCR's impact in such a way that the organisation's effect was

transforming, rather than threatening to Syrian sovereignty. UNHCR's mandate (and the included assumptions about sovereignty) adapted in the Syrian scenario, but its humanitarian discourse still created political contradictions and tensions, as it shaped Iraqi identity and life from a political rationality highly different from that of the Syrian state. The Syrian state was not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and, from UNHCR's perspective, did not have a modern asylum or refugee law at the time of research.[197] Therefore UNHCR's mandate did not automatically extend onto Syria's territory. Instead, since 2003, the organisation operated under a 'temporary protection regime' that was respected to a varying degree by the Syrian government. In practice this meant that the government allowed UNHCR's operations, cooperated with certain UNHCR efforts and, for example, since 2010, was accepting UNHCR's temporary protection document as a way of extending official residency permits for Iraqis. Despite this last point regarding permits, it was noteworthy that during the time of my research, only one of around 80 Iraqi informants had obtained a residency permit through her UNHCR protection paper. All others had obtained permits independently from their registration with UNHCR, meaning that permits were also open to those Iraqis not registered with the organisation. This point was important, as UNHCR's stated primary protection target was protection from refoulement (deportation/no option of legal residency), which, however, in Syria was provided or withdrawn by the state regardless of someone's status with UNHCR.

None of the Iraqis who I asked directly (perhaps 20) attributed a strong protection element to the UNHCR protection document, in the sense that it would protect them from deportation. In fact, protection from deportation was not mentioned in conversations and interviews about Iraqis' motivations to register with UNHCR. The reasons for UNHCR registration mostly concerned access to resettlement and aid, as well as a general hope that something positive might develop from this step.[198] UNHCR officials, Syrians and Iraqis all believed that deportation of an Iraqi could occur at any time at the discretion of the government. Given the government's politics of toleration at the time, interlocutors acknowledged that deportation was generally

---

[197] Interview with manager of the UNHCR resettlement unit, 21. 01. 2010; Crisp et al., "Surviving in the city A review of UNHCR's operations for Iraqi refugees in urban areas of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria."
[198] Interview with Iraqi woman, 16 March 2010; Interview with Iraqi man, 17 January 2010; Interview with Iraqi man 20 February 2010.

only likely if an Iraqi broke the law in some way.[199] As long as their papers were in order, many (but not all) of my research contacts felt secure from deportation in the political climate, again indicating that their residency in Syria had little to do with UNHCR registration. Iraqis frequently mentioned fear of a political reversal that would end the politics of toleration and would force Iraqis out of Syria. Such a change would be related to a change in Iraqi-Syrian government relations and not as an element within the remit of UNHCR. The fact that UNHCR-registration did not play an important role in terms of whether an Iraqi was permitted to remain on Syrian territory or not pointed out UNHCR's ambivalent legal status and influence in Syria. While it was possible that UNHCR's quiet diplomatic efforts contributed to the overall toleration of Iraqis in Syria, it was notable that since the organisation's increased involvement in the management of Iraqis from 2007 onwards, the Syrian government had increased residency and visa restrictions on Iraqis. As argued above, it was possible to link these growing restrictions to transformations to the way the Syrian state was producing its sovereignty in response to the framing of Iraqi migration as a humanitarian crisis, and the subsequent international involvement in this field.

The Syrian government's tolerance of UNHCR's aid operations and its broad disregard for its supposed influence on residency and deportation issues also illustrated that UNHCR's impact on Iraqi life occurred mostly in the biopolitical sphere and in regards to further migration. Before elaborating on both aspects in a more detailed analysis of UNHCR's resettlement and humanitarian programmes, firstly it is necessary to provide a brief analysis of UNHCR's main programmes and activities aimed at Iraqis in Damascus.

UNHCR's key programmes in Damascus

As mentioned above, at the time of research, UNHCR ran four key operational units whose activities had a direct impact on Iraqi life: the registration unit, the community services unit, the protection unit and the resettlement unit. The registration unit was in charge of staffing the registration centre, interviewing Iraqis wishing to register, and renewing their registration annually. To initiate registration, Iraqis would visit the centre and receive an appointment by showing their Iraqi passport. In mid-2008,

---

[199] Interview with Iraqi UNHCR volunteer,1 November 2009

waiting time for the registration interview was two months, due to the large numbers of Iraqis wishing to register (an average of around 8000 new registrations per month in 2008), however by late 2009 this had been reduced to less than two weeks.[200] At the registration appointment, which all members of the family wishing to register were required to attend, Iraqis were asked to provide passports and Iraqi identity cards, and fill in an application form, which requested information about the family's biodata, its previous situation in Iraq and the reasons for departure in form of a narrative. After filling the form and waiting (the waiting process was managed via numbers which were called out), a Syrian UN clerk would conduct the interview based on the information provided on the application form. In the official words of the UN, the registration interview served as the "first screening for special needs and identification of vulnerabilities".[201] Referral to and information about relevant UNHCR services could be administered through the clerk at this point. Photos were taken of each family member and each received a UNHCR protection document, valid for one year, and a file number for the whole family. The document, titled 'refugee certificate', showed the owner's photo, name, nationality, date and place of birth and date and place of entry into Syria and included a paragraph stating that the person had been recognised as a refugee by UNHCR and should, "in particular, be protected from forcible return to a country where he/she would face threats to his or her life or freedom. Any assistance accorded to the above-named individual would be much appreciated."[202] This document had to be presented to receive all other sorts of aid from UNHCR and affiliated NGOs.

The community services and protection unit cooperated to increase the broader 'protection space' for Iraqi refugees in Damascus, through identifying 'protection needs' and developing programmes to address them. In practice this translated into the running of a variety of services, via the above mentioned community volunteer network, six support groups made up of Iraqis with a relevant background (for health, psycho-social issues, the elderly and people with disabilities, unaccompanied and separated minors and education), twelve community support centres and the UNHCR buildings at Kafar Sūsa, and Dūma. UNHCR's 2010 'Regional Response Plan for

---

[200] UNHCR Syria, "A Round Up of 2008." UNHCR, "Audit Report UNHCR Iraq Situation in Syria."; UNHCR Syria, "UNHCR Syria Update Summer 2010."
[201] OCHA, "Regional Response Plan for Iraqi Refugees," ed. United Nations (New York2010).
[202] Statement copied from an Iraqi acquaintances' protection document.

Iraqi Refugees' reveals the extent of these community-based services and lists, inter alia, vocational training, extracurricular activities and remedial classes for children, psycho-social counselling, adolescent empowerment programmes, training of youth workers, child-friendly spaces, life skills training and support for victims of sexual violence.[203] UNHCR clerks and volunteers would alert Iraqis to these programmes during any point of contact, or Iraqis could seek them out voluntarily. The protection unit, according to UNHCR reports, additionally focused on capacity building among Syria official involved in immigration through training and the provision of equipment, and raised awareness among the Syrian population on refugee issues.

Finally the resettlement unit, at the time of research the largest unit in terms of staff, managed the complex process through which Iraqis were identified as qualifying for resettlement abroad and were matched with one of the participating resettlement countries.[204] If selected for resettlement, Iraqis received a permanent residency in the resettlement country as well as varying levels of financial and educational support, and thus, according to UNHCR logic, ended their refugee status. Resettlement was considered by UNHCR as one of three durable solutions to end refugee status, generally for the most vulnerable refugees, with selection criteria based on humanitarian and legal criteria. Practically, the question whether a person was resettled or not strongly depended on whether a third country had agreed to give UNHCR a 'resettlement quota' for this particular group of refugees, and thus also on political questions. UNHCR documents and interviews talk about 'filling' quotas or refer to estimates or expectations about how many persons would be submitted for resettlement in a given year, which were based on quotas provided by resettlement states. The availability of resettlement 'places' therefore clearly influenced the selection process and given UNHCR's urgent lobbying for more such places, it appeared unlikely that once a quota has been provided, it would not be filled.[205] This presence of third countries in the resettlement process underscored that resettlement was a space of 'overlapping' sovereignties, a question that will be addressed in chapter five.

---

[203] OCHA, "Regional Response Plan for Iraqi Refugees."
[204] At the time of research, the participating resettlement countries were Australian, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Norway, New Zealand, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, UK and US.
[205] UNHCR, "UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2011."

In the case of Syria, each resettlement country informed UNHCR about the amount of Iraqis it was willing to resettle in a given year and of any additional requirements, for example Norway had the aim to fulfil the 2009 quota to 55% with women.[206] UNHCR's task was to pre-select and submit the required number of files to the authorities of a country, however the final decision whether a file would be accepted was only made after resettlement-country officials would conduct a final interview with a proposed Iraqis; such interviews took place in Syria. The participation of various, complicated bureaucracies and the sheer number of people and files involved meant that resettlement was a highly complex and work-intensive programme. In addition, resettlement was high-profile and controversial, subject to much speculation and accusations of discrimination. This was partially due to the fact that resettlement was so strongly desired by most UNHCR-registered Iraqis, due to the deliberately opaque decision-making about the grounds on which files were selected and due to the long waiting periods between decision-making steps, during which no information was provided to the Iraqi applicants. The high work-pressure on resettlement staff and the constant suspicion on all sides that Iraqis were trying to cheat their way into resettlement added to its contentiousness. The following two sections will provide a more detailed analysis of UNHCR's resettlement programme and it humanitarian programmes, as it is here that the organisation's framework of sovereignty became operationalised and observable.

UNHCR's Resettlement Programme

UNHCR's resettlement programme categorised Iraqis according to criteria of vulnerability, and the provided them with a sovereignty-conform identity supposedly conform with the sovereign ideal, and legal status. The programme showed what kind of Iraqis were considered by UNHCR as most completely non-conform with sovereignty and in need of resettlement, which was considered as the last resort solution to become rehabilitated into the sovereign system. Resettlement was one of UNHCR's so-called three durable solutions to end someone's situation as a refugee; it was considered an important 'protection tool' "when local integration is not an option, and voluntary repatriation does not seem viable or feasible in the near future", which

---

[206] Interview with manager of the UNHCR resettlement unit, 21. 01. 2010, Website of the Norwegian foreign affairs ministry, accessed November 2010.

was, with regards to the Iraqis, considered to be the case by UNHCR.[207] Resettlement was also considered as a solution of choice when a refugee has 'specific needs' that would not be met in the country of refuge, and other reasons.[208]

Based on UNHCR's Resettlement Handbook, the organization had developed 11 categories of Iraqis, who would be prioritized for resettlement. The profiles reflected a mix of heightened suffering ('persons who have been the victims of severe trauma'), of physically weaker persons/less able to look after themselves ('older persons-at-risk', 'unaccompanied children', 'medical cases'), gender considerations ('women-at-risk') and targeted persecution (due to a person's 'religious or ethnic' background).[209] The categories also included the very situation-specific profile of persons who "fled due to their association with the Multi-National Force, Coalition Provisional Authority, UN, foreign countries, international and foreign institutions or companies and members of the press" and stateless persons.[210] Narratives and data that Iraqis were requested to provide during registration and resettlement interviews focused on identifying information related to these categories. These profiles reflected UNHCR's twin concerns firstly with vulnerability defined along humanitarian ideas focused on the body, and secondly with vulnerability defined as an 'unclear' (from UNHCR's perspective) legal relationship vis-à-vis the state and government. The first concern could be traced to UNHCR's subscription to humanitarian discourse, as set out above, that casts refugees as biopolitical subjects with no means of employment or self-support. The second concern was linked to the organisation's concept of sovereignty, according to which UNHCR's corrective intervention in a person's status became desirable if she did not enjoy, and could not in the future achieve, the kind of citizen-state relationship of reciprocal rights and duties that is the bedrock of the modern ideal of sovereignty. Resettlement was regarded as a solution to both aspects of

---

[207] UNHCR. (2010). Frequently Asked Questions about Resettlement. Retrieved 29. November, 2010, from http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a16b1676.html; With regards to the Iraqis in Syria, UNHCR considered that integration was not possible due to the temporary residency permits issued to Iraqis and the official work prohibition placed on them, and voluntary return was not advocated due to the continuing lack of security in Iraq.

[208] UNHCR Working Group on Resettlement, "Resettlement of Iraqi Refugees, Notes," (UNHCR, March 12, 2007).

[209] Ibid.

[210] It is highly interesting and relevant to observe that the refugee convention's inclusion of persecution due to one's political opinion has only been included in these categories in relation to persons who have shown their alliance with actors related to the invasion of Iraq. Thus, former Ba'athists fleeing Iraq for fear of persecution are not mentioned in the criteria and would in fact rather be considered 'exclusion cases' by UNHCR due to their unacceptable political beliefs and actions in the past.

vulnerability: the granting of long-term residency status with the eventual option of obtaining citizenship solved the absent relationship with a state. The provision of government-assistance in the resettling country, followed by integration into the labour market, completed the transformation into a self-governing human who contributed to the maintenance of a protective government through paying taxes and voting. Together, these steps were regarded as the successful provisioning of 'protection space' to a refugee, who was resettled in a sovereign, stable and peaceful, realm. The resettlement programme was a mechanism to eliminate the vagueness of Iraqis' status in Damascus. Iraqis' sovereign status was vague from the perspective of UNHCR's sovereign ideal because they were neither properly recognized refugees, nor citizens, nor fully stateless; this vagueness was regarded as a threat to Iraqi survival, however perhaps more importantly, threatened the stability of the sovereign ideal on which UNHCR's foundations rested (particularly in light of the fact that Iraqis did indeed survive in this vague state, many not very badly). The following sections examine more closely the way that the resettlement programme produced Iraqi identity and status and what techniques UNHCR used in the process.

Resettlement and the production of Iraqi identity

As set out above, the resettlement programme functioned as a corrective tool, through which an attempt was made to produce Iraqi identity and legal status in a way that conformed with the sovereign ideal. From this sovereignty-conform status, human rights, citizenship, peace and stability (in short: protection) were supposed to flow, in accordance with the idea that a sovereign realm was an ordered realm of law and rights. However to qualify for the expensive and work-intensive resettlement process, resettlement candidates first had to become identified as having moved further away from the sovereign realm than any of their peers, through displaying poverty and suffering. Although UNHCR officials kept selection criteria secret, reportedly in order to avoid fraud, it was well known amongst my Iraqi interlocutors that signs of greater distress would increase chances of being resettled. One middle-aged Iraqi man, complaining about the perceived randomness of UNHCR decision-making and the general chaos and opacity of UNHCR operations in Damascus, stated this point when he asked rhetorically:

"Do I have to lie to receive resettlement, do I have to say that I was kidnapped and my wife was raped? They say that your story is not so bad, but they do not understand. People that lie receive resettlement."[211]

A further statement that demonstrated such awareness of UNHCR's processes came from another Iraqi man, who was waiting to hear about his resettlement case and who stated:

"When we go to ask them about what is going to happen, they told us we have to wait until we…every family, it is like a queue. It depends on your story or your situation; it makes them deal with you first. There are other families, maybe they came after us, but their circumstances makes the UN deal with them before us. It depends on their opinions and their ideas."[212]

Other interlocutors, whose relatives or who themselves had held positions in Iraq's former army under the Saddam regime, were aware that this placed them in an awkward position vis-à-vis the resettlement requirements. Two middle-aged female interlocutors, whose husbands had both worked in the army (as doctor and pilot respectively), suspected that their respective delay and rejection from the resettlement process was linked to their spouses' previous positions. The fact that one of the men had vanished on the Syrian-Iraqi border, in all likelihood murdered for his army association, showed the potential life-death impact of UNHCR's judgment of people's deservingness of resettlement.[213]

The resettlement programme pushed Iraqi identity onto selected aspects of Iraqis' experiences and self-understanding. While violence, fear, injury, poverty, dependency, weakness and support of the US-led invasion were all – among many others - recognizable elements of Iraqi experience and life in Damascus, participation in the resettlement programme nudged these elements towards becoming defining features of Iraqi identity, as they were prerequisites to being selected for the (often) highly desired move abroad. Even as UNHCR clerks recognized that this perception was often highly distorted, the structural requirements embedded in the stated 'priority profiles' ensured that the resettlement remained focused on the identification

---

[211] Field note 040210
[212] Interview with Iraqi man, 20 February 2010
[213] Interview with Iraqi woman, 16 March 2010; Interview with Iraqi woman , 24 February 2010

of these vulnerabilities. Through producing Iraqis as 'huddled masses' of beings that had been cast outside the protective realm of sovereignty, who, through resettlement, could access this realm again and achieve safety, UNHCR produced and performed successfully the narrative that state sovereignty in its modern, liberal manifestation was the right, just, stable and peaceful form of power and social-political organisation. This *mise en scene* of sovereignty could only be achieved by ignoring the many ambiguities that Iraqi existence in Syria introduced to the sovereign ideal, by the simple fact that many Iraqis existed quite well without a citizen-state relationship that would qualify as such in UNHCR's perspective. This ignorance about other aspects of Iraqi existence in Syria on behalf of UNHCR, elaborated below, was astonishing and thorough.

Resettlement and the body politic

The resettlement programme also contained a judgment on Iraqis' place in the Syrian body politic. As UNHCR only considered resettlement viable if local integration was *"not an option"*, Iraqis examined for resettlement were necessarily understood as un-integrated in Syria and, in present circumstances, un-integratable. This notion was often repeated in UNHCR rhetoric, both in official statements and interviews, and always extended to Iraqis in general, not just those being examined for resettlement. Speakers and interlocutors pointed to two key facts when making this argument. Integration was not considered possible due to the fact that Iraqis only received temporary residency permits; and because Iraqis were prohibited from working (Iraqis received a stamp into their passport stating this prohibition). These statement's again clearly reflected UNHCR's two central concerns about refugees, namely their lack of a stable relationship with the state and their inability to care for themselves. Iraqis' status, in UNHCR's view, cast Iraqis 'outside' of the Syrian body politic, as they were assumed to stand in a fundamentally different relationship to the Syrian state than persons with Syrian papers. The following paragraphs will argue that this view of Iraqis was only possible by viewing the Syrian context through the lens of the sovereign ideal and by ignoring that Syrian state sovereignty was constructed through very different social relations, governance strategies and techniques. Government protection and a reciprocal citizen-state relationship did not form part of Syrian sovereignty in the way that the sovereign ideal stipulated. By basing its programmes on this ideal, UNHCR imported related ideas and techniques onto Syrian territory,

creating a conflicting narrative about where Iraqis stood in relation to the Syrian state than the situation that presented itself through daily observations.[214]

The ban on employment

When confronted with the observation that signs of Iraqi employment and investment were evident around Damascus, many interlocutors (both from UNHCR and not) would stress that Iraqis could only seek work in the informal sector, in unskilled jobs, and that Iraqis easily became victims of exploitation due to their lacking legal status. The clearly widespread Iraqi employment was thus portrayed as temporary and precarious, as an emergency survival measure, rather than as a sign of residency, stability and successful organisation. The most striking aspect of this assessment was its blatant and peculiar blindness towards the reality of labour, authority, citizenship and state – in short towards the reality of daily life – as it presented itself in the Syrian context. Lack of security and precariousness was a central governance strategy through which the Syrian government produced and performed the state's sovereignty towards the people living on its territory. One key technique through which this precariousness was produced was to impose 'official' prohibitions, while at the same time tolerating systematic and widespread transgression of the 'official' rule. In this way the possibility of state intervention was always allowed for, however it was never clarified when such an intervention may occur.[215] This technique, combined with a low supply of jobs and poor education facilities, meant that precariousness and at least latent feelings of insecurity were constant factors for many people living in Damascus, especially with regards to employment and income. The regional instability, recently highlighted during the 2006 Israeli attacks on Lebanon, followed by the 2008 attacks on the Gaza strip, strengthened this feeling even amongst Syrian

---

[214] It should be noted that I do not wish to argue that UNHCR's perspective on Iraqis in Damascus was fundamentally false. Iraqi life in Damascus contained all those aspects referred to by UNHCR, as it contained those stressed by my observations. However UN programmes, by blending out those elements that did not correspond to UNHCR's ideas about sovereignty, continuously emphasised only those elements that did, and in this way was able to produce Iraqis' location in Syria in an unambiguous correspondence with the sovereign ideal.

[215] George, *Syria : neither bread nor freedom*. Wedeen, *Ambiguities of domination : politics, rhetoric, and symbols in contemporary Syria*.

I myself as a research student working without a permit was very aware of this technique, which in the case of research worked in reverse : through generally not providing research permits, however also generally tolerating social research in (never defined) uncontroversial areas, the Syrian government never commits either way, however always allows for the possibility of arrest and deportation.

interlocutors who held attractive and relatively well-paying jobs.[216] In the Syrian context, 'protection' in UNHCR's sense of physical safety, enforcement of one's rights and economic independence flowed much more from personal wealth and from useful personal connections to state employees/otherwise powerful persons, than from the judiciary or from the government. This applied to all people living on Syria's territory, be they Iraqi or Syrian. Dozens of observations and interviews confirmed that successful Iraqi employment, business activity and investment depended much more on such matters, than on their secure or insecure relationship with the Syrian state.

The two neighbourhoods with the most visible Iraqi community, Saīda Zaīnab and Jaramana, hosted dozens of Iraqi-run business, mostly restaurants but also bakeries, shops and travel agencies. One interlocutor told me how, shortly after his arrival in Syria, he had set up a small billiard bar, together with a friend who had provided the necessary capital. The bar had been a moderate success until increased rent and bribe payments made business unviable.[217] Another Iraqi acquaintance worked in a restaurant owned by his family, which provided a moderate income for the family after rent and bribe payments. The bribe payments in both cases were necessary to local state agents due to absent permits and to prevent any form of harassment.[218] While these and other observations pointed out that Iraqis could face additional hurdles in Syria due to their status as foreigners, they also showed that Iraqis with capital and skills had better chances of finding employment/business than poor, unskilled Syrians. This, as argued throughout this thesis, was due to the way that the Syrian government created and produced Syrian state sovereignty through techniques of population management that notably differed than those captured in the sovereign ideal. Due to these differing techniques, in Syria a person's legal status vis-à-vis the state only had a relatively modest effect on desperation, unlike what the UNHCR assumed in its criteria for resettlement.

A similar analysis may be made in reference to the often-repeated statement that Iraqis were only allowed to work in the 'informal' economy and were prone to exploitation. While it was true that Iraqis could not access public sector jobs, which in

---

[216] Field note 150110a
[217] Interview Iraqi man, 14 February 2010
[218] Ali and Dorai, "Under the Radar, but not invisible: Iraqi Activity in Syria's informal economic Sector."

Syria included wide swathes of the economy, including large parts of the health and education sector, there was no further indication that other parts of the job market remained systematically closed to Iraqis. In addition, the 'formal' sector (i.e. jobs where a closer government inspection was likely, such as education or health), was not fully closed to Iraqis, as was indicated by the private Iraqi-run university on the outskirts of Damascus, which had been open since 2005, staffed and headed by Iraqi faculty. One of my interlocutors, a natural scientist, was visiting Damascus for several months for the specific purpose to seek a job at this university; his worries focused on the competition and made no mention about possible troubles about work permits.[219] Further, the vague term 'informal' did not carry clear meaning in the Syrian context, where 'official' and 'non-official' spheres were blurred to a high degree. The fact that many Iraqis were working in jobs beneath their level of education or in worse jobs than they had held in the past was disappointing and sad, but not highly different than the situation experienced by many Syrians I encountered. While Iraqis occasionally seemed to be paid substantially less than Syrian employees for the same tasks, this was not the case across the board, as many observations and conversations indicated. All in all, there was no strong evidence that, in terms of employment, Iraqis faced a radically different situation than Syrians due to the 'official' employment ban on Iraqis. This point was astutely summarised in a highly insightful research study on Iraqi employment conducted, somewhat ironically, on behalf of UNHCR, for which 21 working Iraqis were interviewed. The study states that:

> "All the participants had a stamp on their residency card saying they were not allowed to work. They knew what the stamp meant, but this did not stop some from being puzzled at the idea of needing a permit to work. Many assumed that their working would be tolerated as they had seen other Iraqis doing so, and assumed that they also had the stamp forbidding them to work. 'N' thought that permits were only needed for setting up businesses. 'E' and 'O' did not understand what a work permit was. 'Z' left Iraq specifically to work and send remittances to his family in Iraq. He was not aware of any permit requirements and is working in a hotel without one.
>
> 'G' was aware that she was not supposed to work. Her husband, a Chinese chef in Iraq, had applied to work in a Chinese restaurant in Dūmar. They said they would hire him if he went to get a work permit from the 'National Leadership'. Experience had taught 'G' that work permits were not an issue in the Saīda Zaīnab neighbourhood. She believed that the Syrian

---

[219] Field note 230310a, Field note 25022010a

government tolerated Iraqis working there, and setting up businesses too. She mentioned that there were Iraqis working as professionals in the medical clinics associated with the Haūzas (the Shia religious seminaries)."[220]

This report, interviews and observations with Iraqis cast doubt on the claim that Iraqis were systematically exposed to increased exploitation, simply due to the fact that they were Iraqi.[221] One of my interlocutors, an Iraqi woman in her late teens, reported about her search for work and how she had learned about a basic juice-making factory, where Kurdish girls squeezed pomegranate with bare hands while sitting next to large, burning-hot cauldrons, earning around USD five per day. Through this encounter the Iraqi woman had learned that Kurds in Syria were in a 'bad situation', as they were not given nationality and opportunities. The job in the juice factory presented such bad conditions that my Iraqi friend decided against it.[222] A further research informant, an Iraqi man in his early 20s, was actively searching for work in a number of fashionable restaurants in the old city, where some of his Iraqi friends were employed. The wage he expected to earn, around USD 160 per month to begin with, would be the same as Syrian employees; however it was noteworthy that this informant was not hired in the end as his residency permit had expired, the restaurant owner told him that once he obtained a residency, he would hire him (a work permit was not mentioned).[223]

The relationship with the state

Also with regards to others areas of 'protection' and the key issues of residency and freedom of movement did daily life in Syria challenge UNHCR's assumptions about the way sovereignty worked. The lack of a formal relationship with the state, which in UNHCR's logic translated into a lack of protection, did not distinguish Iraqis in the Syrian context in this regard. Protection was not a key element of the state-citizen relationship in Syria, where the state's sovereignty was built on different strategies of coercion and social relationships. As the sovereignty-producing strategies of the Syrian government are analysed in greater details in chapter three; this section will only present a few aspects that demonstrated the contrast with UNHCR's vision

---

[220] Ali and Dorai, "Under the Radar, but not invisible: Iraqi Activity in Syria's informal economic Sector.", page 8.
[221] Ibid., page 12
[222] Field note 051109
[223] Field note 230110a

especially starkly. The Syrian government had ruled under emergency laws since 1963, which suspended the constitution and any protection it awarded to individuals from state violence.[224] In practice and according to observations and interviews this meant that the government regularly resorted to personal harassment, arrest, conviction and physical violence against persons who had fallen foul of state or government agents. It also meant that it was very hard to seek redress for any arbitrary rights-violations by state or governments agents; if attempted, it would be sought through personal connections and bribe payments, rather than legal process.

One of the most pertinent issues when considering the alleged absence of freedom of movement/residency of Iraqis, assumed by UNHCR to be an issue of official state matters, was the fact that persons who had drawn the negative attention of state agents were regularly prohibited from, or harassed when leaving the country by the Syrian government. As mentioned in chapter two, this situation applied to various of my interlocutors: a Syrian, middle-aged, male government critic; an Iraqi woman who had been questioned by intelligence agents over her links with foreigners; and a young Syrian man who was dodging the military service. A further Syrian acquaintance, a man in his late 20s who had been living abroad for many years, repeatedly faced trouble when trying to exit Syria after visiting his relatives. After repeatedly having to pay bribes and mobilize contacts to leave, he decided not to visit again despite important family occasions, as he was too worried about the consequences: in effect, the Syrian government had banned him from returning to Syrian state territory. These observations show that, when on Syrian territory, state-affiliation was not a crucial determinant for 'protection'. Freedom of movement from and to the territory was not a sovereign-citizen right for persons with Syrian documents that could be systematically upheld under certain conditions. Syrian state agents, due to arbitrary circumstance, could easily treat two persons in a similar situation differently in terms of protection and freedom of movement.[225] Certain

---

[224] In 2011, the emergency law was officially ended as a reaction to the wide-spread anti-government protests, however this did not change the situation on the ground where security officials still conducted arrests and convictions based on 'national security' question. This development highlighted that the concept of 'legality' was broadly meaningless in Syria.

[225] An important caveat to this statement : state affiliation does impact on protection in the sense that if a person holds citizenship in a country that is likely to intervene on her behalf in case of rights violations or arrest, Syrian state agents will be much more cautious. So while Iraqis (for example) could not turn to their embassy to seek protection, EU citizens could, and were therefore much less exposed to harassments or arrest.

observations of the resettlement programme also scuttled notions that a legal residency permit in a sovereign state would result in 'protection'. Hardship, and other issues, led a small (and unknown) number of Iraqis to return to the Middle East, after having received the long awaited resettlement.[226] Once resettled to the US, Iraqis received financial support from the US government for the first months, after this period food stamps were provided, however rent and other expenses had to be covered by Iraqis themselves. This process clashed with UNHCR's focus on resettling the most 'vulnerable' refugees, who were often persons who would find it most difficult to obtain employment and economic independence abroad. Here, UNHCR's narrative that legal residency in a sovereign country would result in protection for 'huddled masses' was most clearly revealed to be problematic. The returning Iraqis were also a living evidence that the particular definition of 'protection' enshrined in ideas and laws about modern sovereignty, in practice had important limits. While sovereign protection covered violence stemming from certain persecutions, it did not extend to physical harm resulting from poverty, and thus revealed its historical and ideological ties to capitalism and liberal values about self-governance. The issue also highlighted sovereignty's continuing basis on imagined nationhood and the exclusions and barriers faced by migrants, and pointed out that in Syria, the state had not assumed control over the broader and more inclusive identity of 'Arab', even though this meant a slacker control of borders and territory. Further complicating any assumed link between citizenship and protection, UNHCR's financial and food aid for Iraqis in Syria was perceived as unlimited, unlike the temporary state support received after resettlement.

As UNHCR sought to create the 'protection space' that Iraqis were apparently lacking due to their foreignness in Syria, the organisation created benefits and services that were not available to Syrians via the Syrian government. In this somewhat ironic situation, UNHCR produced 'Iraqi' and 'Syrian' as distinct categories of persons, based on the sovereign-ideal of citizenship as a person's defining characteristic, in a way that the Syrian government did not. This absence of 'protection space' for Syrians again called UNHCR's assumptions about sovereignty and citizenship into

---

[226] During research I met one woman who had returned after being resettled from Amman to the US, after not being able to find means of survival after her six-months support ran out. Other informants told me directly about a handful of other cases, as did UNHCR interviewees. A number of press reports appeared in US papers on the issue, however there do not appear to exist statistics on this issue.

question, as 'vulnerable' Syrians, be they 'women-at-risk', 'elder-persons-at risk' or be they persons facing persecution on political grounds, had no recourse to enforce their assumed right of protection as citizens. A conversation with a Syrian acquaintance, who was an astute observer of Syrian politics, stressed this point. When asked about what she considered as a key difference between the situation of Syrians and Iraqis, she answered that *"the state did not care about the human rights of either its citizens nor of the IR, whether they lived or died, the state did not care. But the IR (note: Iraqi Refugees) had various organisations that were representing them to Europe, to the US, to the UN, such as UNHCR and the aid organisations. So in that sense they had someone speaking for them and there was a spotlight on them."*[227]

Together with other humanitarian actors, UNHCR contributed to a transformation of the space in which the Syrian government could produce the state's sovereignty, both towards the people living on its territory and towards the international community. As already alluded to, UNHCR's humanitarian programmes played a crucial role in these transformations; they are the focus of the next section.

UNHCR's Humanitarian Programmes

UNHCR's humanitarian programmes demonstrated the organisation's institutional belief in liberal values of self-government and the liberal subject, and hinted at these ideas' connection with the sovereign ideal. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to establish an easy dichotomy between UNHCR as a 'liberal' actor and the Syrian state as a 'despotic' actor. As the last section of this chapter will argue, UNHCR's governance techniques showed that in terms of violence, there was no neat divide between liberal and authoritarian forms of power. Considering UNHCR's humanitarian programmes it was important to note that at no point did Iraqi migration result in the widespread misery associated with tent camps and forced marches of people carrying their belongings. No camps for Iraqis had been established in Syria, neither had homelessness visibly increased in Damascus in association with Iraqis. In early 2007, during a meeting with UNHCR Damascus at a time when no significant programmes existed, the then community-services officer recounted how she gave a (then unusual) cash hand-out to the most desperate Iraqi man who had approached UNHCR, who had told her that he had no accommodation and was considering

---

[227] Field note 091009a

sleeping in a park. In middle-income Syria, where visible signs of extreme poverty were scarce, this man was considered a crisis. The explanation for the rapid expansion of humanitarian programmes should be rather sought in the particular politicisation of Iraqi migration through US and European advocacy groups, and the consequent expansion of funding for such aid programmes.[228] In 2008, donor countries provided around USD 250 million to UNHCR, followed by a minimum of 130 million in 2009 and around 160 million in 2010.[229] This money, coupled with the intrinsic expansionism of UNHCR and NGOs always on the lookout for new 'markets', was fundamental to the setting up of the various new interventions analysed below.

Given their breadth, the humanitarian programmes provided a rich ground of analysis; this section concentrates on two aspects. Firstly, it addresses the question of the targeting of the programmes, the meaning of their focus on certain areas of life, and not others. Secondly, it analyses the political transformation these programmes hinted at and the changes to the Syrian state and its sovereignty that they entailed.

Iraqis as receivers of humanitarian care

As already referred to, a crucial aspect of UNHCR's raison d'être was its portrayal of Iraqis as weak, dependent and unable to produce themselves, through their own effort, into persons who could pass as citizens (and therefore as sovereign, adult humans). Without the existence of vulnerable Iraqis, there would have been no justification or reason for UNHCR's press releases, funding appeals, job announcements, programme designs, cooperation with NGOs, with the Syrian state etc.[230] The figure of the vulnerable Iraqi was the bedrock of UNHCR in Syria at the time. It was therefore no surprise that this figure was ever present in nearly all UNHCR Syria publications and programmes.[231] Between 2007 and 2010, UNHCR Syria leaflets, plans and funding

---

[228] Chatelard, "What Visibility conceals. Re-embedding Refugee Migration from Iraq."

[229] UNHCR financial figures were published inconsistently across several different publications and present estimates. OCHA, "Regional Response Plan for Iraqi Refugees."; UNHCR, "UNHCR Global Appeal 2011 (update) Syrian Arab Republic," ed. UNHCR (New York, USA: UNHCR, 2010); "UNHCR Global Appeal 2010-2011 Syrian Arab Republic," ed. UNHCR (New York, USA: UNHCR, 2009).

[230] UNHCR also managed and helped non-Iraqi refugees in Damascus, and has done so for years (mainly Somalis and Afghanis), however non-Iraqis had been completely swamped and made invisible by the focus on Iraqis.

[231] An interesting exception is a report about UNHCR's Syria programmes by UNHCR's internal audit committee. Technical and neutral in tone it queries procedures and the management of UNHCR's relationship with local partners, with no mention of vulnerabilities and the usually encountered tone of compassion and kindness.

appeals, always referred to several key areas of humanitarian intervention, which portrayed the Iraqi refugee population as lacking in the related areas of life. The referred-to areas were: delivery of basic food items, financial help, health care (including psycho-social counselling), training and remedial education, special help for single women and special help for victims of sexual attacks and torture.[232] The image of Iraqis that emerged from these catalogues, aided by photographs, was of persons who were, due to unspecified developments, so poor to not have enough food, not able to earn a living, sick and in psychological distress, unprepared for the future, in social distress (single-women households) and victims of cruel and sexual violence. Part of this portrayal was a strange silence about the causes of the Iraqi plight. Apart from occasional and vague references to persecution by unnamed perpetrators, Iraqis could have easily been the victims of a natural catastrophe that had led to a wider state collapse, an event of 'higher force' for which no human agency was to blame. The responsibility of the US-led coalition forces for Iraqi flight was thus veiled, as was the complete failure of the stated goals of the war such as 'bringing democracy to Iraq'. By eliminating the historical and political context of Iraqi suffering, UNHCR achieved a depoliticising of its 'beneficiaries'. Being non- or a-political is, in humanitarian discourse, a necessary prerequisite for a person to be deserving of aid. In the case of UNHCR, presenting its beneficiaries as non-political also allowed for UNHCR's image of neutrality to be upheld. The use of technical and medical language in this categorisation of Iraqis ('trauma', 'at risk', 'gender-based violence') also contributed to a strong distraction from the political processes and political violence that were contained in Iraqi experience.[233] While it was thus relatively clear that UNHCR's humanitarian programmes were biopolitical in effect and produced Iraqis as vulnerable, politically neutral and passive agents, it was much harder to pin down the political transformations of sovereignty and citizenship contained in them.[234] The humanitarian programmes in Syria were linked to the powerful, globalising discourse of humanitarianism in general, and embedded Iraqis into forms of governance that not only transcended Syrian territory but which were de-territorial, in the sense that they drew legitimacy from ideas presented as universal and neutral:

---

[232] UNHCR, "Country Operations Plan 2007 Syrian Arab Republic."; "UNHCR Global Appeal 2010-2011 Syrian Arab Republic."; UNHCR Syria, "UNHCR Syria Update Autumn 2009."; IRIN News, "Starving to survive: Iraqi refugees resort to desperate measures."

[233] Omar Dewachi, ""Between Iraq and a Hard Place": Urban Governance and Transnational Laboratories of Intervention of displaced Iraqis in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon," (2010).

[234] Ibid.

human rights, compassion and solidarity. However the social relations created by humanitarian programmes – between Iraqis, between Iraqis and Syrians, between Iraqis and UNHCR officers and between Syrians and UNHCR officers – were *power* relations, and relations of governance and influence, and were decidedly *not* neutral. These relations, through which money, ideas and identities flowed, created new understandings about what it meant to be Iraqi, what it meant to be Syrian and what the meaning and power of Syrian state, or Iraqi state sovereignty was. The creation of 'Iraqi refugee vulnerability' as an arena of intervention produced a new space of encounters in which Syrian state sovereignty, Iraqi identity and the influence of humanitarian actors were renegotiated and transformed. As Iraqi 'vulnerability' was a factor in determining a person's access to welfare services and resettlement, it very concretely influenced a person's (physical and imagined) location in a sphere of one or another state's territory and population, and thus her position towards the state's power. In this way, the characteristic 'vulnerability', produced through humanitarian programmes, had a transformative power, because persons understood as such were slotted into particular programmes that changed their location in the sovereign system. Further, it affected Iraqis' modes' of behaviour and self-governance as certain Iraqi practices were rewarded and others not. Like the resettlement programme, the humanitarian agenda cast Iraqis as external to the Syrian body politic and as outside of the Syrian state's responsibility.[235] In combination with Iraqi 'vulnerability', this justified and explained the intervention of UNHCR on Syrian territory and in the lives of part of the population living on it, i.e. the intervention of UNHCR into areas of life normally strongly understood as a space of state sovereignty, or a space in which state sovereignty was performed. This intervention would have been much harder to implement, if Iraqis were presented as agents with (political) potential for activism or indeed action of any significance on Syrian territory, as this would have merited stricter government control to maintain state sovereignty. By producing Iraqis as passive, neutral and as not possessing any means of intervening in Syrian affairs it was possible that UNHCR's interventions became understood as similarly neutral and based on universal human values.

---

[235] In fact, as will be discussed further below, UNHCR rhetoric constantly stressed the Syrian governments' generosity in hosting the Iraqis (despite the supposed strain these were placing on Syria's public finances, and rather then for example pressing the government to do more, such as allowing Iraqis to work).

As an interesting and though provoking mental exercise it is worth considering the effects of UNHCR's humanitarian interventions if they focused on other areas of Iraqi life, or applied different criteria. If UNHCR's aid programmes, for example, focused on identifying successful, male Iraqis who had managed to set up a business in Damascus, and supporting such persons to give advice-sessions to other men, the political and social effect would be markedly different. Or if the organisation applied overtly political criteria, such as selecting persons who could demonstrate a commitment to democratic values, or small entrepreneurs, or simply privileging healthy persons rather than sick, such changes would have a significant impact on the organisation's ability to operate, the availability of donor money, the acceptance by the Syrian government and so forth. It would also have had a profoundly different effect on Iraqi self-governance and identity formation. In the interviews and observations collected during fieldwork, UNHCR's humanitarian interventions appeared as a visible, however not defining element of Iraqi life in Damascus. The importance of the agency's aid varied according to a person's situation. While a small number of interlocutors described it (especially the financial aid) as crucial to their existence in Syria, others were happy to take food aid and educational courses as a bonus and still others dismissed it completely, stressing the bad quality of the food, which they sold. Some interlocutors, who were single men and did not qualify for aid, spoke about times when they had needed support and did not understand why UNHCR would not provide it, and still others refused to register for aid out of pride.

Humanitarian transformation of sovereignty

While it would be tempting to argue that UNHCR was taking over areas of governance usually associated with the state and transforming Syrian sovereignty in this way, UNHCR's interventions rather pointed out that the organisation was creating spheres of governance that had not been part of the Syrian repertoire of sovereignty-creating techniques before. Given the lax, institutional separation between Syrians and Iraqis in the Syrian context, arguably UNHCR's humanitarian discourse about Iraqis was crucial for producing 'Iraqi refugees' as a particular field of governance, which had a transformative effect on how the Syrian state entered this field. This was most clearly visible in the way that the international focus on Iraqi migrants as a humanitarian crisis and in need of global attention opened the space for Syrian government officials to perform Syrian state sovereignty to external audiences.

International conferences, UN committees, journal and press articles focused on Iraqi refugees developed as a platform on which Syrian public figures acted out Syrian state sovereignty in terms of power (Syrian control over refugees), stability (Syria as safe haven for refugees), morality (Syria as a generous host) and in terms of membership of the 'international community' (Syria participating in the international effort to help the refugees).

As already mentioned, the Syrian government gradually increased restrictions on Iraqi immigration simultaneously with the humanitarian focus on the matter. Until late 2006 Iraqis entered Syria without visas and obtained residency relatively easily; since then visa requirements and residency procedures gradually tightened. Clearly, many issues contributed to this complex development, including government anxieties about border security and popular discontent about Iraqi immigration. But the growing restrictions were also a sign that the Syrian government was transforming its management of Iraqis according to ideas and practices about how borders and states should divide populations according to citizenship, in line with the sovereign ideal. The humanitarian discourse about Iraqis, which contained this ideal, and which was practiced mainly by European/US media, NGOs and the UN, at least appeared to have had an influence on the way the Syrian government transformed its sovereignty-producing techniques towards Iraqis. The continuing entry restrictions in 2009/10, when public attention in Syria and globally to the Iraqi issue was waning, as well as the acceptance in 2010 by Syrian state agencies of the UNHCR protection paper as a means to obtain residency, pointed to this. The increased cooperation between UNHCR and Syrian state/government agencies, which was particularly pronounced in UNHCR's humanitarian programmes, also indicated an increased convergence of interest and discourse between persons representing the two institutions. For example, in 2009, UNHCR signed a cooperation agreement with Syria's Women's Union, a government organisation, to jointly operate centres and programmes for women-at-risk. The opening-celebration of the first jointly-operated centre in Kafar Sūsa, (Damascus), saw speeches of senior members of both UNHCR and the Syrian government. While their rhetoric remained quite different, their agreement that the existence of Iraqi refugee women merited a cooperation on the aid effort and on the type of interventions and aid offered to women showed a merging of interests on the

matter.[236] Similarly, in 2010, UNHCR announced an MOU with the Syrian Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour "to strengthen the services provided to vulnerable refugees, particularly women at risk, unaccompanied and separated children, minors in juvenile centres, refugees with disabilities, and the elderly".[237] In the field of health, UNHCR cooperated closely with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent ('SARC'), a quasi-government institution. SARC operated several clinics, delivering primary health care services to registered Iraqis and transferred them to public hospitals if necessary. Treatments for Iraqis were subsidized by UNHCR and in 2007 and 2008 the organization funded SARC with over USD six million, which also highlights the financial incentives provided to Syrian actors to comply with UNHCR's processes.[238] Given that SARC created a particular, computerised database to record UNHCR patients' information, its personnel would have been necessarily exposed to the selection criteria and categories of vulnerability of UNHCR and, further, would have participated in the production of Iraqis as vulnerable refugees, in line with the sovereign ideal. Nevertheless, as mentioned before, it would be incorrect to characterise the transformative effect of Iraqi migration as only flowing from UNHCR to the Syrian government. Visibly, UNHCR's implementation of its humanitarian agenda was affected by Syrian government demands and by the government's management and discourse of Iraqis. At the most basic and important level, the unofficial and open attitude of Syrian authorities to Iraqi presence, settlement and economic activity strongly limited UNHCR's scope and depth, than if Iraqis would have been forced to live in camps, deprived of all means to make a living.[239] Further, the fact that the Syrian government was not a member of the refugee convention and UNHCR only operated under a temporary agreement, placed the organisation into a situation, in which its operations were dependent on governmental tolerance. This dependency must count as an explanatory factor for UNHCR's consistent and lavish praise for the Syrian government, which was not

---

[236] UNHCR, "Press Release: Syrian Women's Union and UNHCR inaugurate centre to empower refugee women," ed. UNHCR (Damascus25 November 2009). ; Observations and recordings on the day of the opening of the centre.

[237] UNHCR Syria, "UNHCR Syria Update Summer 2010."

[238]UNHCR, "Audit Report UNHCR Iraq Situation in Syria." This report mentions several poorly set-up financial processes, which would have easily allowed persons to siphon off money for personal gain, which highlights a further twist to the UNHCR-Syria relationship.

[239] In this sense, it is instructive to observe what an important role the Palestinians from Iraq, some of which were forced to reside in desperate conditions in tents in the desert between the Iraqi and Syrian borders for several years, played in UNHCR programmes. Fully dependent on UNHCR aid, these several thousand families always featured prominently in UNHCR publications and rethoric.

otherwise often mentioned in the same breath as terms such as 'principles of human rights', 'protection' or 'humanitarianism'.[240] Despite UNHCR's constant emphasis on human rights rhetoric, in no instance did the organisation appear interested in crossing Syrian government 'red lines' on matters of political freedoms, freedom of speech and so forth. While UNHCR did offer a free legal aid clinic to Iraqis and worked on a very small number of detention cases, the UNHCR employees I encountered displayed the same deference to the governments' repression of certain political topics as most other persons in Syria.

Violent and non-violent techniques in UNHCR programmes

The aim of this last, short section is to make explicit an argument that is running throughout this thesis, which concerns a broader analysis of the dichotomy of 'liberal' and 'authoritarian'. These two terms and the associated political systems are usually separated according to the degree and type of violence visited by governments on the people living on the state territory in question. The argument presented here is that this dichotomy of violence is not as stark as often understood and that the management of Iraqi migration in Syria by 'authoritarian' and 'liberal' actors demonstrated its limits. Ultimately, distinct regimes of violence appear to be instead differentiated by *whom* that violence is visited on, and how visible this violence is made by political discourses, rather than what kind of violent is used. To a smaller degree, the type of violence used is also a differentiating factor. This argument appears through an analysis of the techniques used by UNHCR in its management of Iraqis and by comparing them with those used by the Syrian state. By looking at the two actors' techniques it becomes clear that, despite the perhaps initially apparent association of UNHCR with 'liberal' and the Syrian government with 'authoritarian', both used violent and liberal strategies in their management of Iraqis (and thus their production of sovereignty). The violence just appeared (or disappeared) in different circumstances and in different patterns.

Global and local techniques

Through making use of global communication and travel technologies UNHCR has over the decades developed a central repository of knowledge about refugees and

---

[240] These were just some of the accolades heaped on the Syrian government by UNHCR representatives speaking at the launch of the agency's regional response plan 2010 in January 2010.

migration. The conclusions and programmes drawn from this knowledge are distributed by UNHCR to wherever its activities reach. In this way the organisation is creating de-territorial and potentially global techniques of intervention into situations of migration, which produce the experience of migrants, and their position in sovereign spaces, in a similar way. These techniques are, with regards to sovereignty, teleological, as they contain very strong assumptions about what the correct relationship between persons and their government should be and about the rights that a citizen of a sovereign state should enjoy. In this sense these techniques also have hegemonic potential, as no other institution comes close to rivalling UNHCR in terms of knowledge, mandate, funds or reach. UNHCR's written and spoken texts repeat the organisation's commitment to human rights, and its goal and mandate to protect refugees from violence throughout. An analysis of these texts could thus conclude that UNHCR is a fundamentally liberal organisation whose interventions focus on shaping refugee lives in accordance with the Enlightenment ideals of citizenship and productivity. UNHCR's programmes, as described in these texts, amount to essentially biopolitical techniques that elevate the poor, deviant and sick to legal membership of society and prepare them to be handed over to the disciplinary apparatus of a sovereign state, where, if they adapt their behaviour accordingly, they will flourish. My observations during fieldwork however found that in Syria, UNHCR's treatment of Iraqis showed a mix of the liberal biopolitics presented in UNHCR texts, and of much more direct, violent power that produced Iraqis not as 'beneficiaries' but as unruly, deviant and potentially dangerous persons that had to be disciplined and punished. Occasionally also, UNHCR's superficially liberal techniques of categorising and humanitarianism had effects that decided over life and death, for example if a person associated with the former regime was refused protection from persecution or if the non-provision of aid to a person would lead to their return to Iraq.

UNHCR's more violent or disciplinarian treatment of Iraqis was visible during direct encounters between UNHCR staff and Iraqis at the processing centre in Kafar Sūsa, where often dozens or hundreds of Iraqis were waiting outside. One day I accompanied an Iraqi acquaintance to this centre, where she was hoping to obtain information about her resettlement file. We arrived at around 7am in the morning to obtain a paper slip with a number that would ensure entry on that day; although the

centre only opened at 9am, it was known that there were not enough numbers for everyone, for this reason it was necessary to queue early. No proper waiting area adorned the entrance and soon around 200-300 people were crowding around it, leaning where possible against concrete blocks or fences which dotted the undeveloped site. From 9am onwards, ten people at a time were allowed entry through a narrow doorway, which was monitored by a male, Syrian UNHCR employee. As the day wore on and the heat increased, with no shade to stand in and no opportunity to buy food or water, the crowd, which was separated into men and women, became restless and people pushing towards the entrance were angrily shouted at by the UNHCR staff. After around five hours wait, my friend and I were standing on the dusty sidewalk, trying to lean against a fence to relieve our weary legs and feet. We had now been shouted at several times by the harassed-looking UNHCR employee, who had shouted several times that people without a number should go home, that there were no further number that day and that persons from outside Damascus would not be served at this site. I noticed that the men were being processed much faster than the women and assumed that this was because the male crowd would become more aggressive and demanding. Several women harangued the UNHCR guard about the long wait and their exhaustion about standing in the sun and I observed how a Syrian army officer intervened several times, in one instance raising his voice with an older woman who could not stand in the sun any longer and had questioned their bad treatment, adding that 'they were not Jews', which made my friend laugh. The presence of the officer made the waiting women nervous, in one instance I overheard his discussion with one of them in which he queried whether she had a residency permit. Eventually we were allowed inside; after a small discussion about my presence I was exceptionally allowed to accompany my friend, however requested to sit at the back of the waiting room with additional attention from the various guards. At the end of an incredibly exhausting and demoralising wait of about six hours, my friend held a five minute audience with a UNHCR employee in front of a computer, who looked something up in an electronic database and told her that there was no news on her resettlement file. The experience of the day sat very uneasily with UNHCR's rhetoric of refugee rights and protection that I encountered during interviews and in UNHCR brochures. It showed that when in practice the presumably passive and unprotected 'huddled masses' of refugees were demanding and proactive, UNHCR's approach could turn disciplinarian and threatening. Caught in their

organisation's discourse of the sovereign ideal and humanitarianism, UNHCR staff seemingly had no 'rights-based' solutions once the refugees' behaviour upset and undermined it.

UNHCR had no means of punishing Iraqis who cheated the organisation or broke any other rules other than withdrawing support, and the organisations' lack of any form of detention or police apparatus showed the important limits on its use of violence. To identify transgressors, UNHCR had developed instead a system of unannounced visits to beneficiaries' homes to check their identities, and tried to cross-reference information through interviewing family members separately or checking different databases. Iraqi interlocutors complained about the intrusive nature of the interviews, and reported on very personal questions asked separately of spouses (presumably designed to spot false information, however this was not always recognised or believed by Iraqis, who experienced such processes as harassing). UNHCR staff was deliberately opaque about the organisations' procedures and about why certain questions were asked, documents requested or further interviews requested. This strategy, reportedly intended to prevent fraud, left Iraqis in the dark about the reasons for UNHCR's requests and therefore also without significant room to react to these requests other than as passively compliant, in the hope that something positive might come from them. The lack of information about significant events such as resettlement, dates of final interviews and departure, produced a situation of limbo and increased dependence on UNHCR. Through the access that UNHCR provided to other sovereign territories and citizenships, the organisation itself wielded a degree of sovereign power, even if the final decision rested with the resettlement states. In its management of Iraqis, UNHCR therefore used a mix of biopolitical, disciplinarian and violent techniques. To outside observers however, the disciplinarian and violent aspect was practically completely hidden and could only be witnessed through overcoming significant hurdles. UNHCR rhetoric overwhelmingly stressed its biopolitical strategies, and the design and set-up of its Damascus sites separated visitors from the messy, direct service-provisions. Only through accessing sites normally reserved for Iraqis (and to achieve such access without a UNHCR chaperone was tricky) was it possible to witness the full range of UNHCR techniques.

Conclusion

This chapter presented an analysis of UNHCR's concept of sovereignty and how the organisation implemented this concept into a lived reality in its management of Iraqis in Damascus. The analysis pointed to the contradictions that UNHCR's programmes created in Syria, where the Syrian government implemented Syrian state sovereignty through different social relations and population management than those assumed and practiced by UNHCR. UNHCR's institutional commitment to the sovereign ideal of the territorially stable nation state can be found in its statutes and in the Geneva Refugee Convention on which it is based. These documents, written shortly after the second world war, imagine the world as a community of distinct states, each with a government representative of its citizens. The assumed, normal government-citizen relationship is one of protection and mutual obligations. In the exceptional circumstance that this order breaks down, a citizen might become a refugee, now floating protection-less between sovereigns in need of a new sovereign identity. UNHCR is the organisation created with the mandate to help refugees re-access the sovereign space.

Far from static, UNHCR programmes and policies have continuously changed the interpretation of this mandate. In the past twenty years, UNHCR has evolved into an organisation with a broad and more interventionist humanitarian agenda, extending into the provision of food, health and psychosocial care, financial aid and education services, far beyond the making available of passports and resettlement. Its discourse casts refugees as 'vulnerable', due to two key absences : the absence of a legal, documented relationship with a sovereign state and the absence of liberal self-governance (in the sense of an inability to produce oneself independently into a financially stable, healthy and orderly person). UNHCR's programmes are keyed to rectifying these two absences in the lives of refugees. These notions of sovereignty and citizenship, upon which UNHCR's programmes in Damascus were based, did not correspond to the way the Syrian government managed Iraqis and integrated them into the Syrian body politic. The Syrian government's regime of toleration of Iraqi migrants meant that their presence was based on a precarious stability, which depended more on individual wealth, skill, connections and luck than an official relationship with the state. Governmental protection and a citizenship of mutual

obligation were not a defining feature of the way the Syrian government produced Syrian state sovereignty.

Through its programmes, UNHCR produced Iraqis as vulnerable and passive refugees, outside the realm of sovereignty, ignoring many aspects of Iraqi life in Damascus that pointed towards integration, self-help and stability. These programmes disregarded several key elements of the Syrian government's sovereignty-producing strategies, such as the creation of official prohibitions, which were continuously ignored, unless an inopportune person needed to be punished. This strategy applied, for example, to Iraqi employment, which was officially prohibited, but in practice widely tolerated. In line with its assumptions about refugees, UNHCR however constantly portrayed Iraqi employment as illegal, precarious and temporary. UNHCR's programmes opened up a political and social space for humanitarian intervention and for the Syrian government to produce Syrian sovereignty in this space. UNHCR's interventions in Iraqi migrant life in this way did not weaken Syrian sovereignty, however had a transformative effect on how Syrian sovereignty appeared in relation to Iraqi migrants and the field of Iraqi migration as a humanitarian crisis. On the international stage, Syria's portrayal as generous host of Iraqis confirmed Syria's sovereignty according to the sovereign ideal. On Syrian territory, cooperation between government agents and UNHCR, as well as increasing residency and visa restrictions on Iraqis pointed out that the Syrian government was adapting its governance techniques to this ideal. Finally, the analysis of UNHCR's resettlement and humanitarian programme presented in this chapter, showed that although UNHCR's techniques for managing Iraqi migrants were mainly biopolitical, they also contained a degree of disciplinary and violent power. This observation calls into question the frequently made distinction between 'liberal' and 'authoritarian' actors or regimes, presumably distinguished by the presence/absence of violence and freedom; closer inspection found that this distinction blurred in the case of UNHCR in Syria.

Chapter 5
The humanitarian Regime of Sovereignty II: INGOs and Iraqi Migration to Syria

Despite their variety, all humanitarian INGOs need to position themselves towards state sovereignty, in their management of the limits and opportunities that sovereign exclusions and boundaries pose for their operations. This chapter will demonstrate how a small number of very different INGOs, all involved in the management of Iraqi migration in Damascus, embedded themselves in the particular relationships of bureaucracy, money, emotion and violence that, partly, constituted state sovereignty in this context. The chapter argues that INGOs played a small, but key role in constructing state sovereignty vis-à-vis the potentially sovereignty-disturbing event of Iraqi migration. Field research found only small instances of 'anti-sovereign' practices among NGO workers, which transcended the framework of social relations imposed by sovereignty. A further aim of this chapter is to contribute to the academic debate about NGOs and the type of power they exercise. International relations scholars in particular have engaged in confusing discussions about the type of power that NGOs wield, debating whether they exercise public power, or productive power, are agents of imperialism, neo-liberalism or democracy.[241] The empirical evidence presented in this chapter shows that the observed INGO activities indeed contained a will and power to transform the way state institutions govern. But INGOs in Damascus were also forced to stray from their accepted beliefs and practices, adapting to those of Syrian state agents. Power thus worked very subtly through personal and institutional contacts, imbued with conviction, money and fear.

Most INGOs encountered during field research regarded their projects as remedies for problematic aspects of Iraqi lives.[242] This problem-solving attitude, in which knowledge was understood as a legitimation and responsibility to intervene, was

---

[241] See for example Michael Barnett and Raymond Duval, *Power in Global Governance*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Terry Macdonald, *Global Stakeholder Democracy Power and Representation Beyond Liberal States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Mary Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003); Chandler, *Constructing Global Civil Society: Morality and Power in International Relations*; Jan Aart Scholte, *Democratizing the Global Economy: The Role of Civil Society* (Coventry: Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation, University of Warwick, 2004); B. Maragia, "Almost there: Another way of conceptualizing and explaining NGOs' quest for legitimacy in global politics," *Non-State Actors and International Law* 2(2002).
[242] Dewachi, ""Between Iraq and a Hard Place": Urban Governance and Transnational Laboratories of Intervention of displaced Iraqis in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon."

contradicted by the fact that despite their efforts, INGOs did not possess significant information about the Iraqi population, and were prevented by the Syrian government from collecting such knowledge. INGOs in Damascus therefore based their projects largely on *assumptions* about the Iraqi population that flowed from established ideas and tropes about refugees, intimately connected to the sovereign ideal and sovereign exclusions.[243] In this way INGO practices revealed some of the meta-ideas behind the techniques of migration management that flowed from, and at the same time enforced, the hegemony of the sovereign ideal. The first group of NGOs to be considered in this chapter consisted of around a dozen professional, established INGOs operating in Damascus during 2009/10. These organisations, officially registered with the Syrian state, transported new bureaucratic and regulatory practices into the Syrian political context; the struggle between humanitarians and Syrian ministries over 'the way to do things' highlighted that INGO activities posed a potential threat, *and* a potential building block for the construction of Syrian state sovereignty. The presence of INGOs promised financial reward, the upgrading of public infrastructure and a legitimacy-boost for the state domestically and internationally. But on the other hand, INGO presence could also signal internationally and domestically that the Syrian state was a 'developing country', in need of foreign intervention to sustain basic elements of the state.[244] The second group of INGOs analysed in this chapter were a selection of unofficial operations run by volunteers and amateurs, displaying a variety of approaches and ideas. These organisations ran the gamut of small one-man-bands to semi-professional outfits with a degree of annual planning and foresight. While all stood in a relationship with professional humanitarianism, these organisations had different positions towards the ideal of state sovereignty, sometimes highlighting and enforcing aspects of this ideal and sometimes overcoming sovereignty's boundaries through inclusive solidarity. Apart from INGOs position towards the imagined ideal of sovereignty, this chapter also analyses how both groups of INGOs managed the lived reality of Syrian state sovereignty, which, as presented in chapters above, was based on very different assumptions, categories and routines than those assumed by the sovereignty ideal. Indeed, it was from the contradictions arising from the implementation of INGO programmes based on the sovereign ideal in the Syrian

---

[243] Haddad, "The refugee: the individual between sovereigns."
[244] Duffield, "Development, territories, and people: consolidating the external sovereign frontier."

context, that the most insightful perspectives on the construction and transformation of sovereignty emerged.

Field research observations found that most INGOs did not weaken or undermine the exclusions and the violence implicit to the sovereign ideal, as their programmes and political assumptions were in accordance with it. In fact this chapter argues that INGO activity transformed such social developments in Syria that were non-conform with the sovereignty ideal into sovereignty-conform situations. INGOs operated within the territorial and population divisions of the assumed unity of territory, population and government, and maintained them. There appeared to be no indication that, especially in the humanitarian field, INGOs weakened the ideal of sovereignty and the forms of power related to it.[245] Yet in terms of Syrian state sovereignty, it was precisely INGO's adherence to the sovereign ideal that placed them into tension with the Syrian government and Syrian state institutions. INGOs initially approached the Syrian state according to notions of legality and representation that did not exist in the Syrian context, were sovereignty was exercised through different techniques. INGO's had to adapt to the much more personal, direct and unpredictable forms of rule through which the Syrian state enforced its sovereignty over Syrian territory; while Syrian state institutions also had to accept certain changes to their practices when dealing with NGOs. These contradictions again demonstrated the relationship between the sovereign ideal and the lived reality of sovereignty, and how transformation to the micro-techniques through which sovereignty is constructed in local contexts, develop from the dynamic equilibrium between the two.

This chapter is based on direct observations of NGO activities in Damascus, as well as indirect observations obtained through conversations with Iraqi migrants, foreign and Syrian INGO staff and foreign UN staff. INGO documents focused on Iraqis in Syria, such as websites, funding proposals, annual reports, were widely consulted and analysed, to understand how the ideas and attitudes expressed in these documents related to INGO practices. The first section of the chapter gives a broad overview of INGO activity focused on Iraqi refugees in Damascus. The second section analyses in greater detail the practices of professional INGOs that were officially registered with the Syrian state, characterised by the ideas and language of professional

---

[245] Sending and Neumann, "Governance to Governmentality: Analyzing NGOs, States, and Power."

humanitarianism. The third section concentrates on unofficial, semi-professional or amateur INGOs that ran projects for Iraqis at the time of field research. Displaying a greater variety of approaches, these organisations' positions towards sovereignty was eclectic; sometimes confirming, sometimes undermining sovereignty. The fourth section concludes the chapter.

Another consequence of the invasion of Iraq: INGOs in Damascus

The link between post-2003 Iraqi migration to Syria and the sudden and unexpected expansion of INGO presence in Damascus has been noted repeatedly. This expansion, made possible chiefly through the construction of Iraqi migration as a humanitarian catastrophe and the lobbying efforts of American NGOs, was also linked to political developments in Syria, such as a growing openness among prominent government figures towards foreign NGOs and their role in economic development. But clearly, the rapid and large-scale funding provided by North Atlantic states to UNHCR Syria for its Iraqi programme, and UNHCR's need to find implementing partners to run projects, increased the pressure on the Syrian government to allow the registration of INGOs.[246] Consequently, by 2009/10, 13 INGOs were established as partners to UNHCR in Damascus; around half a dozen church organisations (with international links) and a small number of private or less official, international organisations operated independently.[247] No public register for organisations working with Iraqi migrants existed, and despite increasingly stream-lined, bureaucratic registration processes, INGOs still maintained various channels with the state to authorise their activities.[248] My research collected information on ten very different INGOs, to varying extent. On two occasions, I was able to conduct repeated and intensive participant observations, on four occasions in-depth interviews plus limited observations, at other times information was collected through informal conversations and/or interviews with INGO staff, beneficiaries or third parties. INGO projects ranged from professionalised services delivered by experienced, large organisations to semi-private projects run by amateurs. INGOs diverged in their programmes, staff and set-up, but a common thread was that their operations established Iraqis as recipients of either goods or services. The stated reasons for the delivery of such goods and

---

[246] UNHCR Syria, "UNHCR signs landmark accord in Syria with international NGO," *UNHCR Press Release* 8 May 2008.
[247] "UNHCR Syria Update Autumn 2009."
[248] Kraft, "Two Changing Spheres: NGOs and Iraqis in Syria."

services were that Iraqis needed assistance and help to survive and lead meaningful and healthy lives, as reported by the numerous INGO reports on the needs and sufferings of the Iraqi community in Syria.[249] This 'needs-based' view of Iraqi life was also the standard argument with which INGOs justified funding requests, and was the general perspective used by the professional INGOs in their aid-projects world-wide. In Damascus, professional INGOs generally maintained a centrally located head office, however conducted their operations in Iraqi-populated suburbs, such as Saīda Zaīnab, Jaramana or Yarmuk, more rarely also in cities outside Damascus such as Homs and Aleppo. Smaller, less formal INGOs were run from private flats, church facilities or with no central location. The range of programmes broadly covered medical help, education, leisure activities and the building of infrastructure (new schools or hospital facilities). Accessing INGOs in Damascus proved difficult during field research. Other than I had expected, the sudden enlargement of the INGO sector had not led to increased ease of communication and transparency. Instead, many INGO employees, especially those of large organisations with little experience in Syria, were too worried about state surveillance to meet me, despite the very general and non-controversial focus of my research. While initially frustrating, these experiences became valuable information in their own right, as they expressed ways of control and self-preservation exercised by INGO employees, and related to questions about Syrian state sovereignty.

An unusual feature of INGO activities in Damascus was their inconspicuousness. Unlike in other humanitarian 'crises', where INGO names are often displayed prominently on cars, buildings and signs, INGO logos were absent in Damascus. All INGO locations visited were unremarkable and found in low-key buildings and apartments. But the novel presence of INGOs in Damascus was nevertheless noticeable, most prominently in the expensive cafes and restaurants in uptown Mālkī or the old city: INGOs had brought a new type of foreigner to the city, the humanitarian expert. Whereas on previous stays, conducted annually since 2005, the foreigners I had met in Damascus consisted mainly of language students, diplomats

---

[249] Weiss Fagen, "Iraqi Refugees: Seeking Stability in Syria and Jordan."; Philmann and Stiennon, "10,000 Refugees from Iraq A Report on Joint Resettlement in the European Union."; IRC Commission on Iraqi Refugees, "A Tough Road Home Uprooted Iraqis in Jordan, Syria and Iraq," ed. IRC (New York, USA: IRC, February 2010).

and non-humanitarian professionals, I now encountered people in their 20s and 30s trying to establish their international NGO-careers, and older, experienced humanitarian workers. Their attitude towards knowledge about Syria and the Syrian political context frequently involved a mix of keen interest in the subject, a lack of access to local information and surprisingly confident opinions on particular questions. The element of *confidence* in the demeanour of these experts was important to note, as it appeared as a foundational element in the translation of ideas into practice in general. Humanitarian employees needed to at least *appear* confident about the truth of their assessments in order to justify their presence, activities and interventions. Syria was beginning to offer job and career opportunities in the humanitarian field, which placed it among a particular group of 'developing' or 'post-conflict' countries, conceptually a huge departure from the idea of Syria as an isolated member of the axis of evil, inimical to Westerners. For Syrian state sovereignty, this subtle shift in perception among 'internationals' was important, and indicated a connection between a state accepting and receiving humanitarian aid, and being accepted as a member of the international community. In turn, this highlighted that if a state was prepared to allow the international humanitarian sector to operate on its territory, which implied the introduction of certain ideas about sovereignty, citizenship and government, backed up by the money of Western donors, this could bolster its formal, international sovereignty. This connection between the humanitarian sector and global forms of political organisation are summarised by the medical anthropologist Omar Dewachi, who argues that

> "humanitarian interventionism, as part of a transnational mobile network of deployment of people, ideologies and markets has become the link between transnational forms of domination and local political practices."[250]

Related to this point, it is important to mention that the post-2008 INGO expansion in Syria also included a small number of organisations working on general development issues, not just Iraqi migration, despite reports of an initial ban by Syrian authorities on INGOs to work with Syrian nationals. In 2009/10, the Spanish INGO Acción contra el Hambre provided basic health and sanitation services and improvements in al-Hasaka, Syria's north-eastern governorate. A further Spanish INGO, AIDA,

---

[250] Dewachi, ""Between Iraq and a Hard Place": Urban Governance and Transnational Laboratories of Intervention of displaced Iraqis in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon.", page 3

provided specialised training on how to deal with infectious waste in hospitals.[251] The existence of these INGOs point to the above-mentioned broader shift among Syrian policy-makers towards integrating INGOs into economic development and education programmes, which goes beyond the field of Iraqi migration. The political upheaval in Syria since spring 2011 makes it very hard to predict, whether this 'opening' trend towards the humanitarian sector will continue, and how a future Syrian government will position itself towards it.

Professional humanitarian INGOs

Humanitarian organisations in Syria were not easily classifiable along standard divisions of 'home-grown', 'grass-roots', 'international' and so forth. Several NGOs focused on humanitarian questions had existed in Damascus before the latest peak in Iraqi migration. Organisations such as Thara, focused on women's rights, or the Syrian Human Rights Observatory, are clearly Syrian, but maintain international contacts with activists around the world.[252] Regarding the group of international NGOs researched for the purpose of this thesis, it could be broadly separated into: (1) professional institutions with global ambitions run by foreigners and (2) semi-professional and amateur organisations run by Iraqis and foreigners. The following section focuses on the former. Professional INGOs were those organisations that already had a large portfolio of aid projects in Asia and Africa and for which Syria simply represented the entry into a new 'market', where previous experiences could be adapted and rolled out. Such organisations included Danish Refugee Council, Terres des Hommes, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Première Urgence; established bureaucratic apparatuses and players in the global humanitarian sector.[253] Their modus operandi included standardized, regulatory requirements, including a degree of transparency, financial accountability and bureaucratic continuity, which significantly influenced their interactions with the Syrian state.[254]

---

[251] See both organisation's websites http://www.ong-aida.org/ and http://www.accioncontraelhambre.org/. I became aware of their activities through meeting two of their foreign employees during field research.

[252] http://www.thara-sy.com/thara/modules/news/ and http://www.syriahr.com/

[253] Terres des Hommes presented a slightly special case, as a Syrian branch of TdH Lausanne had been active in Damascus since decades, originally focusing on helping refugees from Palestine. TdH Syria/Lausanne became involved with Iraqi refugees in 2007 when UNHCR was looking for any established organisations that would be able to implement Iraqi refugee projects.

[254] Di Iorio and Zeuthen, "The Benefits of Engaging and Building Trust with a Reluctant Government: The Experience of Community Center for Iraqis in Syria."

One of the few professional INGOs that responded to my requests for an interview was the IRC, one of two US-based INGO operating in Damascus.[255] The interview took place at IRC's inconspicuous office behind a main road in central Damascus, located in a typical, French-style Damascus flat on the first floor, with wide stone floors and high windows. Three employees, two Syrian, one European, provided me with an overview of the organisation's activities with Iraqi refugees, which at that time consisted of projects in the education sectors. IRC was renovating and improving a number of schools in deprived suburbs and offering remedial classes to Iraqi pupils.[256] Three main ideas emerged from the interview. Firstly, that Iraqi pupils faced problems when trying to attend school in Syria; secondly, that Syria was a new and difficult context for IRC to operate in due to the control from state institutions; and thirdly, that funding constraints and opportunities were a central concern for IRC. The expatriate director conveyed a business-like attitude, focused on the managerial challenges faced by IRC such as the obtaining of funds, the hiring of staff and compliance with government regulations.

A problematic Population

One of the Syrian staff explained that there were around 1.5 million Iraqi refugees in Syria and that 60% of Iraqi children did not attend school, adding that:

> *As you might have read, Syrian schools suffered from overcrowding. First, the Iraqis face many challenges when it comes to schooling. For example, with the English language, in Syria we start in year one, whereas in Iraq they only start in year seven, so there is a very big gap there. Then there are the financial problems, this is probably the biggest problem. Often children have to work and families live off their wages.*[257]

This rhetoric closely reflected the language and information about Iraqis on IRC's website and in press releases and reports.[258] Iraqis in Syria were presented as hopelessly troubled and in desperate need of the world's attention and aid. IRC's

---

[255] Interlocutors with INGO experience in Syria reported on an existing ban on US-based INGOs stated in Syrian government documents, it remains unclear why IRC was allowed to register.

[256] Interview at the IRC, 19.10.2009

[257] ibid.

[258] IRC Commission on Iraqi Refugees, "A Tough Road Home Uprooted Iraqis in Jordan, Syria and Iraq."; "Five Years Later, A Hidden Crisis," ed. IRC (New York, USA: IRC, March 2008). IRC, "IRC Press Release: International Rescue Committee set to begin aid programmes for Iraqi refugees in Syria ", ed. IRC (Damascus, Syria02 September 2008).

language was, even compared to that of other NGOs, extreme in this regard, however nevertheless represented broadly the tone of most INGO publications on Iraqi refugees, as further illustrated by the following texts:

The February 2010 report "A Tough Road Home" by the IRC contains the following description of Iraqis, in its chapter titled 'Refugees in Jordan, Syria and the Region':

Neglected Populations

Host governments and the Government of Iraq have done little to ensure that these young men and women have any access to meaningful job training or economic opportunities. The longer they remain refugees, the greater the possibility they could become a "lost generation"—and a potential threat to regional stability. Young, unemployed men grow frustrated by their inability to provide for themselves or their families. Returning refugees are leaving young people behind in host countries because in Iraq they would be at risk of being arrested or forcibly recruited by militia groups. (…)

Victims of sexual violence and those with psycho-social needs resulting from war-related trauma require targeted and timely interventions if they are to become fully functioning and contributing members of a society, be it in Iraq, a country of first asylum or a resettlement destination. The UNHCR and other bodies have noted the near universal experience of serious and debilitating trauma among the Iraqi displaced. The Commission urges the development and adequate funding of psycho-social services for Iraqi displaced wherever they may be.[259]

The Danish Refugee Council's website depicted Iraqi life as follows (similar wording in the organisation's quarterly reports):

Humanitarian Needs

Due to their illegal status, the Iraqi refugee population in Syria is facing a difficult situation being both illegal and out of funds, and their possibilities of living a decent life are limited. The influx of refugees has created additional inflation and pressure on the job market in the country. Criminality has increased, and prostitution of young Iraqi women in need of cash support has become a reason for resentment by the host community. The Syrian education

---

[259] IRC Commission on Iraqi Refugees, "A Tough Road Home Uprooted Iraqis in Jordan, Syria and Iraq.", p. 13

system is also struggling to cope with the increased numbers of children and The access to secondary or tertiary health care systems for Iraqis with chronic diseases is very limited.[260]

Finally, the website of Terres Des Hommes Switzerland, which supported a number of health-projects in Syria, carried the following description:

> Regional assistance to Iraqi refugees
>
> The Iraqi groups who have taken up temporary refuge in Syria and Jordan are in great distress. They have very few rights and no access to adequate services, in particular in the field of psychology. However, this is where their needs are greatest because of the trauma experienced during the war, while fleeing and also during their stay in the country which has taken them in. Tdh is providing psychological and social help to these children and their families in Jordan, where it has opened a centre. Two partner relief organizations are working in Syria.[261]

These images of Iraqi migrants, which focused exclusively on the negative elements of their life and migration experience, cast the population as problematic, potentially dangerous and in need of correction. The notable focus on psychological trauma and sexual deviance (an often repeated trope in INGO publications on Iraqi refugees) located Iraqis' problems firmly inside their own minds and bodies, implying and highlighting the need for interventions targeting Iraqi lives and individuals, rather than the external, political circumstances that were contributing to Iraqi poverty.[262] Unsurprisingly, this was indeed the form that many professional-INGO projects took. Further, the texts constantly connect Iraqis' problems to the fact that they were migrants/refugees. Emphasis is placed on the assumed illegality of Iraqis in Syria, and their lack of rights. The act of migration to another state, and the existence as a refugee was portrayed as an existence of last resort.[263] This portrayal of migration contained an implicit and explicit confirmation of state sovereignty (in terms of the

---

[260] http://www.drc.dk/relief-work/where-we-work/middle-east/syria/; Danish Refugee Council, "Quarterly Report (Syria) October-December 2010," ed. DRC (Damascus, Syria: DRC, 2011); "Quarterly Report (Syria) July-September 2010," ed. DRC (Damascus, Syria: DRC, 2010).

[261] http://www.tdh.ch/en/countries/syria---jordan

[262] A strong example of what Foucault termed 'bio-power' or 'bio-politics'.Michel Foucault, James D. Faubion, and Robert Hurley, *Power*, Essential works of Foucault, 1954-1984 (New York: New Press ; Distributed by W.W. Norton, 2000).

[263] I do not wish to belittle the suffering of Iraqis in Syria. The aim is to point out that INGO rhetoric reduced the extremely varied existence of Iraqis in exile, which also included successes, opportunities, strength, health and selfhelp, to that of suffering and weakness, and in this contributed to the construction of sovereignty. It is also important to point out that the reasons to remain in exile, after the initial flight, were very varied, including cultural, economic and social preferences for staying in Syria, not just fear.

sovereign ideal unity of territory, population and government) as the accepted, correct and existing form of political organisation. This confirmation emerged from the stated assumptions about national and territorial belonging, and from the implicit impossibility of a good life outside Iraqis' home state. The act of crossing state borders was understood as outside the norm and only to be taken in extreme circumstance, with severe consequences such as illegality and the need for outside help. Iraqi existence outside of Iraq's territory was not regarded as an indication that the stipulated unity of government, territory and population was a fiction, but as a wrong, bad and dangerous state of affairs that needed to be corrected so that the (fictional) correct, good and safe situation of sovereignty could be regained. In addition to their heavy biased towards negative elements in Iraqi lives, these texts thus conveyed to the reader that the drama of Iraqi lives was due to the breaking down of the imagined sovereign order. This position could only flow from INGO's belief in the sovereign ideal, firstly, because even a cursory analysis of politics in Syria and Iraq showed that the sovereign ideal was not applicable to the lived reality of sovereignty in both countries; and secondly, because Iraqi existence in Syria in particular showed that they were integrated remarkably well into the Syrian body politic. INGO rhetoric and practice was thus firmly within the discourse of the modern ideal of sovereignty and neither weakened nor deconstructed it. Descriptions of Iraqi activities in exile that contradicted the sovereign ideal, and that placed into questions the notions of legality, citizenship and nationality, were absent from INGO rhetoric and, broadly, from their programmes, even though such activities were highly visible in Damascene suburbs at the time. Despite the troubled situation in their society of origin and their often horrible recent past, Iraqis in Damascus were also thriving: through their own strength and due to a political, social and cultural context that did not produce them as hopeless, non-sovereign outsiders. But in INGO texts, the natural and ideally best location for Iraqis was the territory of Iraq and the sovereign space of the Iraqi state, and it was only highly exceptional circumstances that had undone this natural and baseline situation. Through their highly selective portrayal of Iraqi existence in Syria, INGOs strengthened the construction of the sovereign ideal in a context where lived reality placed it in question.

State-NGO relations

Returning to the IRC interview, the second important point relating to sovereignty that was discussed concerned the organisation's interactions with Syrian state institutions. These interactions were relevant for the potential transformations they could produce to the sovereignty-constructing techniques of the Syrian government. When I asked whether I could visit one of their projects, IRC's expatriate director warned me that:

"This is not a regular environment for NGOs, I will request approval and I'm sure that there will not be a problem but we will have to see. In a different context we would take you along and show you everything, but here..."[264]

From the perspective of the IRC, Syria's working environment for NGOs deviated from the norm, due the relatively heavy monitoring conducted by state institutions. This once again pointed out, that NGO assumptions about what state's role in society should be and normally was, were influenced by abstract notions that did not correspond to the Syrian context. The IRC interlocutors explained that their actions were closely monitored by officials from the ministry of education, with whom they met every week to discuss progress and to request approvals. After broad approval had been received, further requests had to be made regularly even for small activities, such as distributing leaflets to inform Iraqi students about projects. The schools that IRC was rebuilding and renovating, located in the suburbs Harastā, Qudsīa and Bīla, had been selected by the Ministry of Education, rather than by an independent needs-assessment. Concerning the information and statistics about Iraqi pupils, according to which the schools had been identified (Syrian government statistics were notoriously poor and/or non-existent), the IRC staff explained that it was not easy to get information, as the statistics of the ministry were old, and that IRC used a mixture of government and UNHCR statistics for their purposes. The knowledge and figures about Iraqis, which IRC staff so confidently provided, thus appeared largely as assumptions, rather than empirically researched. In this particular case, IRC's choices and projects were so closely related to those of the ministry that the boundary between governmental and non-governmental had become blurred. This situation highlighted the discrepancies between the sovereign ideal, and related notions of liberal government, and the manner in which state sovereignty was created and

---

[264] Interview with IRC 19.10.2009. Incidentally, follow-up emails to the interview were never answered.

enforced in Syrian politics. The IRC's experience emphasised the particularities of Syrian politics through which the public sphere, or space, was lived in the Syrian context. According to liberal theory, NGOs form a part of an international civil society, located in the public space, a realm of activity protected from state influence by law and an active citizenship. Such ideas are closely related to the sovereign ideal, which assumes an intimate relationship of representation and unity between a population and its government; this relationship can only be ensured through a vibrant civil society active in public space.[265] As the IRC's experience showed, these notions were not applicable in the Syrian context, as the Syrian government clearly treated INGOs as political actors that needed to be controlled. Indeed, as will be highlighted below, state institutions used the new public sites developed by INGOs (community centres, training courses) as new sites in which to perform the state's sovereignty.[266]

The close monitoring and control exercised by Syrian ministries over INGO activities and knowledge was further described in an insightful report by the Middle East Institute:

> The registration procedure reflects the weight of the Syrian bureaucracy and the government's desire to keep the activities of foreign entities under control. The procedure is as follows: INGOs are first to seek accreditation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. One condition to be accredited is to present proof that the organization is fully funded. The second step is to submit a project proposal to SARC without being able to a conduct preliminary needs assessment. After SARC approves the proposal, it signs a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the INGO. The MoU was particularly challenging for the first INGOs that signed agreements with SARC: these agreements included the obligation for INGOs to share a common bank account with SARC, and the need for SARC's approval for any disbursement or the payment of 2% of the NGOs' budget to SARC in compensation for expenses related to the partnership. A few months later, these financial arrangements were lifted after SARC realized that they were time consuming, impractical, and unacceptable by donors and INGOs. However, other restrictive terms of the MoU have remained in place: SARC enjoys oversight of the NGOs' recruitment process, meetings between INGOs and

---

[265] Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War*.

[266] This is not to say that no public sphere existed in Syria. As argued in other chapters, the laissez-faire element in Syrian rule, which was focused on certain red lines of political behaviour, frequently resulted in less state intrusion into areas of live heavily controlled in liberal societies. The experience of Iraqi migrants is one such example. The key point here is that the construction of the public sphere was created through different forms of governance than those assumed in liberal theorizing.

any other organizations is subject to SARC's approval, and so is communication with journalists or researchers.[267]

These restrictions partly explained the reluctance of INGO representatives to meet with me. But more importantly, they showed that professional INGOs transported norms, ideas and behaviours onto Syrian territory that were different to those accepted by state officials. Further, they provide an insight into how such clashes and squabbles over the 'way to do things' could lead to changes in practices and beliefs on both sides – resulting in new micro-practices that could gradually produce social and political transformations to the way state sovereignty was exercised in Syria.

It is of interest to consider the motivations of both INGO and Syrian state officials to engage in these struggles. Why would international NGO workers compromise on important values and their independence to set up in Syria, if there were so many crises in the world to work on? Why would Syrian clerks change their demands to allow INGOs to operate? These questions were not part of my research focus, however certain observations allowed for some deductions as to the motives to accept change. For INGOs, there appeared to be a publicity value in having been one of the first INGOs to set up operations in Syria. The Danish Refugee Council repeatedly mentioned on its website and in PR material that it was one of the first NGOs to start operating in Syria; similar statements were found in publications of the IRC and the International Medical Corps, emphasizing that their operations were among only a few others in Syria.[268] Entry into Syria allowed INGOs to portray their work as exceptional and pioneering, which presumably enhanced their profile towards the public and donors. The availability of funds and UNHCR's call to INGOs were basic factors that pushed through INGO operations. Regarding the motivations for Syrian officials to engage with INGO procedures, apart from the fact that many would have been ministry officials carrying out decisions made by their superiors, access to resources such as jobs and money could have acted as incentive. The involvement of Syrian officials in the hiring of INGO staff, including, according to informal conversations with expatriate INGO employees, deciding upon individual appointments and their salaries, meant that such jobs could become part of patronage

---

[267] Di Iorio and Zeuthen, "The Benefits of Engaging and Building Trust with a Reluctant Government: The Experience of Community Center for Iraqis in Syria."

[268] http://www.internationalmedicalcorps.org/Page.aspx?pid=378; www.drc.dk; IRC, "IRC Press Release: International Rescue Committee set to begin aid programmes for Iraqi refugees in Syria ".

networks. Expat INGO staff, for example, speculated whether some employees were giving up parts of their salaries to the persons who had arranged their jobs. Further, the investment of INGOs and UNHCR in the Syrian health and education sector, occasionally without proper financial oversight, created substantial flows of money and jobs for Syrian companies.[269] The importance of the tense relationship between professional INGOs and Syrian state institutions for sovereignty concerned both the domestic and international sovereignty of the Syrian state. As referred to above, INGO projects developed new public spaces, which remained heavily state controlled, through the operation of community centres or women's shelters, and ran unprecedented programmes focused on the inner life of individuals, such as psycho-social counselling or parenting skills. These new forms of social organisation and interventions included new governance techniques, in which the Syrian state appeared in various forms. For example, the existence of foreign and Syrian INGO staff, and spaces associated with INGOs, created new sites in which state officials demonstrated the state's presence in these newly created domestic spheres. INGO activities thus did not weaken the sovereignty of the Syrian state over its territory, however changed the way this sovereignty could be performed and experienced.

Professional INGO programmes also introduced a strict conceptual distinction between Iraqi and Syrian 'beneficiaries', as their project proposals and reports stipulated percentages for both. This practice made the national division, a key organising principle of modern sovereignty, visible and fixed to all involved in the programmes and elevated it to new importance.[270] Establishing percentages of Iraqi and Syrian 'beneficiaries' that were to profit from certain projects were linked to ideas about 'do-no harm' development principles, according to which aid projects focused exclusively on Iraqis could have fuelled resentment from the host population. Particularly in the field of education projects, the continued distinction made between Syrian and Iraqi children, the latter described as the reason for the overcrowding of schools, even though of course they had arrived in Syria often as toddlers, was striking. To use the example of Première Urgence's description of its school

---

[269] UNHCR, "Audit Report UNHCR Iraq Situation in Syria."

[270] I recall visits to a number of aid projects in 2007 run by churches, who were reporting an increase in attendance of Iraqi visitors (i.e. these were pre-existing projects aimed at all poor people). While the project attendants were certainly aware of who was an Iraqi, they emphasised their openness to anyone in need and did not keep tabs on Syrian and Iraqi visitors, due to a firm conceptual distinction of their social roles.

rehabilitation programme, in an announcement concerning the completion of two new school buildings:

> These two schools, with a capacity to host 1.050 pupils, will allow the development of a response to the overcrowding of Syrian public schools and will promote the enrolment of Iraqi refugee children. Over 33.500 Iraqi children are enrolled in Syrian schools and over 75% of these are attending schools in the greater Damascus region. (…)
>
> We are proud of this result and are now eagerly looking forward to the creation of educational programmes with the support of the Syrian ministry for education, with the goal to ensure the future of Syrian and Iraqi children" explained Sandra Bachrach, Première Urgence's chief of mission in Syria.

In this text, Première Urgence is not simply concerned with easing the lives of disadvantaged children, but is also focused on promoting a continuing distinction between Iraqi and Syrian children. The reference to overcrowding and the figures, percentages and locations of Iraqi children imply that Iraqi children are somehow alien to the Syrian education sector. Given that the raison d'être of INGO's presence in Syria was the existence of 'alien', Iraqi refugees, promoting their distinction was in fact existential to these organisations. This observation again points out that INGOs working on refugee issues were closely bound to the exclusions linked to the sovereign ideal, rather than standing outside or even opposed to such exclusions.

Funding

Turning now to the final key point arising from the IRC interview, the following and last section on professional INGOs considers the relevance of INGO's seeking of and dependence on third party funding. The IRC interlocutors made several, key references to the relationship between funding and their programmes. IRC's focus on education was explained by stating that most INGO's were focused on education as *"this is where the funding is and the need"*. Healthcare on the other hand was *"90% taken care of by SARC* [271] *and funding for healthcare goes to them"*. At the time of the interview, IRC was looking to add 14 staff to the existing 10 employees to cover an increased number of project in 2010. In reference to the expansion, the IRC director stated:

---

[271] Syrian Arab Red Crescent

"Last year, the number of Iraqi children registering in schools was so much lower, so it was very difficult to justify any increased funding for this and the donors were very reluctant to fund any more projects. The latest information from the MoE is that there are expecting more children to register, so this should mean that there should be more funding forthcoming."

Apart from the curious fact that the potentially wonky statistics of the Syrian ministry of education were used as the decision-making basis for millions of dollars of funding, the interplay and positioning of foreign donors, INGOs and Syrian state institutions was relevant for our analysis. The relevance of donor-ideas and money-flows also became apparent in an interview with a programme manager at Terre des Hommes:

Are TdH projects limited?

Yes of course. It all depends on the funding. After the end of the project we provide a report and we discuss the possibility of renewing the project or not. According to the report and the result, the target achievement of the project.

Are most Iraqis that come to you registered with UNHCR?

No, no. That depends…some. Last year we had a regulation that we cannot help any Iraqi if he is not registered in UNHCR. But this year, when we start a new project, one of the project funding from the EU, they set a regulation that the project has to target Iraqis not registered in UNHCR.[272]

Funding was perhaps the most fundamental aspect to the operations of professional INGOs in Syria: no funding, no projects. Unlike some of the smaller, informal INGOs to be discussed below, professional INGOs had to pay staff salaries, office rents and administrative overheads and expensive projects required large amounts of money. UNHCR and INGOs did not provide detailed breakdowns of their budgets, however some documents allowed for a rough idea of the figures involved. The Danish Refugee Council in the year ending 30 September 2009 spent around USD 4.6 million on its projects in Iraq, Syria and Jordan; the IRC had a budget of around USD 6.4 million for the Middle East in 2009, in 2010 this figure grew to around USD 9.8

---

[272] Interview with Terres des Hommes, 10.11.2009

million.[273] These figures were dwarfed by UNHCR's budgets for Syria of around USD 167 million in 2010 and around USD 130 million in 2009 (some of which would have gone to DRC and IRC).[274] The EU donated around EUR 37 million in 2009 for the Iraqi refugee issue (extraordinary, as standard annual funding to Syria amounted to around EUR 30 million).[275] Even if the highest estimates for Iraqi refugee numbers of 1.5 million would have applied (UNHCR never registered more than around 250,000 Iraqis as refugees in Syria), these budgets were large: amounting for UNHCR alone to around USD 1.5 per day for each registered Iraqi refugee in 2009. These flows of money dedicated to 'non-governmental' efforts to manage Iraqi migration according to the exclusions and categorisations of the sovereign ideal show perhaps most clearly that INGO practices were indeed part and parcel of the global, social and material relations that constructed the sovereign ideal. In the case of Iraqi migration, INGOs filled an "institutional gap", created through sovereignty's principle of territorial exclusivity, and allowed a multitude of states to intervene on Syria's territory to focus on a mutual interest: that Iraqi migration would not destabilize sovereignty and its related divisions of territory and population.[276] The refugee-aid provided through INGOs, although in Syria not highly visible and not well-known among either Syrians or Iraqis, contributed, and was connected to, global practices that promoted the sovereign ideal as hegemonic form of political organisation.

The global money-flows also linked actors of foreign states to those of the UN, of Syrian (domestic) state institutions and of professional INGOs. The funds' trajectory and acceptance through and across boundaries of territory, bureaucracy, culture and, indeed, sovereignty, and their link to the implementation of certain ideas (education for 'Iraqi' children in Syria, for example) highlighted that money was a crucial transporter of norms, but also showed how governance techniques, including those linked to sovereignty, were transmitted through humanitarian aid.

---

[273] IRC, "FY 2010 Financial Statement," (New York, USA: IRC, 2011); Danish Refugee Council, "Annual Report 2009," ed. DRC (Copenhagen, Denmark: DRC, 2010).
[274] UNHCR, "UNHCR Global Appeal 2011 (update) Syrian Arab Republic."; "UNHCR Global Appeal 2010-2011 Syrian Arab Republic."
[275] Interview with diplomat, 10.10.10
[276] Kim D. Reimann, "A View from the Top: International Politics, Norms and the Worldwide Growth of NGOs," *International Studies Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (2006); Matthew Bolton and Alex Jeffrey, "The politics of NGO registration in international protectorates: the cases of Bosnia and Iraq," *Disasters* 32, no. 4 (2008); Ashutosh and Mountz, "Migration management for the benefit of whom? Interrogating the work of the International Organization for Migration."

Semi-official and unofficial INGOs

In addition to the large, professional INGOs described above, in 2009/10 a number of smaller organisations operated aid-projects for Iraqis in Damascus, which were neither officially registered with the Syrian government nor relied on professional staff. These organisations did not maintain regular, close contact with Syrian ministries; their staff possessed a deeper, more intuitive knowledge of Syrian-government red lines, were open to meeting me as a researcher and allowing me to participate in and observe their programmes. All organisations maintained a low profile.

Iraqi Student Project

The 'semi-official' INGO that I had closest access to, and which was the most intriguing of all, was an organisation called 'Iraqi Student Project' (ISP). This organisation had been set up by a retired couple from the US, to help gifted Iraqi high-school graduates receive scholarships to liberal-arts colleges in the USA. Apart from a single paid employee in the US, where ISP was registered as a non-profit organisation, this INGO was funded entirely through the couple's income from social security, and donations of time and money from a small group of supporters in the US and Syria.[277] ISP was run out of the couple's rented, two-bedroom flat in central Damascus, which functioned as a live/work space, where volunteer teachers – often American or British TOEFL teachers working at the American Language Institute close by - gave classes to prepare the selected students for their study and life in the US. ISP's origins stemmed from its founders' engagement in the US peace movement, protesting against the invasion of Iraq in 2003. After spending two years in Damascus studying Arabic and learning that many young Iraqis in Syria could not attend university because of expensive fees, they decided to create ISP.[278]

The key fascination that developed from the participant-observation at ISP concerned the intense and complicated power dynamics between the elderly directors, the volunteers, and the young Iraqi students. After several severe conflicts at the organisation, in which students were expelled from the programme for unclear

---

[277] It should be noted that the couple running ISP was by no means wealthy or that they benefitted from a large retirement. Both had worked in education and/or publishing to not highly lucrative gain.
[278] See the organisation's website www.iraqistudentproject.org

reasons, I became aware of how the power-imbalance between directors and students worked underneath the egalitarian and peaceful veneer. Given this chapter's focus on the construction of sovereignty through INGO programmes, the following paragraphs aim to tease out how ideas and practices of sovereignty were present in the relationships at ISP.

The selection process for students was based on several standard items, such as being Iraqi, not having been accepted for UNHCR resettlement, having a good school record and expressing an interest to return to Iraq after finishing college to contribute to the country's future. In addition, selection depended on assessments of the candidate's family environment, his/her psychological stability and potential for coping alone in a foreign country. These assessments were carried out in a relatively informal manner by the two directors, through home-visits and interviews. If selected, candidates joined a programme of classes and were subjected to continuing, broadly informal monitoring by the directors and volunteer teachers. Should a student become considered as 'not ready', s/he could be required to complete a further year of programme, or could be expelled at any time.

The personal nature of these assessments is illustrated by the field-note excerpt below, reporting a conversation with one of the directors about several of the students:

> He talked about Firas and how he was such a great kid. "This guy's essays, they are just so good, his use of English….if I could speak directly to any of the people in admission at the colleges, I would really tell him to take this guy, he's just going to take off and flourish over there." It's clear that Firas is one of the director's favourites and I just can't get it out of my head that it has to do with his pretty tough story of 1.5 years in poverty in Jordan, during which he was alone with his father and had to take care of the household etc. (…)

He named Radi as one of the students that he had some doubts about having the maturity to success 'once he is alone over there'. While he acknowledged that Radi was very passionate about his subject and very good in class in getting the others to participate, he somehow doubted that Radi had the toughness to 'hack it' once out there in the states by himself. I was quite surprised by this assessment, as Radi lives on his own in Syria and is managing his affairs by himself, and while there is indeed something quite 'young' about him, I personally definitely found him quite tough and grounded.[279]

---

[279] Field note 16 January 2010 (all names changed)

The two directors' personal view of students held enormous sway over the students' future, as most students considered their success in the programme as monumentally important. One Iraqi young woman described how, at the time that she was being considered for ISP, her alternative option would have been a job as a waitress in one of the new malls of Damascus, highlighting how the chance to complete a university degree in the US was an extremely desirable exit from a dead-end existence in Syria. This desire to succeed, coupled with the arbitrary and personal control exercised by the programme directors, created pressure on the students to conform to the directors' expectations. The following extract from a conversation with one of the Iraqi students, which occurred in the immediate aftermath of the sudden and unexpected dismissal of another student, highlighted this situation.

The thing with Hussein was such a shock. With Huda, ok, it was kind of predictable that they wanted to kick her out, but with Hussein it was a complete shock. Everyone likes him, he is such a friendly and smart guy. And they did not give him a warning. After this, everyone feels insecure, no one knows what is going to happen. (…)

I feel so afraid now. Do we have to depend on her moods? Everything can change, I don't know how to behave so that she likes me. Today when she said something about my trousers, I thought oh no, I'm not going to wear these trousers again. Does she not like my hair the was it is? Does she not like my nose today? Or if I write an essay that she does not like…First we were under pressure in Iraq, then we were under the pressure of the Syrian government, when we don't know whether they will kick the Iraqis out and now we are under the pressure of ISP.[280]

This statement crystallized how personal relationships at the programme were fused with wider, political relationships of sovereignty that strongly influenced the power dynamics at work. The influence wielded by the ISP directors was perceived by the Iraqi student in line with former pressures experienced in Iraq and Syria, which had had similar life-changing impact on the student's life. In terms of the blurring of supposedly liberal and authoritarian forms of power this comparison was insightful. Yet for our analysis it was of greatest relevance how these power relations at ISP

---

[280] Field note 8 February 2010

could be explained with reference to the way that sovereignty organised populations on a global scale, linking people to certain territories and governments, whether they liked it, or not. Materially, the power exercised by the ISP directors was directly linked to their US citizenship which, in accordance with sovereignty, bonded them to the US government, which provided them with the money required to run their organisation. Their security and power was inversely reflected by the insecurity and weakness of the Iraqi students, whose Iraqi citizenship bonded them to the Iraqi government, which neither provided them with opportunities nor money. The ISP directors' opportunity to intervene in Iraqi students' lives, and to decide on their future, was afforded them by the political and social organisation of sovereignty. Interestingly, this fact, which linked the directors' influence indirectly to the same source of power that had led to the invasion of Iraq, appeared to be much clearer to the Iraqi students than to the directors or American volunteer teachers, and indeed, initially to me.[281]

The constructions of sovereignty on the level of imagination and ideas that emerged at ISP were much harder to pin down, and full of contradictions. Students were frequently encouraged to express their national pride as Iraqis and numerous books about Iraq's rich history, and maps were displayed in the ISP flat. But representations of Iraq as a place of destruction and hopelessness also abounded, in which the US appeared as a safe haven, the only chance for these students to lead meaningful lives. The ISP directors were frequently cynical and critical about US politics in the Middle East, but strongly celebrated other instances of US culture, such as the peace movement (which they remembered fondly) and the civil rights campaigns, and encouraged the students to celebrate these too. Students were also encouraged to abandon certain cultural traits, and there was a narrow framework of behaviour that made someone a 'good ISP kid'. The following extracts from conversations with the ISP directors develop some of the complex understandings of the US and Iraq as separate spaces that were present throughout the ISP programmes:

The students get taught for one year by voluntary teachers to improve their
English and to prepare them for the way teaching is done in the US. In Iraq,

---

[281] Initially I was surprised at the lack of gratitude expressed by some students when privately interviewed about ISP. However it gradually became clear that at least some students considered the directors' initiative as a kind of very minor repayment for all the problems that the US had created for Iraq.

students generally learn information off by heart and reproduce it in the text. In the US, they have to learn critical thinking and analysis and to write good essays. There are classes every day. Once a week my wife [one of the directors] does a writer's workshop which focuses on essay writing skills. (...)

For many Americans it is an experience to meet an Iraqi. It becomes a real place for them. One of our students was at immigration, when the officer stopped short at the passport and did a double take, then expressed surprise that this girl, who does not wear the hijab and wears modern clothes, could be from Iraq. "You can walk around like that in Iraq?" Yes you can. "Is that a tattoo?" Yes. "You can have a tattoo in Iraq?" Yes you can.[282]

Iraq and the US emerged as two distinct educational spaces, in which knowledge and knowledge-production functioned, were understood and valued differently. In order to succeed in the US, the students had to abandon aspects of their previous, 'Iraqi' learning and acquire new modes of knowledge and thinking. Modern state sovereignty closely links knowledge-production to questions of legitimacy and government. Distinct epistemologies connect citizens to the imagined sovereign in a particular way and establish the citizen's home-state as different (and better) than all other states; the fundamental boundaries of security and global hierarchy are established through discourses about what constitutes valuable, useful, dynamic and creative learning and knowledge, as much as through other media.[283] In this sense, knowledge and education had replaced, or have been added to, oaths of allegiance and/or religion as ways of connecting populations with their rulers. Such distinct forms of knowledge became visible at ISP seminars, during discussions about representations of Iraq and the schooling the students had experienced in the past. The recordings of a number of classes showed that, of course, Iraqis did indeed learn a form of 'critical thinking' in Iraqi schools, however its form and content would probably be dismissed as uncritical and simplistic anti-Western propaganda by most 'Western' observers. Most of the students reflected critically themselves on the image of a rapacious and imperialist US waiting to steal Iraq's oil they had been taught.[284]

---

[282] Field note 22.10.2009

[283] Campbell, *Writing security - United States foreign policy and the politics of identity*; Salter, *Barbarians and Civilization in International Relations*.

[284] This point is clearly an invitation to reflect on the forms of uncritical propaganda taught in US schools, which cannot be elaborated on here.

Crucially, these observations demonstrated that knowledge and its content were linked to territory and government, and was a form of power controlled by state institutions, through which the state's sovereignty and the unity of its government, population and territory were created and demonstrated. To 'fit in' and succeed at US colleges, Iraqi students had to acquire the modes of knowledge production intimately tied to US sovereignty, that indicated US territory as a separate physical and conceptual space. It was remarkable that the ISP directors considered it necessary that the students at ISP (who had already been preselected according to criteria of education and personality that made them more conform with US college life) received months of training to achieve an appropriate standard; their experience of several students failing in the US had taught them that students needed much more than English-language training to 'make it'.

Native without a Nation

In a different way, education also played a central role for the activities of the small, informal INGO 'Native without a Nation' (NWN), created and run principally by an Iraqi man called Firas. NWN's activities, which consisted of IT-skills and creative workshops for children and teenagers, home visits to depressed and/or hard-up families, and skype-exchanges between Iraqi and US youngsters, had developed out of Firas' personal social activism since his arrival in Syria in 2006. Further, NWN ran a website, on which Iraqi teenagers could publish their stories and art work.[285] A small group of US-based supporters helped organise the internet-exchanges with a school in upstate New York, USA; funding was restricted to occasional donations of equipment from friends and small cash donations.[286] Although NWN's projects helped Iraqis, thus making a distinction based on national identity, the organisation's close focus on personal narratives, friendship and non-judgemental compassion made it an example of international solidarity that did not depend on reconstructions of the sovereign ideal, or the categorisation of people into sovereign types. In this sense NWN stood outside the sovereign edifice, and its activities were not relevant to the constructions of sovereignty and in the best case, created spheres of action not dominated by sovereign exclusions and red lines.

---

[285] http://nativewithoutanation.blogspot.com/
[286] In 2011, the organization had collected around USD 2800, according to the website.

Although (or because) Firas, who had in-depth personal experience of UNHCR's application of sovereignty, and that of the Syrian state, was heavily affected by all manners of sovereign regulations, NWN's 'humanitarian' activities emphasised the personal disposition of the persons involved in the projects. There was little or no indication that broad assumption were drawn about people's 'needs' or deviations due to the categories, values and exclusions of sovereignty. NWN's website presented the stories of some participants without judgement-laden introductions or texts about the situation of Iraqis as such, their illegality and so forth.[287] Many narratives concerned memories of violence experienced in Baghdad, but many also articulated instances of empowerment and independence. One of Firas' stated aims was to develop a platform for young Iraqi people to express themselves in their own words and thoughts. The following quotes from the website illustrate their diversity and the aim of self-expression:

Othman Abd Al-Rahman Mohammad:

My name is Othman Abd Al-Rahman Mohammad. I am an Iraq pupil and I am proud of being an Iraqi. Despite the fact that I live in my second country Syria, I love this country so much as well as its generous people.

I love to study in a perfect way. I love my school, my family and my relatives who are away from me due to the cruel circumstances. I also love helping my father with the housework.

From Noor, Muna and Anfal:

Since the first art show we had in Damascus, we felt admiration and encouragement from the audience to continue painting, and talk about the mixtures of colors. We were often asked if we ever went to art schools. The answer always is " We never studied art, it's just what we do and like to do. We do express what we feel and we convert it on our paintings." (…) At the end of the meeting we agreed that we have to be strong and keep getting better.

We noticed the difference between the first and last art show, our paintings became stronger and more expressive through the subjects and the colors. Every painting had story. Now we are preparing for another art show, with new paintings, new stories, and new style. We will never stop looking forward. We will never be silent.

Mustafa, 17:

---

[287] And interestingly, the few tropes about Iraqis in Syria exhibited by the website, in the familiar, humanitarian language, were evidently written by the overseas supporters.

(…)

I will never forget that accident. I no more want to be in Iraq so that I don't have to face any of this again. That doesn't make my situation any easier as I have heart failure and the medical care is basically non-existent. All I hope for is to know my future after registering with the UNHCR as a refugee.[288]

Sovereignty's divisions are not absent from these self-representations, and sovereign boundaries, both physical and imagined, structure the thoughts and practices of these young people. However the key point concerning NWN's activities was that they did not reproduce or use sovereignty as a reference point in the same way as other INGOs; they did not contain regulations or classifications according to people's position vis-à-vis an assumed, protective sovereign. NWN did not run programmes that were pre-designed according to ideas about refugees based on the sovereign ideas. The INGO's semi-spontaneous interventions relied on in-depth personal knowledge of persons who were interested in receiving support. Rather than aiming to guide or change these lives in any particular direction, this support created small instances of success or positive feelings, which empowered people to continue struggling against the often overwhelming way in which sovereignty's exclusions were affecting them. By ignoring sovereignty's framework in these small ways, NWN's practices used an alternative lens through which Iraqis in Syria were not consistently recast as outside sovereignty, but simply as fellow-humans who had fallen on hard times. A similar dynamic could be observed during the web-conferences that NWN organised between Iraqi youth in Damascus and a school class in upstate New York, USA. These conferences, held around every six months, were conducted via the internet-telephony programme Skype, and included video-calling, so that the partaking individuals could see each other. During the calls, the children and teenagers would introduce themselves and show each other art work they had made, or narrate items they had recently studied. The focus on shared, enjoyable activities among individuals (rather than divisive, negative experiences of imagined collectives) created a basis of understanding of one another's humanness, regardless of sovereignty's territorial, governmental and population divisions. The empowering aspect of the internet's territory-undermining technology, which can create non-territorial communities and nations, was a crucial aspect for this project.

---

[288] All texts taken from http://nativewithoutanation.blogspot.com/

Capoeirarab – Bidna Capoeira

The third and final informal NGO to be discussed was the INGO Bidna Capoeira, which developed out of the Syrian capoeira school Capoeirarab. An acquaintance alerted me that this school, set up by the Syrian-German capoeira fan and sport professional Tariq Salih, ran classes for Iraqi children, supported by Caritas. Over several months I participated in this project, and attended the regular capoeira lessons, 'hanging out' with the other capoeiristas, a fun group of Syrians and foreigners. During this time, the directors of Capoeirarab (the sport club) came to realise that capoeira could be developed into a humanitarian development tool that could attract international funding. The resulting INGO, registered in the UK, was Bidna Capoeira. Fascinatingly, the changes in language and practice that resulted out of the shift from running semi-formal projects for Iraqis to creating a professional INGO, clearly reflected a move towards structures of the sovereign ideal. Perhaps most clearly of all points made in this thesis, this development demonstrated how the material and mental constructions of humanitarianism enforced and produced the values, categorisations and exclusions of the sovereign ideal.

The classes for Iraqi children held in 2009/2010 took place in the community hall of a church in Damascus' old city, reflecting the project's link with the Christian INGO Caritas providing the funding. Twice a week, a mini-bus delivered a boisterous and jolly group of children from Jaramana, who received a two-hour training in music and sports. The classes were mostly led by two young Syrian men in their early 20s, sometimes accompanied by other members of Capoeirarab, foreign or Syrian. During training, no references were made to the fact that the participating children (between 9 and 13 years) were of Iraqi origin. While the children, during casual conversations before or after the class would sometimes talk about their memories of Baghdad or other items relating to their Iraqi identity, the trainers did not appear to consider these children in any way different than the Syrian children they taught on other occasions. During conversations the trainers confirmed that the Iraqi identity of the children was of no concern to them; only when an older child perhaps used a word from Iraqi dialect did this serve as a reminder of the children's background. A similar attitude was displayed at Capoeira's flagship project at the time, a regular training and Roda (capoeira game) in the tent-tamp Al-Tanf, where several thousand Palestinians from

Iraq lived in very bad conditions just outside the Syrian border.[289] The capoeira training was part of several activities developed by UNICEF "psycho-social consultants" to "heal the psycho-social wounds" of the camp residents.[290] Around once a month, Capoeirarab's trainer visited the camp with a small group of capoeiristas to teach capoeira music and movements to camp residents, who hugely enjoyed the entertainment, exercise and social atmosphere. The participating Capoeiristas repeatedly mentioned the positive and exhilarating experience of playing capoeira in the camp, commenting on the immense enthusiasm and quick learning ability of the camp residents, and how members of all ages participated in the Roda. This attitude was demonstrated by the following interview extract with a capoeirista from Costa Rica, who was visiting Syria as part of university exchange:

> So we go there every Monday and Wednesday for two hours, we do capoeira and it's an organisation…most of the Iraqi refugees there are Christian, and some of them are Muslim, but only a very small percentage, maybe five out of 30. So I guess we are working with a minority in a minority, so that's kind of interesting. We teach capoeira, music and movements and we play games with them – it's not a very rigid schedule, it's more like a hobby than wanting to change the world, it's more like let's have fun with kids, let's do it. (…)

> I feel like with capoeira, it's complicated, because I would love to be helping them with bigger issues, like immigration problems or rights here in Syria…but I guess when you do capoeira, I don't think you are thinking to change the world, you are just thinking of one person, or one individual and making their lives better. I know a lot of them really enjoy singing and dancing and I guess it's just another outlet for them. (…)

> I feel like the Middle East is an area, a lot of people here know so much about the Middle East, but they don't know that much about the rest of the world, same thing that happens in the rest of the world, you always know about yourself but not about others, so just like teaching them that there is a dance that is not like

---

[289] Palestinians attempting to enter Syria from Iraq were initially refused entry by the Syrian government on the grounds that they should be allowed to return to Israel. As a result, several thousand persons were stranded between the Iraqi and Syrian border in the desert and two tent-camps, operated by UNHCR, were set up. Both camps are now closed, their previous inhabitants either resettled abroad or allowed entry to Syria.

[290] UNICEF press release, available online http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/syria_51283.html

belly dancing and teaching them that there is slavery and that things are happening in Brazil that aren't happening here, I feel that this is also a global movement and that Damascus is becoming more global, little by little and I feel that capoeira helps and adds to that. (…)

It's because capoeira rocks! It's a great sport, and because the people that are teaching it are really energetic and fun and they are always excited about teaching it and promoting it and music is always fun, I mean how can you go wrong – music and movement and young people teaching capoeira, it's not like a 70 year-old teaching them mathematics, it's something they can identify with I think.291

This quote highlights how Capoeirarab's activities, whether for Iraqi children or other people, were uniting, and elevated all participants to an awareness of their shared characteristics as human beings. Although it may appear somewhat esoteric or outlandish to persons unfamiliar with the game, I argue that the structure and history of Capoeira, its rules and the way it is taught, lie outside several key ideas related to modern sovereignty and liberal modernity. Indeed it is likely that the sports fascination and joy is related to the way that it taps into a different social imaginary and organisation. During a Roda, a person's identity constantly changes between being an isolated individual to being a member of a tightly fused group, and by standing in a circle (in which the game takes place) and playing/singing loud music, a separate, constantly shifting mini-territory is created. Restrictive, hegemonic notions of fixed space, of the separations object-subject, individual-community and enemy-friend evaporate in a liberating feeling of concentration and excitement. It is in particular the forming of the circle and thus defining of a limited territory through the participants' bodies that is of relevance to this process. It has been argued that sovereignty begins with the delimiting and definition of a territory; yet during a capoeira game, players experience the constant creation and undoing of a protected space through their own, shifting physical presence. Capoeira is defined by ambiguity, and its players are ambiguous, sometimes fighters, sometimes dancers, sometimes partners and sometimes enemies. It is undoubtedly this ambiguity that makes capoeira such an attractive game, as participants can shift and experiment

---

291 Interview with Capoeirista, 11.11.2009

between different roles, or even pick a particular role that suits or contradicts their social position or personality. In the Roda, the divisions and hierarchies of society are gone, which creates extraordinary sentiments and energies of freedom and power.[292] Further, the game's African origins, and its (mythologised) travel and subsequent development in Brazil through slavery, belie nationalism and territorial boundaries, and in fact remind of the violence and tragedy associated with the development of modern statehood. In a feel-good and, I would argue, largely non-political space, capoeira thus allowed for moments in which sovereignty's restrictions – both those of the sovereign ideal and those of local, Syrian manifestations of sovereignty – could be forgotten.

The transformations that occurred as part of the professionalization of Capoeirarab into the INGO Bidna Capoeira were therefore all the more astonishing. In the aftermath of the successful project in Al-Tanf camp, several foreign Capoeirarab members began work to turn the experience into a permanent NGO, realising that interest from big, international donors created opportunities for paid jobs with an activity that they highly enjoyed. Stating that the organisation worked with "communities that need a lift", in "difficult situations from post-conflict to natural disasters", Bidna Capoeira's website established capoeira as an intervention tool to improve "social integration & networking, child & women's protection, gender-based violence, preserving cultural heritage". Undoubtedly in an attempt to attract the attention of international donors, Bidna Capoeira's founders applied typical humanitarian language, along with its ideas about distressed, impoverished populations and their 'needs'. Completing the transformation of capoeira into a technical solution for deviant populations in need of sovereign protection, Bidna Capoeira's website offers a 'one-price-fits-all' solution to its services: USD 3.5 per person per day for a one-month "emergency response", USD 1.36 per person per day for a six-month "humanitarian relief" and a seductively low USD 0.77 per person per day for a 2 year "sustainable development".[293] As laid out above, these humanitarian tropes created ideas and practices of the modern sovereign ideal; people living in political conditions not matching this ideal were treated as deviant and in need of correction. Further, the focus on biopolitical technologies, i.e. changes to be made to

---

[292] This was particularly evident during Roda's in Syria, where so many stifling restrictions are placed particularly on young peoples' lives.
[293] All quotes taken from Bidna Capoeira's website www.bidnacapoeira.org

the bodies, minds and behaviours or individuals, rather than to structural, political circumstances, created the firm belief that people in non-sovereign conditions were unhealthy, unproductive and dangerous. Bidna Capoeira's website described a project in Palestine with the following paragraph:

> Our team will bring some immediate fun and inclusive activity to the camp. The capoeira will allow the children to express anger and frustration in a safe and healthy way. Our experience shows that children develop their self-confidence, discipline, and respect for new cultures while playing and testing themselves.[294]

Particularly in the context of Palestine, the reference to expressing anger in a 'safe and healthy' way demonstrated the corrective element of the stated project aim (and reminded readers of how, without intervention, these Palestinian children might be un-safe and un-healthy). Depressingly, capoeira was robbed of all its ambiguity and sovereignty-undoing potential, even robbed of the myth that slaves used the game to practice their strength for an eventual show-down with their masters. The normative shift undergone from Capoeirarab and its non-corrective, empowering and exchanging classes to Bidna Capoeira's quest for using the game as a tool to discipline and pacify violent and poor populations, demonstrated that this transformation was linked to the search for funds from international, humanitarian donors. The connection between material power – the provision of finances – and the promotion of the values of modern sovereignty were particularly clear in this example, emphasising that the maintenance of the status quo of sovereignty was closely linked to the maintenance of existing forms of dominance and power.

Conclusion

Post-2003 Iraqi migration, which, by 2007, had developed into an international, political and humanitarian concern, led to an unprecedented opening of Syria to international NGOs, which previously had been largely prohibited from operating in the country. The presence of this new type of humanitarian actor resulted in new spaces and practices of sovereignty construction, both through INGOs themselves, and through Syrian state institutions, who had to develop strategies to manage them. Research found that INGOs conducting aid projects for Iraqis broadly fell into two groups. The first group consisted of around a dozen professional and officially

---

[294] ibid.

registered organisations, such as Danish Refugee Council or International Rescue Committee. These INGOs were established members of the global, professional humanitarian sector and used standard procedures and regulations to set up projects, raise and organise funds, publish annual reports, recruit staff and so on. The second group of INGOs consisted of much less formal organisations that lacked official registration with state authorities and relied on volunteers rather than paid professionals. This group of diverse organisations included, for example, a semi-professional INGO with several dozens of volunteers as well as a one-man outfit with little external support.

This chapter argued that the activities of the first group, professional INGOs, were based on and promoted the modern ideal of state sovereignty as the normal, safe and correct form of political organisation. In their publications and in interviews, professional INGO employees continuously presented Iraqis in Syria as alien, illegal and helpless, due to their location outside of the territory that their nationality allocated to them, according to the sovereign ideal. Rather than considering Iraqi life in Syria as an indication that the assumed unity of population, territory and government of the sovereign ideal was a fiction, INGO activities consistently portrayed Iraqi migration as an instance in which this previously existing unity had been tragically broken. According to this logic, Iraqi migration was considered as an option of last resort and as the reason for Iraqis' troubles. By portraying migration as outside of the norm, by continuously emphasising Iraqis' illegality in Syria and by ignoring how Iraqis were indeed integrating in Damascus, INGO rhetoric and programmes reproduced and constructed the hegemony of the sovereign ideal.

Interestingly, when it came to the type of interventions that Iraqis were considered to require, professional INGOs concentrated problems that were internal to Iraqis' bodies and minds, such as physical and mental trauma or crime, such as prostitution and violence. Rather than focusing on the external, political developments that were leading to continued Iraqi displacement, INGOs orientated themselves to corrective interventions of Iraqis themselves. Unsurprisingly, this biopolitical focus was reflected in INGO programmes that largely comprised health and education projects, psychosocial counselling and help for victims of domestic violence. From this perspective, Iraqis in Syria could never be regarded as normal instances of human life, but were cast as deviant and in need of protection and correction through INGO

interventions. In this way, INGO discourse also served as an explanation and as legitimisation of foreign intervention into the Syrian body politic, on Syrian territory. Professional INGOs filled an institutional gap, created by sovereignty's principle of territorial exclusivity, and created a channel for acceptable foreign intervention to govern Iraqi migration in a way that did not destabilize the fiction of the sovereign ideal (as the direct interventions of another state would have done). In this way, the activities of professional INGO activities in Damascus contributed to the regularisation of Iraqi migration into systems of sovereignty, carried out in light of the highly visible contradiction to sovereignty's imagined unity of territory, population and government that Iraqi life in Damascus presented.

Apart from INGOs' portrayal of Iraqi migrants' lives as alien and deviant, this chapter also considered the interactions between professional INGOs with Syrian state institutions. As argued in other chapters, domestically, Syrian sovereignty was not based on the social relations stipulated by the sovereign ideal, and notions of legality or the independence of the state from individuals hardly applied in the Syrian context. This situation resulted in occasionally tense interactions between INGO staff, who were unprepared for the heavy intrusion and control by state officials in their operations, and ministries, who treated INGOs as potentially threatening, political actors, rather than trusted partners. Consequently, INGO activities, such as the opening of community centres or the offering of vocational training, rather resulted in new spaces for the state to construct its sovereignty, than in the broadening of a civil society outside of state influence.

The second group of amateur INGOs engaged in a range of activities that reflected both constructions of the sovereign ideal and the lived reality of sovereignty in Syria in a variety of ways. One organisation, focused on helping young Iraqis access US colleges, demonstrated how education and knowledge-production were areas through which sovereign boundaries were constructed and became apparent. The Iraqi participants to the programme were encouraged to move away from the type of learning they had experienced in Iraq, which was characterised by an absence of critical thinking and analysis. Iraq and the US were understood as being separated by different epistemologies and forms of learning. In order to succeed at a US college, students were not just required to master English, but to be able to grasp US-style beliefs about what constituted useful knowledge and education. Here, educational

practice was revealed as linking citizens to territory and government, according to rules set by the state, and national curricula acted as divisions between different sovereign spaces. Very differently, a second informal INGO ran projects emphasising the commonalities among Iraqi and US youth, without reifying Iraqi life in exile according to familiar humanitarian tropes. In this way, sovereign exclusions were overcome by simple expressions of human solidarity and by a form of organisation in which the roles of provider and beneficiary, of leader and led, were blurred and unclear.

The highly varied activities of international NGOs in Damascus showed that INGO projects neither stood outside state sovereignty nor weakened it as a hegemonic form of political organisation. Instead, due to sovereignty's impact on nearly all areas of human life, INGO activity was necessarily positioned in relation to it, both in the sense of the sovereign ideal and of particular Syrian manifestations of sovereignty. Tensions and transformations between INGOs and state institutions emerged over the techniques of power through which sovereignty was to be respected and enforced. Professional US/European INGOs approached sovereignty through practices of laissez-faire and liberalism, in which the state limits its own powers to intervene in certain areas of life, so-called public space or civil society. Such a structured and stable regulation of state power did not exist in Syria, where state intervention was unpredictable and uncertain, and could be minimized by building strong, personal relationships with ministers or other tactics. As new actors on the scene, INGOs were kept under surveillance by suspicious ministries; unfamiliar with this form of state power, INGO staff felt intimidated and attempted to play strictly by the rules, not realising that rules were rarely fixed by Syrian state actors.

Chapter 6

The States on Syrian Territory II: the 'international Community' and Iraqi Migration to Syria

This chapter addresses a puzzle arising out of the involvement of foreign states in the management of Iraqi migration to Syria. As the previous and following chapters argue, the programmes of UNHCR and international NGOs produced Iraqi identity and life in Syria in a manner conform with the modern sovereign ideal and its assumed unity of territory, nation and government. Iraqi migration was an opportunity for a variety of actors to perform and enforce both the domestic and international space of the sovereign ideal; sovereignty-contradicting Iraqi migrants were governed to become sovereignty-conform and to become linked to a nation, a territory, a government. Paradoxically however, the processes that created this international governance of Iraqis included a host of extra-territorial activity, or, put differently, cross-territorial intervention, by foreign state-institutions on Syrian territory to manage Iraqi migration. It appeared that to control sovereignty-undoing activity on the level of Iraqi migrants, extra-territorial state power was channelled into institutionalised paths that made it acceptable within the order of the sovereign ideal. Ironically, the construction of territorial and national sovereignty relied on trans-border practices of control that were exercised through networks of sovereign-state power and interstate organisations. As shown in chapter five, international NGOs were one such institutional channel through which the interests and influence of foreign states became acceptable on Syrian territory; as will be demonstrated here, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and UNHCR played a similar role.

The presence and influence of foreign states in Syria highlighted that sovereignty did not rule out unequal power relations between sovereign states. Some states or territories could apparently be more sovereign than others, along material or moral yardsticks and criteria. The field of Iraqi migration served to create and emphasise existing hierarchies among sovereign states, in which citizenship of 'superior'

sovereigns appeared as a prized gift that could be granted or withheld.[295] These divergent strengths of different sovereigns did not, however, display themselves as clashes between states, but appeared via the different approaches that different states deployed in their governance of Iraqis, and via the material and organisational power brought to bear by intervening states. Far from creating 'anarchy', sovereignty produced a layered process of governance, in which human beings influenced each other through their association with differently powerful sovereigns.

To understand this layered process of governance it was necessary to turn again to the question of how the inside and outside of sovereignty was constructed. The puzzle presented by the involvement of foreign states in the management of Iraqis on Syrian territory highlighted more than anything that inside and outside were conceptual, rather than tangible or geographical spaces, and were therefore also not fixed. The hierarchies in international/outside space existed according to material, technical, knowledge and moral standards, which empowered those actors affiliated to states with superior qualities according to these standards. This was visible from the confident interventions by foreign states described in this chapter. These confident interventions in turn showed that more powerful states' actors, without visibly upturning the façade of the sovereign ideal, were able to influence the shape of the weaker state's inside space. Inside and outside are thus dynamic concepts, in the sense that certain practices construct them as separate, and for the maintenance of sovereignty they need to remain separate, yet paradoxically, other practices cross the divide with impunity. The acceptance or rejection of practices crossing the inside and outside were related to hierarchies of power: while the sovereignty-undoing migration by Iraqis activated an international, corrective response to this contradiction against the sovereign ideal, the sovereignty-undoing interventions by foreign states related to the same phenomenon were accepted and/or not perceived as a problem.

Together with those of the humanitarian sector, the complex international interventions by state institutions constructed Iraqis as located outside sovereignty, and highlighted that such persons were considered legitimate 'targets' of whichever sovereign power decided to intervene in their lives. This construction strengthened the abstract ideal of sovereignty that each person needs a sovereign to become a citizen

---

[295] Ashutosh and Mountz, "Migration management for the benefit of whom? Interrogating the work of the International Organization for Migration."

with a productive and good life, which was threatened by the existence of Iraqi communities in Syria whose sovereign identity was vague, and who did not maintain a clear link with any particular sovereign (see chapter three). The construction of Iraqis as sovereignty-less non-citizens that appeared in the rhetoric and practices of foreign institutions, did not mirror the broad way of Iraqi life in Damascus, where Iraqi communities were thriving and suffering, waxing and waning, regardless of their vague, sovereign status.

The practices of foreign states participating in the governance of Iraqi migration showed that efficient, bureaucratic systems run on high-powered technology were key to creating the dominance of sovereign-state power over a disparate population of Iraqis. Unlike the Syrian state's form of bureaucratic power, in which personal relationships could trump and money could buy outcomes, the bureaucratic procedures operated by other states worked according to an abstract logic beyond the influence of Iraqis. Dominant sovereignty was contained in and constructed through impermeable bureaucracies that ruled according to hidden laws and whose judgements had to be accepted as they were handed down. The importation and exercise of such techniques into Syria emphasised the hierarchy between sovereigns wielding sophisticated, technical apparatuses, and those ruled by less structured and disciplined administrations.

The differing techniques used by different states yet again emphasized that sovereignty could be based on fundamentally different relations between population and government in different local contexts. The Syrian state conducted no elaborate pre-selection of Iraqis entering its territory, rather governing all persons on its territory similarly through techniques of insecurity and surveillance. North-Atlantic states on the other hand engaged in highly elaborate routines to select those Iraqis who would qualify as potential members of their citizenry and who they would bind themselves to in a relationship of rights and duties. This comparison pointed out that sovereignty in the US and Europe relied more heavily on the myth of democratic representation and that of the public's ownership of the state; in Syria (and Iraq) this myth was of much less importance for the maintenance of sovereignty.

This chapter will attempt to unravel these questions by firstly presenting an overview of how foreign states were present in Syria in the context of Iraqi migration. While

the IOM and UNHCR served as inter-state gatekeepers to enforce the borders of its members on Syrian territory, states also engaged in separate and distinct activities that inserted their sovereignty into the process of Iraqi migration. The second and third parts of the chapter consider the practices two states, the US and Germany respectively, and analyse their sovereignty-producing effects and techniques through their participation in Iraqi resettlement and humanitarian aid. As the governments of the US and Germany held opposed positions on the 2003 invasion of Iraq, a comparison between their approaches to post-invasion Iraqi migration is particularly rich and enlightening. Analysing these two states' approaches this chapter presents an argument of how state sovereignty is configured and reconfigured through trans-national activities aimed at normalising migrants into the system of sovereignty. Discussions about the end or continuation of nation states in times of globalisation are put to rest by arguing that waxing, waning and paradoxical state practices are elements of modern sovereignty, which, why relying on the fiction of unity, is based on disparate and scattered interventions to uphold this fiction.

Foreign states' involvement in managing Iraqi migration to Syria

In 2009/10 casual conversations with Iraqis in Syria frequently turned to the topic of life abroad. Many Iraqis had relatives and friends living in other countries, were looking forward to or hoping to emigrate themselves, either via the UNHCR resettlement programme or other immigration options offered by overseas governments.[296] The situation of acquaintances, who had migrated a long time ago or shortly previously, were frequently discussed together with the personal situation of the speaker, why he or her had not followed suit, or what his or her own position towards emigration was. Details of resettlement and immigration procedures were pored over and explained, including complaints about perceived discrimination or conspiracy theories about which countries preferred which type of Iraqi and what the reasons behind certain questions and requirements of immigration officials were. The countries most frequently mentioned in these conversations were the US, Sweden, the Gulf states, Saudi Arabia, Germany and Canada, also Malaysia and Australia.

Foreign states in Iraqi imagination

---

[296] Under-cover emigration via smuggling or forged passports were reportedly part of Iraqi migration strategies, however will not be discussed here as I did not encounter persons who had taken this route.

As emigration had been an important element in Iraqi society for decades and many Iraqis had experiences of work or study abroad, many interlocutors were aware of its positive and negative aspects.[297] In 2009/10 some Iraqis had already returned to Syria after having been resettled, after failing to make ends meet in the US or simply not liking life abroad, and stories about these returnees were swapped and discussed. Nevertheless, many (by far not all) Iraq acquaintances had pinned all their hopes on emigration, either due to the lack of higher-education options in Syria, the lack of financial security to achieve a lifestyle on par with the previous situation in Iraq, perceptions that Syria did not offer a good future for children, fear of continuing persecution in Iraq, desire to join relatives abroad or also due to youthful curiosity about the world and love of adventure.

Foreign territories and nations thus featured prominently in Iraqis' thoughts about their future plans and lives. These foreign entities were associated with hope, and with overwhelmingly strong borders, which manifested in visa requirements, passports, interviews, letters of rejection and sheer distances and cost of travel, all contributing to feelings of humiliation and powerlessness. These feelings were illustrated by the following quote from an interview with a young Iraqi man, who compared his previous travel experiences to his current predicament:[298]

> *And most importantly, the Iraqi, when he travelled, for example we travelled a long time ago, we were respected. In the airport, at the borders, by the state - wherever we went we were respected. Now, there is nothing like this, at all. Where ever we go, there is no respect. You are Iraqi? What's that, Iraqi. Go, no...when we went to the airport, maybe they let our passports through immediately - now, if they hear Iraqi, you have to wait until last. Because you are Iraqi. Why is it like this? Wasn't the basis, when they entered, the liberation of Iraq?[299]*

The lack of acceptance of Iraqi passports and consequent lack of freedom of movement demonstrated to Iraqis the lack of sovereign clout of their state-affiliation. It demonstrated the lack of recognition that the Iraqi state, its government and

---

[297] Chatelard, "The Politics of Population Movements in Contemporary Iraq: A Research Agenda."; Geraldine Chatelard, Oroub El-Abed, and Kate Washington, "Protection, mobility and livelihood challenges of displaced Iraqis in urban settings in Jordan," ed. ICMC (Geneva: ICMC, 2009).
[298] This man has now been resettled to the US
[299] Interview with Iraqi man, 17.01.2010

population received from other, more powerful states and confirmed an absence of care and interest from the Iraqi government in Iraqi migrants. More than any regulatory requirements or prohibitions of the Syrian state, the entry barriers to Iraqis of other states instructed Iraqis that they were sovereignty-less and raised the idea that as an Iraqi, it was necessary to obtain the protection of another government, even though emotionally the idea of abandoning one's nation might be controversial and painful.[300] The combination and fostering of the idea that a better life was possible in other states, and the hurdles that these states upheld for people with Iraqi papers created a powerful effect of sovereignty, and of a hierarchy between different sovereign states and their citizens. Those Iraqis wishing to resettle or emigrate were forced into a position of trying to comply with the numerous requirements of the foreign sovereign, and waiting, often for months or even years, for the sovereign decision without knowing what factors would influences its outcome.

The above mentioned states allowed Iraqis entry to their territory and, at different levels, to their nation, via the UNHCR resettlement programme or other immigration options, such as skilled migrant schemes, family reunification or asylum claims. These programmes involved different activities by foreign-state officials on Syrian territory, through which the respective states' sovereignty became present in Syria. While all processes required, at some stage, a 'confessionary moment' by Iraqis in front of an official from the destination state, in which all questions about a person's life and conduct were permitted, the exact routines required by different states varied.[301] The US, for example, which was the country accepting by far the most Iraqis through UNHCR resettlement, relied heavily on the IOM to process Iraqis who had been pre-selected by UNHCR, according to US government requirements. The IOM ran a 'refugee processing centre' exclusively for the US, where IOM staff concluded a range of services for 'USRAP', the United States Refugee Admission Program. IOM conducted interviews to verify eligibility and identities, to obtain biographic data and "elicit testimony of past persecution" in a "chronological narrative"; promising to enter "all required bio-data into the US State Department

---

[300] The question after leaving their Iraqi citizenship was answered by Iraqis in a great variety of ways. Many also differentiated between obtaining a second or different passport and giving up their Iraqi identity, maintaining that one did not necessitate the other.

[301] Mark Salter astutely uses the term 'confession' to analyse the moments in which persons have to bare their identity and bodies at borders. See Salter, "The Global Visa Regime and the Political Technologies of the International Self: Borders, Bodies, Biopolitics."

Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System (WARPS) database". Further, IOM staff would request the necessary security name checks from US government agencies and provide on-site assistance during "adjudication circuit rides" (i.e. country-visits during which officials would decide on Iraqi immigration requests) of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), including "scheduling refugee appointments, managing case files, distributing DHS/CIS decision letters at the conclusion of the circuit ride and supervising interpreters".[302] Here, the IOM functioned as an outsourced branch of US government ministries, and channelled activities of the US state, which were carried out on Syrian territory and had a direct impact on the population living on this territory.[303] This channelling through the IOM, an international organization to which most states were members (not Syria), had the effect of hiding the presence of the US, which only became more clearly visible in the last step of the process, when officials from the DHS arrived for their 'circuit rides' to interview Iraqi applicants and provide a final decision. The IOM became an institutional process that veiled state practices that stood in contradiction to the sovereign ideal of territorial exclusivity, and that in fact created a situation of layered sovereignties, in which the officials and politics of several states influenced the lives of the same people, living on the same territory, in a very direct way.

The US was the only state to rely so heavily on the IOM for its resettlement processing. Other resettlement states, such as Germany or Norway, appeared more inclined to trust the UNHCR selection process, as their officials did not create additional steps through the IOM, but interviewed pre-selected Iraqis directly. Due to this closer cooperation with UNHCR, officials from these states would communicate their preferences to UNHCR before pre-selection took place, when they announced their state's 'resettlement quota', i.e. the number of Iraqis to be accepted in a given year. For example, Norwegian officials informed UNHCR managers that they wished to receive 60% women through their quota, while Germany's sectarian request for Christian Iraqis was firmly rejected by UNHCR – however then resurfaced, apparently reformulated as a focus on 'religious minorities'.[304] Through these

---

[302] All quotes taken from IOM, "Information Sheet," in *IOM support to the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP)* (New York, USA: IOM, 2008).

[303] Ashutosh and Mountz, "Migration management for the benefit of whom? Interrogating the work of the International Organization for Migration."

[304] Yassin Musharbash, "Irak-Fluechtlinge wollen keinen Christenbonus," *Der Spiegel Online* 23.05.2008.

requests, the domestic sphere and politics of the various resettlement states influenced decisions to be taken by UNHCR clerks, which could have momentous impacts on the lives of Iraqis in Syria. As in the case of IOM, the institutional layer of the UNHCR served to blur the involvement of the sovereignty of foreign states in the management of Iraqi migrants in Syria, and presented the resettlement process through a single prism of humanitarianism and generosity.

Other states, operating their immigration programmes, also contributed to the overall, important presence of unreachable territories in the minds of Iraqis. States such as Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Australia or the Gulf states allowed Iraqis access to their territories either via large financial deposits, investments, specific skills or marriage, and ran their immigration schemes through embassies and directly at their borders. The entry restrictions imposed by other Arab states, whose nationals in the past had frequently sought employment in Iraq, were often criticized by Iraqi interlocutors. Their restrictive policies also had a negative effect on Iraqi freedom of movement and empowerment, and possibly influenced the social composition of the Iraqi population in Syria. However they did not create, in the same way, layers of sovereignty on Syrian territory, which the multiple involvement of settlement and donor states, with the humanitarian agencies, produced via their categorisations and judgements on the sovereignty of Iraqis, Iraq and Syria. The particular combination of humanitarianism, securitisation of Iraqis and highly selective immigration practices exercised by donor and resettlement states transported these states' sovereignty onto Syria soil. More importantly perhaps, it also constructed lived experiences in Syria according to the sovereign ideal and furthered ideas about what it meant to be a good sovereign, and which territories and populations could be considered more sovereign than others.

Apart from emigration matters, foreign states were also present in the management of Iraqis through their financial support of UNHCR, the Syrian government and, to a lesser extent, international NGOs. Particularly through the support to UNHCR and the Syrian budget, foreign states channelled hundreds of millions of dollars into Syria from 2008 onwards, with the stated aim of improving Iraqi lives, and helping the Syrian state cushion the financial burden of hosting Iraqi migrants.[305] The donations,

---

[305] For funding figures broken done according to donor state, see OCHA, "Regional Response Plan for Iraqi Refugees."

the majority of which came from the US, allowed UNHCR to provide monthly stipends to poor Iraqi families, enabled the World Food Programme to assemble bi-monthly food packages and led to renovations in the Syrian education and health sector. Such money also paid the high salaries of foreign aid workers as well as the lesser salaries of the dozens, if not hundreds, of Syrian staff that the humanitarian sector had employed. Further, it lined the pockets of Syrian businessmen providing, for example, the contents of the food packages, or involved in associated transport services. The funds thus contributed to diverse social and economic developments in Syria, including the governance of Iraqis. More relevant for this analysis, the money supported a narrative and a construction of the Iraqi migration crisis that contained numerous, important elements of the sovereign ideal and sovereign hierarchies. In the process of writing funding proposals and providing the donations, humanitarian agencies and foreign states functioned as a sovereignty-producing apparatus, in which the superior sovereignty of the donors was never directly expressed, but became operationalised in the various regulatory and categorising regimes applied to Iraqis.

Invisible sovereignty

Nowhere in UNHCR publications aimed at Iraqis, nor during humanitarian service-provisions, was it made obvious where the funds came from that made the assistance to Iraqis possible. This absence of communication was reflected in a corresponding lack of awareness amongst Iraqis about who funded UNHCR and other assistance schemes. The conversation that I had with an Iraqi young woman, while waiting for hours outside the UNHCR compound for an appointment, about assistance provided to Iraqis was representative for an overall confusion about the matter.[306] She had been convinced that the social security funds provided to Iraqis in Sweden came directly from the Iraqi state. Rather than emphasising and advertising their involvement and donations to Iraqis, the governments of donor states used the UNHCR channel to veil this involvement and provide no clear information to Iraqis about the impact certain governmental decisions were having on their lives. Even more strongly than in the immigration/resettlement programmes, in which the influence of foreign sovereigns was visible but kept highly unclear, the involvement of foreign states in Iraqi lives via the funding of humanitarian assistance was not made explicit, and remained hidden

---

[306] See also Frauke Riller, "On the resettlement expectations of Iraqi refugees in Lebanon, Jordan and Syria," ed. UNHCR ICMC (Beirut2009).

from Iraqis. The chief mechanisms through which this effect was achieved were 'international' institutions such as UNHCR and IOM, which appeared as independent, international actors without any particular state affiliation. The fact that their actions and decisions were strongly influenced by, or formed a cohesive apparatus with, foreign governments, was not made explicit.

State officials, both Syrian and foreign, on the other hand had access to privileged knowledge about these financial structures, as had international aid workers and international media. This discrepancy highlighted a fascinated effect of this foreign money in the construction of Syria's domestic and international sphere. While internationally, the request for and acceptance of foreign financial support allowed Syrian officials to participate in a range of discourses and activities that demonstrated Syria's ability to act and behave like a sovereign state, domestically, it was the hiding of this money's origin that allowed for the continuation of an unencumbered Syrian domestic space that, conceptually, remained the exclusive domain of the Syrian state.[307] Yet the international awareness of foreign-state support for Iraqi migration involved a further paradox: while it confirmed the existence and legitimacy of the Syrian state, it also assigned the Syrian territory a particular identity within the hierarchy of sovereigns. The hosting of Iraqi migrants was used to construct Syria as a generous state and nation, but the acceptance of foreign funds to deal with this migration also identified Syria as a country in crisis and located it closer to being a developing country than a fully fledged sovereign.[308]

The involvement of foreign states in Iraqi migration management in Syria was complex and varied, demonstrating how the messy, lived reality of sovereignty created paradoxes and contradictions to the sovereign ideal. Foreign states' influence on crucial turning points of Iraqi lives in Syria created a real and imagined web or layer of sovereignty for Iraqis to navigate. The opacity surrounding these states' involvement only heightened the sovereign effect, by keeping Iraqis waiting and guessing, about which element of their identity to emphasise when approaching one particular sovereign. Through their funds, donor and resettlement states supported the humanitarian portrayal of Iraqi migration, however interviews and selections of

---

[307] Lisa Wedeen, "Seeing like a Citizen, Acting like a State: Exemplary Events in Unified Yemen," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 04 (2003).
[308] Duffield, "Governing the borderlands: decoding the power of aid."

resettlement requests revealed a more openly ruthless side, in which Iraqis were treated as potential security threats and financial burden rather than victims in need of aid. Resettlement and emigration processes combined sovereign power's caring and threatening elements, and emphasised, at different times, different aspects of Iraqi existence as it suited. In this way, one of the crucial sovereign powers of all the states involved in Iraqi migration was revealed, namely that of constructing, portraying and representing Iraqi lives selectively and as official channels saw fit. This process remained possible through a rich mix of mechanisms that led to the invisibility of many facets of Iraqi lives in Syria, including the highly selective manner, in which Iraqis themselves chose to portray themselves when interacting with state officials.

After presenting this overview of how foreign states participated in Iraqi migration to Syria, we now move on to a more specific analysis of an involvement of two donor and resettlement states, the US and Germany. In addition to considering these two states' activities in Syria, the analysis will reflect on the intertwining of domestic political debates about Iraqi migration, with the techniques used by state officials abroad. Once again, migration emerges as a crucial field of production for sovereignty's external and internal spaces that involved the conceptual location of the nation, as well as being rooted in the geographical limitations of territory.

Germany and Iraqi migration

Germany was a small-to-medium sized player in the field of onward Iraqi migration from Syria. By July 2010, 2,046 Iraqis had been resettled to the country from Syria, compared with 14,250 to the US, 907 to Australia and 102 to France.[309] Aside from resettlement, the other main route for Iraqis to access Germany at least on a temporary basis was by claiming asylum; in 2010, 12,093 Iraqis claimed asylum in Germany, of which on average around 50% would receive at least some form of temporary leave to remain.[310] As will be elaborated below, the treatment of Iraqis in Germany highly depended on which regulatory 'stream' they accessed the country; for example at the same time that the German government decided to accept 2,500 Iraqis from Syria via UNHCR resettlement, Iraqi asylum seekers already in Germany were having their residency permits revoked or their claims rejected. The German state did not operate

---

[309] UNHCR Syria, "UNHCR Syria Update Summer 2010."
[310] Bundesministerium des Innern, "Press release: 41.332 Asylantraege im Jahr 2010," (Berlin17.01.2011).

one immigration policy towards people of Iraqi nationality, but a complicated and contradictory jungle of laws and bureaucratic procedures, often operating independently across different state bodies, that became mobilised according to the different ways in which Iraqis approached the state.[311] This situation emphasised the importance of understanding sovereignty not simply in monolithic, spatial terms, but as a web of human interactions, which are guided according to a particular political rationality and through their outcomes create sovereignty's particular form of human organisation.[312]

Among the Iraqis that I encountered in Syria, Germany was not frequently mentioned as destination, however often enough to feature on the mental map of possible emigration. Three of my interlocutors had acquaintances or relatives living in Germany, of which two had been resettled and one had migrated many years ago. One of the resettlement cases was mentioned during a conversation at the house of an Iraqi family in Jaramana, who were desperately waiting to be resettled and had grown frustrated and angry after repeated and unexplained delays. They spoke about a single, female acquaintance who had been resettled to Germany even though, in their assessment, she had not been in particular need:

> *He spoke at length about the chaos and intransparency of the UNHCR operations in Syria. (…) More than once the case of one of their friends was mentioned, who received resettlement in Germany – and came back after a month, taking the immigration stamp that is valid for three years and then coming back to Syria, because she did not like it in Germany. 'She does not need it!' the wife exclaimed and the husband repeated this story as an example of the perceived randomness of the resettlement choice.*

In this quote, Germany's decision to resettle a single woman from a religious minority, which met the humanitarian criteria of helplessness and fear, was essentially revealed as a fake. The presumed persecuted woman, apparently unable to integrate in the hostile host state Syria, nevertheless preferred her vague sovereign status there to residency in the presumed 'proper' sovereign Germany. On the other hand, her three-

---

[311] Andrea Kothen, "Irakfluechtlinge: Zweierlei Mass, allerlei Gesetze," (Frankfurt, Germany: Pro Asyl, 11.05.2009).

[312] Foucault, Bertani, and Fontana, *"Society must be defended" : lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76.*

year immigration status in Germany provided her with an income (from the German state) and a secure exit-ticket, should political developments in Syria, where she did not enjoy the same legal assurances of residency, threaten her stay. The two separate sovereign spaces of the Syrian and German state were created – and overlapped, in the existence of the woman in question - via the different governance techniques applied to migrants in the two countries. The Syrian mechanism of broad, but unpredictable tolerance, and the highly selective, but (temporarily) guaranteed existence in Germany interacted to created a layered governance of Iraqi migrants who could, in the best case, navigate these two spaces of sovereignty to their maximum advantage. But the family desperately waiting to be selected for resettlement by the German state's sovereign choice, experienced the other side of German sovereignty's 'janus-face': that of unfettered, not-to-be influenced, secretive decision making, of exclusion, of barriers, of threat and violence.[313] The limitation of the number of Iraqis who were to be accepted through resettlement thus contained several of state sovereignty's principal and contradictory manifestations: the power to care, the power to select, the power to exclude and in the extreme case, the power to decide over life and death, which, in the worst case, non-resettlement could result in. Crucially, this was a sovereign, unquestionable power, as Iraqis could not seek justification for decisions, could not question or influence the resettlement-criteria and could not even find out many basic facts about the process of their resettlement file.[314]

Constructing domestic sovereignty

Different German sovereign spaces became visible and interacted through the involvement of the German state in Iraqi migration. This became clear when considering several developments related to Iraqi migration that took place in German domestic space at the same time as Germany became involved in Iraqi migration to Syria. Shortly after the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, which the German government had not supported, German authorities began revoking the refugee or asylum status granted to Iraqis living in Germany, which had been awarded in recognition of their well-founded fears of persecution from the Iraqi government. The German government interpreted refugee law as allowing such revocation if the

---

[313] Wendy Brown uses the term 'janus-faced' to describe sovereignty's paradoxes. See Brown, *Walled states, waning sovereignty*.

[314] Rejection letters simply contained several boxes with statements such as 'not credible', of which one or several were ticked. Appealing such decisions were near to impossible.

conditions in the refugee's home country, which had led to her recognition as refugee, had disappeared, due to 'significant and permanent changes'. The removal of the Saddam government was considered as such a change and as having removed the repression that had justified the refugees' claim and status in Germany.

Despite public criticism from UNHCR and the unique position that the German practice presented in the EU, between 2003 and 2011 around 20,000 Iraqis had their refugee-status revoked.[315] Paradoxically, the withdrawal of permits continued at the same time as other, newly arriving Iraqis in Germany were increasingly being granted temporary leave to remain, upon being recognised as having a legitimate asylum or refugee claim.[316] Permit withdrawal did not lead to immediate departure or forced deportations of Iraqis from Germany; for example, between 2003 and 2006, 473 Iraqis were forcibly deported from Germany, according to government statistics.[317] Forced deportations were only possible when a number of regulatory conditions were met, and even supporters of the withdrawal-policy, such as Germany's conservative party CDU, acknowledged humanitarian reasons for not deporting Iraqis into the conflict zone of Baghdad.[318] But importantly, the revocation of the refugee-status signalled that this person no longer had a right to fall under the protection of the German sovereign, and had no special connection anymore with the German nation, territory or government. This person had become, according to German officialese, 'ausreisepflichtig', roughly translatable as 'legally obliged to depart'. In 2011, the European Court of Justice broadly confirmed the legality of Germany's position.

This contradictory practice of revoking some Iraqis' status, at the same time as other Iraqis were being granted asylum can be explained with reference to the sovereign ideal, and with reference to the implementation of this ideal as a lived reality through bureaucratic practices and power. With reference to the sovereign ideal, the rejection of previously accepted Iraqi refugees can be explained as an attempt to re-create the

---

[315] Amnesty International Germany, "Press release EU muss irakische Fluechtlinge aufnehmen und Nachbarstaaten des Irak unterstuetzen," (Bonn, Germany16.04.2007).

[316] Pro Asyl, "Press release BVerwG: Widerruf der Anerkennung irakischer Fluechtlinge," ed. Pro Asyl (Frankfurt, Germany: Pro Asyl, 25.02.2011).

[317] Cabinet of Germany (Bundesregierung), "Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Ulla Jelpe, Jan Korte, und der Fraktion DIE LINKE," ed. Deutscher Bundestag (Koeln: Bundesanzeiger Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 18.08.2006).

[318] Reinhard Grindel MP, "Rede zu irakischen Fluechtlingen im Bundestag," ed. Christliche Demokratische Union Deutschlands (CDU) (online: Christliche Demokratische Union Deutschlands (CDU), 13.12.2007).

correct, sovereign relations, after a temporary, illogical glitch, which the temporary inclusion of Iraqi migrants into German sovereignty had presented. This anomaly, which had been justified by the presumed anomaly of a government that persecuted the people on its territory instead of protecting them, was withdrawn as the removal of the Saddam government was assumed to have 're-instated' the sovereign ideal in Iraq. The practices of German immigration authorities and their bureaucracies[319] were linked to attempts to maintain the German state according to the ideas of the sovereign ideal: the German nation as a homogenous group of persons with unique links to German territory and government. The legal expelling of Iraqis via re-categorisations and issuing of letters and documents, even as they physically remained on German territory, functioned in classic sovereignty-preserving terms as marking the internal boundaries of the German nation, defining the other and the external, and exercising the continuous exclusion of it.[320]

Constructing international sovereignty

But how can the contradiction be explained that at the same time, new arrivals from Iraq were recognised as refugees, and Germany's then foreign minister pushed for Germany's unprecedented participation in UNHCR's resettlement programme in Syria, offering generous resettlement terms for 1500 Iraqis? To explain these developments it is necessary to consider the international space of the German state's sovereignty.[321] The international performance of German state sovereignty was not focused on generating the conditions of possibility for the sovereign ideal by implementing the internal borders of Germany's population and territory. The participation and demonstrations of German state officials in the conceptual space of the international instead aimed at confirming Germany's role as that of a powerful, but good, democratic and legitimate sovereign with the moral principles befitting of a liberal government. This performance aimed at confirming Germany's *external*

---

[319] Interestingly, a key criticism by left-wing, German parties of the revocations was that they essentially functioned as a work-creating measure for underused immigration-officials.

[320] Finn Stepputat, "Violence, Sovereignty, and Citizenship in Postcolonial Peru," in *Sovereign bodies : citizens, migrants, and states in the postcolonial world*, ed. Thomas Blom Hansen (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005).

[321] A second important, explanatory factor would related to the briefly referred to implementation of German sovereignty via different, contradicting and complicated bureaucratic procedures; however given this thesis' focus on the involvement of foreign states in Syria, this question will not be developed here. For the importance of bureaucratic practices for sovereignty see Feldman, *Governing Gaza : bureaucracy, authority, and the work of rule, 1917-1967*.

borders, however not the physical borders on the edges of German territory, but rather the projected borders of the realm of the German state's sphere of action, which could include territories outside of those allocated to the German state. As the following paragraphs will argue, the high-profile and even staged participation of Germany in UNHCR's international programmes performed the German state's role as that of a generous and good sovereign, as fulfilling the responsibilities that come with being a great power. Just as Syrian state officials, who seized on the Iraqi communities in Syria as an opportunity to demonstrate the integrity and legitimacy of the Syrian sovereign, German officials seized on the Iraqi resettlement cases to perform Germany's benevolent role in international affairs, which could include activities outside of German state territory.

The press coverage surrounding the departure and arrival of the first resettled Iraqis to Germany emphasizes how this particular 'international affair' boosted the construction of Germany as a safe and generous sovereign haven. UNHCR spokespersons lauded Germany's 'effort' stating that "Germany is providing a very positive example which we hope will inspire other European countries to consider resettling Iraqi refugees during 2009".[322] Another UNHCR representative added that "Germany has set an important example to ensure that especially vulnerable Iraqi refugees can plan their future life in peace and safety. The resettlement of these refugees is a valuable contribution to international refugee protection and the commitment and support received by the German authorities and civil society deserve our explicit appreciation."[323] In stark contrast to the behaviour towards those Iraqis threatened with deportation, the first contingent of 120 resettled Iraqis received a personal welcome from the interior minister of one of Germany's federal states, who welcomed them with the words "we have prepared everything to make you feel comfortable".[324] In a related statement, Germany's national ombudsman for integration called on the population to receive the Iraqis with open arms, as it was a principle of humanity to quickly help people seeking protection. The signal to be sent to refugees was to be: you are welcome.[325] It is noteworthy, that Germany's participation in the resettlement programme resulted from the high-profile efforts

---

[322] Syria Today, "120 Iraqi refugees resettled in Germany," (Damascus, SyriaApril 2009).
[323] UNHCR, "Press release Resettlement to Germany of Iraqi refugees in Syria gets under way," ed. UNHCR (19 March 2009).
[324] Focus, "Erste Irak-Fluechtlinge in Hannover gelandet," (2009).
[325] ibid.

made by Germany's then interior minister to convince European countries to help persecuted Iraqis, especially Christians. In fact, the minister carried his lobbying on the question so far that the Iraqi government eventually requested less publicity on the matter, as it considered the refugee-issue as negative publicity, highlighting the failure to achieve security in Iraq.

Overlapping sovereignty

These various examples show that Germany's participation in resettling Iraqis from Damascus, which led to activities by German officials in Syria that influenced the integration and identity of Iraqis living there, was closely linked to the construction of German sovereign space, both domestic and international. 'Overlapping' sovereignty in this sense did not simply refer to a situation in which actions by different states took place on a single territory. Instead, overlapping sovereignty rather explained, in a slightly crude metaphorical way, they way in which the constructions of the sovereignty of different states were necessarily intertwined and influence each other. If the way that the Syrian state included Iraqis in its population and territory (a question directly linked to how Syrian sovereignty was created) differed, this would change the opportunities for the German state to perform its sovereignty towards Iraqis. In conjunction with the moral and legal aspects of the sovereign ideal, which worked as a yardstick of correctness, legitimacy and stability, these overlapping constructions created a dynamic hierarchy in which those sovereigns who performed the sovereign ideal most perfectly, could draw power and resources from this performance, which also legitimised their intervention into the sovereign spheres of less well-performing sovereigns.

In Syria, Germany's participation in the resettlement programme resulted in the categorisation and selection of Iraqis according to humanitarian, integration and, although this was not made explicit, religious criteria.[326] From the point of view of sovereignty, it was telling that the interactions and negotiations preceding Germany's accession to the resettlement programme took place between officials from Germany

---

[326] The exact criteria can be viewed on the website of Germany's ministry for migrants and refugees, on the website titled 'Integration Gateway'. Making no mention of the revocation of the refugee status of thousands of Iraqis in Germany, the website announced "Germany offers asylum to Iraqi refugees" and lists the criteria of acceptance. http://www.integration-in-deutschland.de/nn_286290/SubSites/Integration/EN/00__Home/__WichtigeInfosAlle/20090211__Auf nahmeIrakFluechtlinge.html

and UNHCR, without the explicit involvement of the Syrian state.[327] Without further investigation about the actual daily-life situation of Iraqis in Syria, German officials accepted that Iraqis in Syria faced no prospect of integration and were 'sovereignty-less', thus making an intervention from another sovereign legitimate and desirable. Germany's power to intervene in Iraqi lives (and thus in the construction of the Syrian body politic) in this way resulted directly from the construction of Iraqis as located outside of sovereignty and the judgement that Syria's 'protection' of Iraqis was non-existent or at least insufficient. The superiority of German sovereignty also emerged from the particular understanding of 'protection' as a legal connection with a sovereign (which Syria did not offer) and was thus linked to the different ways in which the German and Syrian state exercised their governance. The apparent fairness and transparency of Germany's bureaucratic apparatus, offering stability and integration, was contrasted with Syrian randomness and instability, an opposition that was, as demonstrated by the experience of Iraqi interlocutors, often nullified in daily life experience.

Nevertheless and crucially, Germany's superior qualities as a sovereign could not have been performed if not many Iraqis had been extremely keen and willing to be resettled to Germany and if UNHCR would not have been able to 'fulfil' the resettlement quota allocated by the German state. The fact that many Iraqis explained their willingness to resettle with the hope of stability and material support, as well as better life chances for their children, showed not only that the performance of German sovereignty was successful, but that the German state indeed governed those people qualifying for citizenship in a way that promised greater prosperity and personal freedoms. This governance, which was linked to far-reaching and complex differences between the Syrian and German state, was part and parcel of the German state's success and strength, and reflected the Syrian state's much weaker success in establishing itself as the key focus of loyalty and identity for the people living on its territory.

---

[327] Musharbash, "Irak-Fluechtlinge wollen keinen Christenbonus."

The US and Iraqi migration

In 2009/2010 the US was the country receiving by far the largest number of Iraqis via UNHCR resettlement. In Jordan, Egypt and Iraq, the US government ran additional, special immigration programmes for Iraqis who had worked as translators for the US army or affiliated contractors, which had resulted in their persecution (it was not possible to apply for this programme from Syria). Further, Iraqis could also claim asylum from within US territory. Between January 2007 and July 2010, 14,255 Iraqis departed from Syria to the US through UNHCR resettlement; according to US government statistics, from 2008 to 2010 inclusive, a total of 50,676 Iraqis received asylum in the US.[328] Syrian resettlement cases thus made up, on average, around a quarter of all Iraqi refugees received by the US during these years.

As most of their resettled friends and relatives had been sent to the US, and as a number of my interlocutors themselves already had prospects of being resettled there, the US was the most frequently discussed immigration option encountered during fieldwork. US cities to which resettlers might be sent were discussed, together with the conflicting information about the financial support refugees might receive, which appeared to be frequently changing and varied according to US federal state.[329] While interlocutors hoping for resettlement to the US sometimes expressed a muted excitement about travelling, the general attitude was that of long-term waiting amid uncertainty whether the hoped-for announcement, and eventually the tickets, would truly arrive. UNHCR (or IOM) only informed Iraqis days before their departure that their resettlement date was due. Questions about the discomfort that Iraqis might feel when being offered resettlement in the country that many perceived to lie at the root of Iraq's problems were only rarely raised. This was particularly ironic in cases when Iraqis described the actions of US forces as closely connected to their fear and ensuing flight. Instead of expressing outright rejection of the US, interlocutors repeatedly indicated that they considered it the US's responsibility to help Iraqis, and thus had no problem with accepting US aid or resettlement, indeed sometimes considered it as their right. The following quotes demonstrate this perception.

---

[328] Daniel C. Martin, "Annual Flow Report Refugees and Asylees: 2010," ed. Office of Immigration Statistics (Washington DC: US Department of Homeland Security, May 2011). UNHCR Syria, "UNHCR Syria Update Summer 2010."

[329] Riller, "On the resettlement expectations of Iraqi refugees in Lebanon, Jordan and Syria."

OK - they wanted to change the Iraq for the better. But now we haven't seen anything good at all. There is nothing good. OK - America entered Iraq and is not concerned about the situation of the Iraqis, what is happening with people, every day thousands are killed, a million have died, they are displaced, forced to leave their work, their work - all these things are not important to them. But when they entered at the beginning it was all to liberate Iraq. So yes, they are responsible to support Iraqis and to give them help because they have done this. It is necessary that they carry the responsibility.[330]

One young woman, when asked about the personal sacrifices that some Americans were making to help Iraqi refugees, said:

...but they are the fault of all our problems! They have made all the problems for us, in Iraq, not only now, but for decades! (...) But it is so little, compared with the problems that they created for us.

These quotes provide food for thought about the understanding of state sovereignty that interlocutors themselves maintained, and a brief elaboration of how this understanding related to the constructions of US sovereignty through the resettlement programme. On first glance, the willingness of Iraqis to accept US responsibility for their welfare matches the humanitarian idea of 'protection'. Similarly, the acceptance of continued US intervention in their lives and the acceptance of US-territory as a place of metropolitan safety and peace appeared to follow and enforce the post-colonial narrative of the US (and Europe) as superior sovereigns. With regards to such opinions, it appeared that the modern ideal of sovereignty was successfully transmitted through the US participation in resettlement. But, importantly, underneath these similarities, other ideas raised in interviews and conversations pointed towards a very different belief among Iraqis about what sovereignty meant. A number of responses and opinions indicated that interlocutors understood sovereignty in a more paternalistic or perhaps absolutist way, with different implications for how sovereignty's social relations should and would be lived, than those expressed by the (post)-modern ideal. This reading of Iraqi views about sovereignty could also explain the broad acceptance of US responsibility for Iraqi welfare among interlocutors.

---

[330] Interview Iraqi man, 17. January 2010

A further extract from the interview drawn on above was:

For example, why is the father responsible for the family? Isn't it that the government, which is bigger, is responsible for the people? Yes, it is necessary, they are responsible. They have to support and help the Iraqis and find a solution for them.[331]

This expression of a fundamental distinction and separation between government and people also appeared during casual conversations. One Iraqi interlocutor reflected on how governments of European countries cared for their citizens abroad, in the case of arrest for example, while Middle Eastern governments did not, expressing an understanding of governments as caretakers over whose actions people had no control. Intrigued by an apparent lack of understanding of how taxes and public finance worked in other states, I occasionally asked Iraqi acquaintances about who they considered as the owner of public spaces, such as roads and parks. Invariably, the answer was that these items belonged to the government. These answers pointed towards a perception of sovereignty shaped in a political context in which the notions of citizens, civic responsibility and of the government as representative of the population did not appear. Iraqis' clearly had experience of fundamentally different social relations underpinning state sovereignty (already analysed in relation to the Syrian state above) than those of the sovereign ideal.

Returning to the analysis of how US sovereignty appeared in Syria, it was important that the differing Iraqi perception of how government, population and territory related to each other, limited the transmission of the liberal and humanitarian portrayal of US sovereignty presented in the official rhetoric surrounding resettlement. For example, as elaborated above, according to official rhetoric, the selection of resettlement cases was based on ideas about the needs of persons considered as being outside of sovereign space. The pervading silence about the political circumstances surrounding Iraqi displacement in this rhetoric served to depoliticise Iraqi migrants. But according to Iraqis' understanding of sovereignty, the selection of resettlement cases was the unfettered decision by a sovereign, whose ultimate motives would necessarily remain hidden, as secrecy and lack of representation were 'natural' elements of sovereign power. Further, Iraqis remained highly aware of the politics of their migration, and

---

[331] Interview, 17.01.2010

considered it as the very basis of their relationship with the US state. Unlike the underlying logic of the resettlement programme, which focused on forging new US citizens out of resettled Iraqis in order to allow them access to secure, sovereign space, Iraqis did not consider themselves in this way.[332] Rather, the US was considered as a type of patron who, after intervening disastrously in Iraqi lives, now should take responsibility to help.

Constructing domestic sovereign space

As in the case of Germany, the US' involvement in managing Iraqi migrants in Syria made different US sovereign spaces visible, emphasised how imagined borders between such spaces were created, and how these distinct spaces encountered each other. In particular, this concerned the construction of domestic and international conceptual space. US involvement in Iraqi migration was closely linked to the 2003 invasion of Iraq and its increasingly disastrous aftermath. Iraqi migrants were a living proof that the desired results of the Iraq war were not being achieved and indeed had proved a horrible failure. As has been noted by Geraldine Chatelard, the foremost analyst of Iraqi migration in the last decades, global awareness of what amounted to a recent spike in ongoing Iraqi emigration, and the framing of this emigration as an unprecedented refugee crisis, was shaped by the activities of US-based humanitarian organisations. The lobbying and awareness-raising around the issue of Iraqi refugees taking place in Washington, DC created a 'global refugee agenda' and was closely linked to US domestic politics, as it served to point out the failure of the Bush administration to bring order and stability to Iraq.[333] In particular the failure to adequately protect Iraqis who had supported the US army, and had become targets for insurgents as a result, placed pressure on the US government; in response the special visa-programme for such persons was created. The successes and failure of this programme were monitored by the media, as was the fate of displaced Iraqis in general.[334] During 2009, dozens of research reports and hundreds of media stories on Iraqi displacement appeared, often linking the issue to the US-led invasion.

---

[332] A further indication was the frequent (however not consistent) reluctance expressed by Iraqis to give up their Iraqi citizenship.
[333] Chatelard, "What Visibility conceals. Re-embedding Refugee Migration from Iraq."
[334] Mowbray, J. 03.04.2009, *Visa denial puts heroic Iraqi translator in the crosshairs*, www.foxnews.com, viewed 05.07. 2011; Paul Tait, "Iraqi translators struggle for safety and a visa," *Reuters* 24.08.2007.

The emergence, or 'making visible' of different US sovereign spaces in this process once again draws attention to the paradoxes of US sovereignty, which appeared as a cause of Iraqi insecurity as well as the rescuer of Iraqis. Re-enforcing the distinction between a dangerous outside and a secure inside, the Iraqi asylum programmes became a field in which the various 'faces' of US sovereignty were separated and interacted. As actions by US state officials and soldiers had clearly contributed to making the 'outside' dangerous, how could the separation between domestic and international be upheld? The maintenance of these conceptual spaces in the face of events in apparent contradictions, pointed on the one hand to the power of the 'territorial trap' intrinsic to contemporary beliefs about the way sovereignty is rooted in defined territory.[335] On the other it demonstrated how the apparent contradictions were solved: via the narrative that the pre-existing dangerous outside (Iraq) proved too dangerous even for the essentially pacifying hegemon (the US). This narrative underpinned much of the analysis of the US' engagement in Iraq (and Afghanistan) and consequent 'military overstretch'.[336] This powerfully suggestive story blended out the historical involvement of other states, including the US, in these 'outside' places and successfully upheld the idea of territorial exclusivity, which should be and was only broken in self-defence, when the dangerous 'outside' was threatening the peaceful 'inside' (which was, of course, how the 2003 invasion of Iraq was justified).[337] It further explained how the potential instability that Iraqi refugees presented for the integrity of US sovereignty could be successfully nullified through the resettlement and asylum programs, in which US territory (and thus sovereignty) could be again confirmed as a source of peace and stability. In this sense, the US' involvement in managing Iraqi migrants in Syria (and the Middle East region) had to be considered as a sovereignty-affirming involvement, despite its extra-territorial character. As already briefly described above, this extra-territorial character was partly obscured through the reliance of US ministries on the IOM to conduct large parts of the emigration process.

---

[335] James Agnew, "The territorial trap: the geographical assumptions of international relations theory," *Review of International Political Economy* 1(1994).
[336] Chansonette Hall et al., "Perfect Allies? The Case of Iraq and Al Qaeda," *International Studies Perspectives* 8(2007). Anthony H. Cordesman, "Four Wars and Counting... Enduring Conflict and the Need for a New Approach to US Strategy and Force Planning," *The RUSI Journal* 149.
[337] Ghazi-Walid Falah, Colin Flint, and Virginie Mamadouh, "Just War and Extraterritoriality: The Popular Geopolitics of the United States' War on Iraq as Reflected in Newspapers of the Arab World," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 96.

US presence in Syria

At the time of field research, diplomatic relations between Syria and the US were improving, although the US did not have an ambassador to the country. The resettlement of Iraqis required, as the last step, an interview with an officer from the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS), who thus had to be physically present in the country. DHS committees regularly visited Syria for this purpose and interview appointments depended on this schedule. The final interview with a DHS official was the 'make-or-break' moment of a resettlement case, as all the previous selection by UNHCR clerks and IOM officials could be nullified by the decision of the DHS interviewer. Correspondingly, Iraqi interlocutors expressed nervousness and excitement once the DHS appointment had been announced. One Iraqi friend told me about a dreaded DHS official known among his Iraqi friends as 'Barbara', who had rejected many Iraqis on grounds of credibility. According to my friend and other informants, 'credibility' was the most common reason for rejection; this would be indicated on the rejection letter by a tick in the box called 'credibility'. Interviews, which were completely unpredictable and could be highly intrusive or superficial, were set up in a way to detect a lack of credibility, for example by interviewing husband and wife separately.[338] It struck me as peculiar, how US state sovereignty appeared personified in the official named 'Barbara'. As a human being, Barbara was a precise, yet moving and temporally unstable location of US sovereignty, physically de-territorial, but, through her US citizenship, conceptually linked to and representative of US territory. As a gate-keeper to Iraqi access to US territory and the US nation, Barbara also presented a moving border post that would only sometimes appear on Syrian territory to allow for a crossing of this border. In this way, the role played by Barbara summarised and went to the heart of the fiction of modern sovereignty and its fixation of territory, population and government as an inseparable entity.

In addition to its presence in the resettlement process, the US state played a role in managing Iraqi migration through its enormous and fundamentally important funding of the humanitarian effort focused on Iraqis. The US was by far the largest funder of UNHCR's total budget, contributing around five times more than the two next biggest

---

[338] Fieldnote, 150110

donors, Japan and the EC, each. In 2010, the US contributed around USD 712 million, Japan USD 143 million and the EC 118 million, out of a total of around USD 1.9 billion in contributions.[339] With regards to UNHCR's operations for Iraqi refugees in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, the US' funding covered an even larger percentage. A 2009/10 report indicated that the US funded between 40% and 50% per cent (and possibly more) of UNHCR's budget for the region.[340] In Syria, this money funded the expansion of the wider humanitarian sector (including NGOs, most of which received at least part of their funding via UNHCR), which at the time was nearly exclusively focused on Iraqi migration. As UNHCR's budget, unlike other UN agencies, depended to a large extent on voluntary contributions, the influence that contributing states have over the organisation is comparatively large.[341]

The difficulty that focused research encountered when trying to unearth US' financial contribution to UNHCR's country budgets demonstrated very well how the 'institutional channelling' of extra-territorial state practices hid overlapping sovereign jurisdictions. Although contributions to UNHCR's budget were heavily weighted towards a handful of states, the organisation presented itself as a unitary actor and as representative of the international community of all member states, and by extension, their populations. Notably, in official and public communications of UNHCR about the Iraqi refugee crisis, the organisation often praised the Syrian government for its cooperation, however did not thank its biggest donor, the US, for its continued and crucial support. Apart from the overall stability to the sovereign ideal that UNHCR thus achieved, the obscuring of US involvement was also more immediately expedient for the US government. The separation of domestic and international spaces through the filtering of US money through UNHCR's structures served to veil the US' financial intervention in a territory considered as belonging to an enemy state by many US politicians, and the controversial, growing budgetary support to UNHCR.[342] As mentioned above, in 2009/10 the US' diplomatic relations with Syria were warming, however far from strong. This was evident from the absence of a US ambassador in Syria since 2005, a classic, diplomatic performance of the sovereign ideal, through which a break-down of positive relations between two unitary states is

---

[339] UNHCR, "Contributions to UNHCR for budget year 2010," ed. UNHCR (Geneva: UNHCR, 2011).
[340] OCHA, "Regional Response Plan for Iraqi Refugees."
[341] Loescher, "The UNHCR and World Politics: State Interests vs. Institutional Autonomy."
[342] George Russell, "U.N. Refugee Agency budget explodes as U.S. foots much of the bill," 05.11.2009.

signalled. This break-down had been prompted by US officials' belief that the Syrian government had been involved in the assassination of the former Lebanese prime minister Hariri; the Syrian support for the Lebanese party and military organisation Hezbollah exacerbated the crisis. The sending to Syria of millions of dollars in aid money at this low point in diplomatic relations therefore not only presented a challenge in terms of sovereign stability, but could have also drawn criticism for the US government from its critics; especially as the expanding humanitarian budget clearly also benefited the Syrian government and public sector facing an economic crisis at the time. This explanation of how the extra-territorial expansion of US sovereign space became neutralised and depoliticised through the organisational structures of UNHCR, points to some of the political (and thus power-related) functions that the sovereign ideal fulfils.

The combination of the US's participation in the resettlement programme, and its funding of UNHCR was an enormously powerful construction of US sovereignty; demonstrating on several levels the US' power to intervene in Iraqi lives across several state territories. Interestingly, as argued above, some aspects of this power were highly visible, while others remained hidden. The opening of US borders to deserving Iraqi refugees was mediatised internationally and also very widely known among Iraqi interlocutors. This aspect of US involvement in Iraqi migration both served to neutralise the negative political fall-out of the US' failures in Iraq, and simultaneously re-created the notion of the US as the locus of peace and stability, as the rescuer of Iraqis. As in the case of Germany, the creation of the US as a resettlement demonstration included a superior judgement of US sovereignty, as it implied that Iraqi or Syrian sovereignty did not properly extend over Iraqis, nor included the capacity to offer Iraqis protection. Yet the actual, physical interventions on Syrian territory required from US state-representatives to conduct the resettling of Iraqis to the US, which would have visibly undermined Syrian territorial control, was veiled. Rather than setting up extra-territorial branches of the various ministries involved in resettlement in Syria, the US government heavily relied on the IOM to conduct most of the pre-selection of Iraqis, which portrayed the operation as an international effort. Similarly, as analysed above, the US' vast financial support of the humanitarian effort focused on Iraqi migrants was obscured, to similar effect. Yet clearly, the heavy financial involvement with UNHCR at least opened a channel of

211

knowledge for US officials into the domestic Syrian space, which, due to the political circumstances, was of high strategic importance yet remained comparatively closed to US influence.

Conclusion

This chapter analysed the involvement of other states in the management of Iraqi migrants in Syria. Foreign states were present in this management through their participation in the humanitarian efforts focused on Iraqis, as well as through standard immigration programmes. Given the high visibility and awareness of the humanitarian aspects among Iraqi interlocutors, the analysis of this chapter mainly focused on the donor states. The two main areas in which donor states were active were the UNHCR resettlement programme, through which Iraqis were allowed to migrate further on humanitarian grounds, and financial support for a range of humanitarian projects.

The participation of foreign states in these programmes created extra-territorial interventions that were contradictory to the sovereign ideal, as they influenced on how the Syrian state was able to manage to population living on its territory. One way through which the extra-territorial character of these interventions was veiled was via the institutional channelling of foreign states' power through UNHCR and IOM. Both of these organisations served as gate-keepers and extra-territorial border guards for the foreign states' participation in managing Iraqi migrants. Not only did they negotiate the terms and conditions under which these states would conduct their interventions, they also conducted the pre-selection of potential resettlement candidates and a host of bureaucratic and security measures required by the immigration policies of the participating states. This form of gate-keeping and institutional channelling made it possible to blur the nitty-gritty involvement of the sovereignty of foreign states in the management of Iraqi migrants in Syria, and presented the resettlement process through a single prism of humanitarianism and generosity by an abstract international community.

To provide further insights into how the involvement of foreign states was linked to the construction of different spaces of sovereignty, details about the interventions of two states were presented, Germany and the US. The German government had opposed the invasion of Iraq, so unlike the US, was not considered a source of Iraqi displacement with a direct responsibility to assist refugees. Still, Germany's high-

profile lobbying of European states to accept displaced Iraqis via UNHCR resettlement delivered a boost to Germany's international sovereignty, as it confirmed Germany as a location of peace and compassion. Germany's unprecedented participation in a UNHCR resettlement programme was publically lauded by UNHCR in press releases and the first resettled Iraqis were welcomed to Germany by senior German politicians to a media fanfare. Yet this construction of Germany's international sovereignty was contrasted by the ironic fact that at the same time, thousands of Iraqis in Germany, who had previously been accepted as asylum-seekers, were having their residency permits revoked. The revocations were justified by the argument that the conditions in Iraq, which had previously resulted in a justified fear of persecution for these Iraqis, had permanently changed through the US-led invasion. Unlike the resettlement process, this development was linked to the construction of Germany's domestic sovereign space, in which the boundaries of the nation had to be continuously made visible in order to maintain the physical manifestation of the sovereign ideal. The different and sometimes contradicting treatment given to Iraqi migrants approaching the German state via different bureaucratic channels also emphasised how the state and its sovereignty were constructed through a maze of regulatory procedures and management techniques, rather than through a single locus of power.

The US' participation in resettlement and in the financing of humanitarian relief for Iraqis was linked to the failure of the US-led war to pacify and stabilise Iraq. Iraqi refugees were a living proof of this failure and US lobby groups pressured the government to help displaced Iraqis, especially those who had become targets for assisting US forces. The involvement of the US thus relied on a contradictory situation in which the country was at the same time the source of Iraqi insecurity and protection. This apparently ironic situation was linked to US state-practices through which 'external' and 'internal' sovereign spaces were constructed. US violence was performed in spaces considered outside of US sovereign territory, which were portrayed as dangerous and threatening to US stability. US violence was justified as a source of pacification and self-defence; this myth was even upheld in the face of the demonstrated, opposite result of US intervention in Iraq. Insecurity and danger in post-invasion Iraq was not considered by the US government as a consequence of US violence, but as a result of the great danger, irrationality and evil that existed beyond

the peaceful US sovereign space and which had been underestimated at the beginning of the war. Theories about the US's 'military overstretch' or miscalculated tactics displayed this approach, which continued the myth about the US as an essential source of peace. Allowing Iraqi migrants access to US territory in this way did not contradict constructions of the sovereign ideal, as Iraqis could still be considered as accessing the US' peaceful realm without the realisation that the US at the same time had destroyed Iraqis' peace in the first place.

The perspectives and opinions of Iraqi interlocutors about resettlement, humanitarian aid and sovereignty were also considered in this chapter. In particular, the acceptance by interlocutors of US responsibility to assist Iraqis, rather than an outright rejection of further US interventions in their lives, pointed to an understanding of sovereignty at odds with the sovereign ideal. In several interviews, Iraqis described the US as a paternalistic power, who had intervened disastrously in their lives and now held the responsibility of the powerful to offer what little improvement could be had. In these statements, the relationship between government and population was viewed a kind of paternalism, in which the government's actions were broadly independent of the will of the people, however could be judged as good or bad. This portrayal indicated perhaps that the states of which interlocutors had experience (mainly Iraq and Syria) relied much less on the myth of popular representation as a technique of upholding domestic sovereignty. Overall, the involvement of foreign states in the management of Iraqi migration to Syria revealed a complex web of state practices through which the different spaces of sovereignty were maintained.

Chapter 7 Migrants, Refugees, Citizens, People: Iraqis in Syria

This penultimate chapter is dedicated to the stories, opinions and reflections of the Iraqi interlocutors who helped conduct the research upon which this thesis rests, as well as to those friends and officials who granted time and interviews. One goal of the chapter is to present their diversity and creativity, and to deliver a more nuanced analysis of 'Iraqis in Syria', which, until this point, has been wielded as a rather general category. Remaining with the overall theme of the thesis, the chapter will examine how my interlocutors considered their relationship with the state, with Iraq, with Syria and with notions such as nation and territory. Most importantly, it will seek to demonstrate how specific actions of interlocutors undermined or confirmed the constructions of sovereignty applied in the management of Iraqi migration to Syria, and what this meant for how sovereignty appeared in daily life. In this manner, the chapter provides insights into the limits of the sovereignty-constructing interventions that Iraqis faced on a day-to-day basis, a crucial aspect of this thesis' overall analysis of how sovereignty became a reality in the context of Iraqi migration. Through the highly individualised responses to various, sovereignty-related forms of control, biopolitical techniques and bureaucratic requirements, which are described in detail in this chapter, Iraqis frequently spoiled not only the hoped for effect of power, but also the images and reputations of the state and non-state institutions wielding it. The chapter also demonstrates how compliance with sovereignty-related power transformed Iraqi lives in their most intimate aspects, and shows how biopolitical techniques truly blur any distinction between public and private, extending the space of what is generally understood as 'public' politics.

More than any of the preceding sections, this chapter showcases the merits of ethnographic research for theory-building in international relations. Without the significant time spent on 'hanging out' with interlocutors and the writing of detailed, daily field notes it would have not been possible to glimpse the fleeting moments in which the effects and contestations of power manifested themselves. While interviews may help flesh out the context of a research setting and are crucial for the quick

obtaining of information, they cannot help researchers understand the 'daily-life' effects of sovereignty-construction. Only one of the important observations laid out in this chapter was collected through an interview.

This chapter's content thus weighs in favour of the narratives of my Iraqi interlocutors. The style of writing and analysis makes heavier use of the ethnographic data collected during field research and necessarily differs from those of previous chapters. Conversations and interviews are clustered around three themes of relevance. The three themes are: (1) conformity, (2) contestation and (3) disobedience and deception. The first theme, conformity, analyses changes in behaviour and self-governance of Iraqi interlocutors in reaction to bureaucratic structures related to their migrant status. This section argues that the basis of these bureaucratic structures could be found in ideas about the sovereign ideal (stipulating a homogeneous and healthy nation, for example) as well as in neo-liberal technologies of risk management and control. The effect of these structures was to create particular exclusions and barriers, according to which Iraqis had to change their daily-life behaviour so that they could become accepted, for example, as immigrants to the US. The second theme, disobedience and deception, highlights how Iraqis manipulated the categorisations and exclusions that were applied to them by humanitarian organisations in Syria. While disobedience and deception did not amount to open resistance, such actions nevertheless weakened the efficiency with which ideas about sovereignty could be translated into lived reality and were a form of Iraqi agency that spoiled the characterisations of weakness and passivity thrust upon them by humanitarian rhetoric. This section also highlights moments in which the randomness of sovereign decision-making, ostensibly based on fairness, knowledge and justice, was revealed. Finally, the third theme, open resistance and contestation, focuses on moments in which Iraqis either directly argued against the way they were governed, or in which they voiced analyses and opinions that stood in stark contrasts with the sovereign assumptions applied in this governance.

My Iraqi interlocutors comprised a group of around 80 persons, out of which I saw around 20 repeatedly and regularly. This group included persons with highly divergent lifestyles and personalities, running from the devout, motherly and smiley friend with six children to the high-strung, eccentric and gay fashion-designer, to the confident, flirtatious and jolly teenager. It included individuals horribly scarred and

down-trodden by recent violence, who could not arrange themselves with life in exile, as well persons quite happy with their life in Syria, who were not looking to move elsewhere. A key experience drawn from researching among this group was that Iraqi migrants in Syria reflected the whole, complex range of Iraqi society, and that the reasons for flight and continued exile were also diverse (however frequently involved violence). Violence and crime had become wide-spread in post-invasion Iraq, and did not amount to a targeted persecution of this or that group, but to a breakdown of social order that affected people across class and religious boundaries. The diversity among recent Iraqi migrants to Syria, and their diverse reasons for remaining in exile, also showed the non-violent social developments that pushed and pulled Iraqis to migrate, not least the simple opening of the border and the newly found, relative ease of travel.[343]

This wide variety among a relatively small group of people made short analytical shrift of any classifications according to age, gender, class or any of the other, standard sociological markers. Iraqi acquaintances mirrored the richness of human existence and their experiences formed part of the paradoxical conditions and ideas of political life organized according to modern state-sovereignty, in a post-colonial situation. The following sections show how Iraqis navigated these paradoxical conditions and how precisely the richness of their human existence clashed with or transformed through the demands of sovereignty-constructing power.

Conformity

The following paragraphs will analyse instances in which Iraqis changed their lives in order to conform to regulations through which state and humanitarian actors attempted to manage Iraqi migration in an orderly way, which meant in a way that allowed for the continuation and reinforcement of sovereignty's political and spatial organisation. The relevance of these episodes, apart from that they give an interesting, overall insight into Iraqi life in Syria, concerns the forms of power that were applied to Iraqis due to their situation as migrants. Applying a broadly Foucauldian analysis,

---

[343] Geraldine Chatelard, "Mobility Opportunities and Strategies for Iraqi Refugees in Syria and Jordan," (Geneva2009); Chatelard, "What Visibility conceals. Re-embedding Refugee Migration from Iraq."; Joseph Sassoon, *The Iraqi refugees: the new crisis in the Middle East*, International library of migration studies (I.B. Tauris, 2009).

it becomes possible to analyse these moments of conformity and to effectively carve out the techniques and locations of power and how they affected interlocutors.[344]

The most visible incident of such conformity that I came across during fieldwork concerned the father of a lovely Iraqi family with six children, who lived in very poor conditions close to my flat in the suburb Jaramana. Through the activities of an Iraqi social activist called Firas, this family had been put in contact with some foreigners, especially due to the artistic talents of the family's two oldest daughters, who had exhibited in several art exhibitions in Damascus and abroad. The family, here referred to as the 'Abu Mahmud' family, could not return to Iraq due to the hostility of the wife's family to the mixed-religious marriage, which had surfaced since the onset of violent sectarian strife in Iraq. Now, they were hoping for resettlement to the US, a process they had been working and waiting on for several years. One of the reasons for the long delay had been Abu Mahmud's health and weight problems. Iraqis with no relatives or friends in the US to act as their resettlement sponsors were allocated such a sponsor, for example a charity or a refugee support group. Yet such sponsors were reluctant to receive people with potentially expensive health problems, which were flagged during the mandatory health check that was conducted during resettlement registration.[345]

One afternoon when I was visiting the artistic sisters, the parents returned and we started speaking about resettlement. Abu Mahmud explained how the year before, a doctor had conducted the resettlement health-check on him. At that time, he had weighed 120 kilos and had been a heavy smoker. (As a proof, one of his daughters even brought an old photograph, showing a very round, heavy Abu Mahmud.) The doctor had written a report to the IOM, stating that Abu Mahmud's health was very bad; this had very much complicated the resettlement procedure and caused a severe delay. However since that time, Abu Mahmud's health had vastly improved, he had lost a lot of weight through a programme of daily running and exercising (now in fact, Abu Mahmud was one of the skinniest men I knew in Syria). He had quit smoking and ate much more healthily. After one year, Abu Mahmud returned to the same

---

[344] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and punish : the birth of the prison* (London: Allen Lane, 1977); Michael Foucault, "Governmentality," in *Michael Foucault: Power*, ed. Faubian J. (New York: The New Press, 2000); Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population (Lectures at the College de France 1977-1976)* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

[345] For more information about the resettlement procedure, please refer to chapters four and five.

doctor, who then issued a report that his health was fine and that he could travel. So now everything should be ready; Abu Mahmud did not understand what was causing the delay. He had called the IOM and UNHCR quite regularly, however did not receive any substantial news. It had been eight months now since the post weight-loss resettlement interview. Both Abu Mahmud and his wife repeated how the waiting was tiring them and causing a lot of worry.[346]

Thinking about and analysing the structures, ideas and individual actions that led to Abu Mahmud's physical transformation reveal an enormously complex, transnational web of actors and of power. The US health system, perceptions of risk management and statistics about cardiovascular disease combined with ideas about productive human life, the individual power of the doctor to issue the report, and biological controls on the possibly diseased outsider, before s/he was allowed to access national territory.[347] The techniques of power that enticed Abu Mahmud to improve his health, revealed a curious mix of what Foucault referred to as 'disciplinary' power and that what he broadly called 'securitization' or 'bio-power'. The disciplinary element was present in the selective procedure, according to which being overweight and smoking not only prevented Abu Mahmud, but his whole family, from being resettled. Yet as Abu Mahmud was free to choose between remaining fat or being resettled, there was also a distinct 'laissez-faire' element in the process.[348]

The overall goal of the procedure, namely the acceptance of only at least relatively healthy people into the US nation, was indicative of modern ideas about the healthy body politic and bio-political population management that Foucault has so well described as first emerging during the 18th century.[349] But the arguments of Abu Mahmud's potential sponsors, that accepting an overweight man was too great of a financial risk, spoke much more about neo-liberal developments, in which more and more elements of social life previously controlled by the state become ruled by market logic and risk calculations. There was no guarantee that an overweight man would become sick, or that his slimmer version would remain healthy; these were calculations based on knowledge of health statistics and cost-analyses of differed

---

[346] Field note 170310

[347] Bigot, "Security and Immigration: Toward a Critique of the Governmentality of Unease."; Latham, "Social Sovereignty."

[348] Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population (Lectures at the College de France 1977-1976)*.

[349] Ibid.

ailments, similar to those regularly carried out by health insurers. Abu Mahmud's 'life-style change' thus was clearly linked, and only explainable in reference to modern, and neo-liberal, forms of power and ideas about state and nation, and directly connected to techniques of power that maintained modern state sovereignty in the US.[350]

Residency Permit

Another important area of conformity I encountered related to the obtaining of a residency permit from the Syrian state. Although there appeared to be few instances of Iraqis being deported for not having such a permit, almost all interlocutors made important efforts to obtain one and keep it up to date. As laid out in chapter three, one possible explanation for this was that the residency permit was the only clear bureaucratic performance that Iraqis could undertake to demonstrate that they were willing to conform to the rules laid down by the Syrian state, and in this way demonstrate their allegiance and legality. Yet the permit was also necessary for interactions with the humanitarian sector and to receive health care, schooling and, occasionally was asked for by potential employers. This latter point was highlighted during the following episode.

One of my Iraqi friends was a very cool young man in his early 20s called Hassan, who was the only Iraqi I knew who did not appear very concerned about the residency permit. One day Hasan was visibly excited and happy, because he had received an offer to work as a waiter at a popular bar in the old city, a pleasant place at which he spent a lot of time as a customer. He had asked the (Syrian) owner for work and had been told to come to the bar that night at seven thirty. Hasan said that he was very happy because he very much needed money, and because it was a good place to work. Hasan was mainly concerned about what to do with this hair (which he wore in a large, curly 'afro'), because the owner had mentioned it, and that he would have to tie it back in one way or another. Humorously, we discussed several options. Hasan was incredibly vain about his hair and received a lot of positive attention for it, especially from foreigners and more importantly perhaps from girls, so I could see that he understood his hair as something that that made him special.

---

[350] Rose and Miller, "Political Power beyond the State: Problematics of Government."

Hasan speculated that maybe after two or three weeks he would be able to just leave the hair, which I told him I doubted, telling him that it was probably a health regulation or something similar. He also, somewhat bizarrely from my perspective, said that he wanted to tell the owner that it would be better if he drank some alcohol at work, as he worked much better then. Not much, Hasan added, just two or three glasses of Arak, that he was more lively and active. I, amused, cautioned him that that might not be something to float immediately, and also expressed scepticism about whether he would really work better after having drunk Arak. I said that if I were him I would tell the owner that of course, I would do anything with my hair that is required, and of course I never drank while on the job and so on, which in turn made Hasan laugh. As the afternoon wore on, I noticed Hasan checking his watch several times, and eventually he left early to ensure that he would be at the bar at seven thirty.

Later, at around nine thirty, I was at another friends' house, that of a Mexican girl who had invited me to come over to watch a movie. She had told me on the phone that Hasan was coming as well, which surprised me. Sitting on her wonderful terrace overlooking the old city and the Mount Qasīūn, she told me that she had bumped into Hasan on the street and he had been very excited about his new job. Then she bumped into him half an hour later again, and she asked him why he was not at the job. She said that there had been a problem because Hasan only had an expired residency permit. Hearing that, I felt terrible, as I knew how excited Hasan had been about this new opportunity; at the same time I worried that maybe there was a bigger problem relating to the permit.

Later, Hasan turned up and told me what had happened: the owner of the bar had asked for his passport, and asked him about his residency permit. Hasan told him that he indeed had a permit, but that it was old, i.e. expired. The owner replied that Hasan needed a valid permit to work with him, and also that he would give his details to the government. Hasan seemed to be unclear about what that meant. He said that he would renew his permit the next day, and that the owner would then employ him; on the other hand he also said that apparently the other Iraqis working at the bar had some sort of official piece of paper saying that they were allowed to do so. Overall during the conversation Hasan seemed confident that he could work out the permit issue, saying more than once that he would sort it out the next day.

I asked Hasan what had happened with his permit, and why he had not renewed it. He told me, lowering his voice and switching partly to English, that his permit had expired one month ago. He had then not renewed it, because he thought that he was going to 'travel' (i.e. be resettled) anyway. I later pressed him a bit on this, and he told me, again lowering his voice, that he had not known for what reason he could claim a permit after the old one had expired, which had been for 'health reasons'. Hasan thought that he could get a new permit through his two younger siblings, who were in school, which was a reason the whole family could obtain a permit. So he had called his parents and asked when they would be renewing their permit; it turned out that they were going to renew it in two months. So he decided to wait and go to renew it with them, because then he would get a one year extension. But now, because of the job, he would go and get one the next day. 'Kuss Ukhta al-Iqama!' he exclaimed.[351]

As the 'Abu Mahmoud' episode above, Hasan's story revealed intertwining relations of power at different levels of the state and social apparatus. It highlighted once again how the Syrian government did not use iron-clad bureaucratic and legal procedures to enforce the state's sovereignty; Hasan had been confident to live for several months with an expired permit, until an opportune moment arose to renew it conveniently. As long as he would have been able to ensure no contact with Syrian officialdom, his plan would have probably worked without problems. Yet through his initiative of finding a job, he entered into an arena of life of greater concern to Syrian state institutions and thus increased his risk of becoming visible to government officials. Hasan's expired permit was not picked up by a ministerial software-system that would issue him a letter to the address he was registered to, as it would have in a state with a high level of technology to manage its population. Instead it was noticed by a potential employer, who owned his business and who refused to hire Hasan without a valid residency permit. This refusal might have been a risk-management strategy, as certain ministries and security services irregularly conducted raids of businesses to check for foreign workers, presumably as a way to demonstrate concern with the labour market (there was some public discontent that Iraqis may be taking Syrian jobs) and to create opportunities to solicit bribes and remind business owners of the state's power. Hasan's potential employer, the bar owner, was aware of this risk and sought to minimize it by only employing Iraqis who had a valid residency permit.

---

[351] A rude expression translating roughly to "Fuck the Iqama!"

Interestingly, no mention was made about an actual work permit, even though Hasan's passport, like that of all Iraqis, had a stamped sign stating that he was not allowed to work in Syria. Once again, the state's presence in Syria was created through ambiguity of rule, which necessitated a constant, and time consuming investigation of the current state of regulations, which created a very different effect of sovereignty than that of transparent, if unbendable, legal or bureaucratic rule.

In the Syrian context of weak bureaucratic structures, the state became evident through the random and changing application of state rules by people who wielded some power to do so. State-governance was a constantly shifting set of rules that could appear in a different guise at every new step in life. Threateningly, the sanction for non-conformity with governance-rules could also shift: in Hasan's case the sanction was not having a job, in other cases it could be a bribe, imprisonment or even deportation, or simply constant fear of being discovered. In other cases there might be no sanction at all. As in the case of Abu Mahmud, the technique of enforcement that urged Hasan towards renewing his permit was a mix of discipline and laissez-faire; disciplinarian in the sense that Hasan could only work this particular job with a permit, laissez-faire in the sense that Hasan was free to choose not to apply for employment, and take the risk of not renewing his permit.

Considering these very particular, personal and micro-occasions emphasized that the construction of state sovereignty, i.e. the construction of state presence as an ultimate force to comply with, occurred through different techniques of power in different local contexts. This knowledge advances theoretical understanding of how sovereignty can be maintained as such a durable form of political organization, and of how sovereignty can adapt to important transformations in distribution and character of power. Understanding that sovereignty can exist in the context of very different social relations between population and government is also useful in furthering conceptual and political clarity on the relationship between the abstract 'sovereign ideal' and the varied, messy and contextual reality of sovereignty in physical life. While governments may mobilize and reference the sovereign ideal in a variety of different ways to construct their state's sovereignty in some instances (especially during practices in spaces designated as international), in others, this ideal may be hardly recognizable from practices used by the same government to enforce its state's sovereignty in other areas of life. From a more narrow, political point of view,

awareness that sovereign exclusions ran along different lines in different sovereign spaces would also be useful, as it would, for example, allow humanitarian organisations a much more nuanced and applicable understanding of where 'protection' was needed and how it could be most usefully created.

The following section looks at how interlocutors consciously contested and discussed certain managerial systems applied to them as migrants, and the sovereign exclusions that these systems contained.

Contestation

During my field work, I came across numerous expressions of discontent with the way Iraqis were being treated by international agencies and foreign states. The most frequent of these complaints concerned UNHCR and its chaotic, inconsistent categorization and services provided to Iraqis. The lack of transparency surrounding UNHCR's decision-making bred conspiracy theories and frustration. The Syrian government on the other hand was often praised by Iraqi interlocutors, who expressed gratitude for Syria's open borders and the access to schools and health services. The following paragraphs discuss instances of contestation not of this relatively basic kind, but have been selected for their notability; either, because they show moments in which interlocutors disagreed with important aspects of the sovereign ideal, or because they describe actual clashes between Iraqi migrants and those governing them. These observations serve to analyse and understand yet again elements of the power and violence contained in the governance of Iraqi migration, and their relation to sovereign constructions.

As already mentioned above, for around three months, as a volunteer teacher for a small NGO, I taught a seminar to a group of six young Iraqis between 18 and 22 years old. The seminar focused on different representations of Iraq in academic and popular texts, and discussions often concerned questions of nation and statehood. One afternoon, towards the end of a session, I asked the students whether they themselves felt Iraqi and how they defined their identity. Interestingly, the responses were very mixed. One young woman, who had already lived in Syria for five years, very clearly stated that she definitely felt Iraqi and was proud of her Iraqi identity. Another young woman, Rana, who had arrived in Syria only several weeks ago, was the most outspoken in saying that she did not feel Iraqi. Rana also quite passionately

questioned why people should have an identity attached to them just because they were born in a certain place. She felt that she had not found a place that was 'home' yet and that home was a place where you felt good and where you liked the ways of society. Iraq and being Iraqi for her was all about the traditions that were so strong in Iraq and that curtailed her life. I asked her whether nationality and nationhood not precisely transcended these traditions, but she did not agree. Rana was very vocal in expressing her dislike of being associated with a place whose rules and way of life she did not agree with. Rana's friend Widat, who had also only left Baghdad around two months ago, tended to agree with her.

The other students put up some resistance against Rana and Widat's position. Hamud said that in other places people would treat you as a foreigner, to which Rana answered that one had to wait and see, whether this would really be the case. Hamud responded that here, in Syria, one could already see that this was the case. Another student called Amir probed Rana, asking her: *"Then, where is home for you?",* to which Rana simply answered that she did not know yet where her home was, as she had not found a place to call home. An intense discussion had developed, as each student clearly felt strongly about this question of Iraqi identity. It was interesting how the majority of the students tried to convince Rana, who was openly straying away from Iraq, that indeed she was an Iraqi at heart and should acknowledge and celebrate this nationality. Yet Rana remained unconvinced. Further, it was notable, (yet inconclusive), that Rana and Widat had both experienced more time in Baghdad after the occupation and had only recently been introduced to the experience of being migrants, while the rest of the group, who expressed strong feelings of being Iraqi, had already spent several years in Damascus. Rana's emotional distance from Iraqi identity and Iraqi nationhood not only went against dominant feelings of patriotism and national pride prevalent among Iraqi interlocutors. By questioning the necessity and requirement to develop positive attachment to the place one was born in and associated with, she contradicted one of the most fundamental assumptions of the sovereign ideal. By openly admitting that she had not yet found a place she was willing to attach herself to so closely as to base her identity on it, she indirectly called for a right to choose one's nationality, in the emotional and patriotic sense, according to preference. This perspective stood in complete contradiction to the assumed unity of territory, population and government at the heart of the sovereign ideal.

Another, interesting episode from these seminars occurred on a different afternoon, when a remarkable discussion was sparked during the reading and deconstruction of an extract from the book 'The Lion in the Sand' by Gerald Butt. 'The Lion in the Sand' contains the memories of upper class British about life in the Middle East during the mandate period. I had chosen the text as an example for (from my perspective) dreadful, orientalist portrayals of the Middle East. To my astonishment all students in the group stated that they had enjoyed the text, partly because it was easy to read and understand. They had found the reading enjoyable and funny. I hid my surprise (if not to say shock) and asked the group what they had liked about it. Several students pointed out various instances in which the author described positive aspects of Arab behaviour, for example the ability of Arabs to distinguish between a government, and a person who was a subject of this government. This observation referred to a section of the article describing an anti-British riot by school boys, during which the boy's British teacher decided to flee. During the teacher's attempt to depart, his car stalled. In response, the rioting boys swarmed around the car to help the teacher, pushing his car home while chanting anti-Churchill slogans.

While I had interpreted this passage as a patronizing example of illogical and silly behaviour by Arabs, the students perceived it as an example of Arab kindness, and ability to distinguish between a person and their government. Reflecting on this question, a small discussion ensued about the students' relationship with Americans and the US-led occupation of Iraq. Some students argued that their relationship with Americans was good, and separate from the policies of the US government. Amer pointed out that he had 96 American friends on the social networking website Facebook. But Hamud argued that if he saw an American as a soldier, he was against him, and that an occupying force could never, ever respect the culture of the country that it was occupying – simply by the fact that it was an occupying force. This position received some support. Karima also came out strongly against the Bush administration, as it had been its decision to occupy Iraq. Partly due to the instruction received from the directors of the NGO on behalf of which I was teaching, which included avoiding overtly political discussions, I steered the discussion back to the text.

The second point that the students used an example of how 'The Lion in the Sand' described Arabs in a positive light was its consistent repetition of Arab people as

highly generous and hospitable, which delighted and surprised the European colonialists. The students expressed some pride in this 'Arab' trait, which they agreed with. As I was keen for the students to consider the text more critically, I tried to steer them towards applying some of Edward Said's methods of analysis, which the seminar had discussed the week before. Further, I asked the group about what they had learned about the colonial period in school (both in Iraq and Syria, as some students had attended secondary school in Damascus), which brought on some interesting points. Clearly, the students felt some embarrassment and sheepishness to talk about their former education. Some started by making general statements such as *"it was all negative, they* [the British and the Americans] *were the thieves who wanted to steel our oil, who were going to take away our culture and so on"*, adding discrediting remarks about the teaching they had received in Iraq. Amir added that there had never been any discussion, that they just learnt the facts from the books and repeated them at the exam. Overall, it was clear that they did not feel very comfortable talking with me about the way that the 'West' and colonialism had been taught to them at school. They discredited the teaching strongly and when I did managed to get them to tell me some things they had been taught, they repeated a few points but made it clear that they themselves did not believe in them.

At the end of the class, I gave them, very briefly, my interpretation of 'The Lion in the Sand', pointing out our different positionality, and how interesting it had been for me to hear what they had to say about it. I said that I had focused much more on the negative ways in which Arabs were represented in the text, on passages in which violence and silly, childish behaviour were associated with Arabs. I pointed them to paragraphs in which Britain's overall role in the Middle East was presented as a benevolent source of order, criticizing this portrayal. After listening to my interpretation, the students were quiet, until Rana said, with some passion, but also laughingly: *"Yes, what you say is also true, but we see these matters differently, because we are fed up with focusing on the negative!"*

To me, as a field researcher, this episode principally highlighted the way that my interlocutors and Iraqi fellow-students contested my own assumptions, attitudes and projections about them. Regarding myself as a critical thinker, politically supportive of the emancipation of people in Middle East, and critical of (post)-colonial and racist stereo-typing, my mind was primed to detect demeaning, orientalist attitudes. It

therefore came as an even greater shock when my Arab friends and students enjoyed and thought highly of a text, which, from my perspective, was rife with orientalist condescension. Rather than drawing negative lessons from 'The Lion in the Sand', the students focused on aspects of it that made them feel good, and happy and proud to be Arabs. And even more interestingly, the lesson that they considered as emerging from the episode of the rioting school-boys, was the ability of Arabs to distinguish between their anger about the politics of a government, and their position towards an individual ruled by this government. The, from my perspective, arrogantly amused tone of the author that I had picked up on as an indication of his patronizing view of 'silly' and 'irrational' Arabs, had been completely lost on them. This latter point was relevant for the analysis of state sovereignty, as it again pointed to local manifestations about how state sovereignty was lived, understood and felt about in the Middle East. The British author and I perceived the discrepancy between the school boys' singing of anti-Churchill songs and their helpful attitude towards the British teacher as illogical and surprising, because an effective analysis of colonialism should have (from our perspective) understood the British teacher as a representative of British sovereignty, along the lines of the ideal unity of government, territory and people. Yet from the perspective of the Arab school boys and the Iraqi students, this connection was far from obvious, which indicated that in their minds, sovereignty did not stipulate such unity, or any form of representative link between government and people.

The other interesting moment of contestation was delivered in the seminar's punch-line, which lay in Rana's retort that they were 'fed up' with the negative view of the West that had been spoon-fed to students under Saddam Hussein. The students had experienced the worst form of intervention and aggression by the US and the UK, which in many ways confirmed the 'anti-colonial' teaching they had received in Iraq. Yet their resentment against the authoritarian and dogmatic teaching received during the Saddam government also ran deep. Not wanting to mimic the opinions that they had perceived as being forced upon them during earlier schooling, and indeed expressing embarrassment of having conformed to it, the students interpreted 'The Lion in the Sand' in the opposite manner. The students' position thus reflected the different forms of violence that had sadly been visited on them through the various, and particularly aggressive forms of state-sovereignty enforcement they had

experienced. The US-led invasion, based on the most brute-form of sovereign violence and hubris, had exposed the students to deadly manifestations of state power, as well as displaying to them the apparent weakness and 'badness' of the Iraqi nation, territory and state. The experience of this violence mobilized resistance to US constructions of Iraq and opposition to the continued presence of US soldiers on Iraqi territory. Yet the oppressive experiences the students had experienced through the Iraqi government previous to the invasion also meant that they felt resistance to the ways in which Iraqi state sovereignty had been forced into their lives, for example through dogmatic education, to which no resistance had been tolerated. Various constructions of sovereignty, in this case extreme and highly visible, shaped the way students' considered their Iraqi identity, their stance towards the US invasion and reaction to how the Middle East was represented in different texts.

Turning now to a very different, and perhaps more sobering incident of contestation and opposition of Iraqis against the migration-governance applied to them, the following paragraphs describe a visit to a UNHCR processing centre.[352] At this centre, where a number of administrative and bureaucratic procedures concerning UNHCR's Iraq programme were undertaken, every Tuesday Iraqis could ask about the status of their resettlement file. One day, a young Iraqi woman and I visited the centre together to enquire whether there was any news about her file. As we were aware that there would be hundreds of other people approaching the centre that day, we prepared for a long wait and arrived at around 7:30 am, when there were already 200-300 people standing in front of the centre, a relatively make-shift building constructed from plywood and metal containers. As the hours wore on and the heat increased, with no shelter or sitting area provided, some women around us began to become restless.[353] Since the early morning, a UNHCR employee, a young Syrian man, had been acting as a form of crowd-controller. At first, he had handed out paper slips with numbers that allocated a place in the queue. As the day wore on, he became more and more aggressive and agitated in his announcements and attempts to convince people without numbers to return home.

The longer we waited and the hotter it became, the more anxious and unhappy the

---

[352] This episode is also briefly discussed in chapter four.
[353] The waiting crowd of perhaps 600 people was separated into men and women; both groups had a separate entry. It was notable that the men were processed much faster, possibly due to a greater fear that men would not meekly accept the bad conditions and the hours-long wait.

slowly diminishing crowd of women became. We had now been shouted at several times by the UNHCR employee, who would appear about every 45 minutes to let the next set of people (*"All numbers below 160 please step forward!"*) into the building. Several times he had angrily shouted that people without a number should not wait but go home, that people from areas other than Damascus were not going to be served here, and that there were *"NO MORE NUMBERS!"* today and so forth. He was looking harassed, even though the crowd was relatively calm. We were noticing that the men were being processed faster; despite there having been many more men than women at the beginning of the day, at the end, the last hour perhaps, there were only women left. I wondered whether the men were being processed faster because they were assumed to become aggressive more quickly in protest against the wait and bad treatment.

The sun was getting hotter and more signs of exhaustion appeared in the crowd. One woman was sitting on a single plastic chair with her handbag over her head to shield against the burning sun. Then an old woman in a black abaya started becoming anrgy about not being able to stand in the sun any longer, saying loudly to the UNHCR man that this was not an appropriate treatment and adding *"We are not Jews!"* which made my friend laugh. After the UNHCR guy had argued with her and she kept shouting, a Syrian soldier dressed in uniform and carrying a gun, who had already intervened a couple of times when minor scuffles had broken out, walked up to the old woman and quite rudely told her to calm down, which she eventually did, still standing in the sun. I was struck by the fact that neither the UNHCR employee, nor the guards, nor the soldier, suggested any way of alleviating her pain, or offered to bring her a chair from inside the building, or some water or any form of assistance. The soldier's appearance sorted things out. A related, memorable instance was a calm discussion between the soldier and a woman in which I just overheard him saying *"You don't have a residence permit?"* and saw the woman talking to him in a calming-down, sycophantic manner. The effect of this discussion was that the bystanders, who had been pressing down on the entrance, moved away (me included) to avoid the soldier and the discussion.

Unlike the previous episodes, this visit to the UNHCR site described a very visible experience of exclusion, and of boundaries being forced into the lives of Iraqis in Syria. It also instructed about the ultimate violence and force that backed up these

boundaries, which taught Iraqis that they were sovereignty-less and without a government-protector. The attempts by waiting Iraqi women to complain against the treatment handed out to them by UNHCR, were noteworthy as they voiced disagreement with the actual rules of the UNHCR's game. In this way they qualitatively differed from attempts to defraud UNHCR (discussed below), which were rather efforts to manipulate the rules in one's favour. Yet the complaints observed during the long wait were perhaps chiefly striking for their weakness. Despite the considerable discomfort of an hours-long wait, standing in the sun without water or shade, hardly any signals were made to the UNHCR clerk that the women had had enough or demanded help.

Throughout its rhetoric, the UNHCR described Iraqi refugees as innocent victims in need of help, and described itself as the agency in charge of delivering compassionate assistance. This rhetoric suggested that the agency was Iraqi refugees' interim protector to ensure that the citizenship rights of sovereignty-less refugees would be met. Yet the treatment experienced while attempting to access a service (resettlement enquiries) that the UNHCR had created on its own volition, enforced more than any other situation that I observed in Syria the impression that Iraqis were not sovereign subjects but non-sovereign lives under the power of whichever agency interested in governing them. Given this discrepancy, much more protest than feeble complaints described above could have been expected. The weakness of the protests could clearly be explained in reference to the Syrian context, and the manner in which the UNHCR relied on Syrian internal security forces to regulate and quell any visible complaints, as was demonstrated by the intervention of the Syrian soldier. Iraqis knew that any form of vocal complaining could land them in hot water with Syrian authorities, who would not tolerate any form or sign of unrest or social instability and would come down hard on any person involved. The fact that even the complaints of an old woman in her 70s, who raised her voice after hours in the heat, were not treated with compassion but provoked the intervention of a security guard, showed how delicate the situation was. In Syria, where elderly persons were generally treated with particular respect, the incident was doubly remarkable, and showed the reaction when 'elderly persons at risk', in UNHCR parlance, strayed from their assigned post of meek victim to a demander of rights. The convergence of UNHCR bureaucracy and Syrian state violence in the disciplining of potentially unruly Iraqis once more showed

how the conventional dichotomy of authoritarian and liberal power was blurred in practice, and highlighted the violence that ultimately backed up liberal forms of power when they were put to the test.

The above discussed episodes only show a small selection from numerous observations of Iraqi contestation and protests, which albeit remained generally small-scale, private and under the radar. Other minor and major contestations included, for example, the ad-busting of the UNHCR's logo, which shows two hands shielding a sexless human figure, by an Iraqi friend. He digitally manipulated the logo so that the two hands opened and left the figure unguarded. Another interlocutor, a gay Iraqi man in his early 40s, openly attracted attention through his highly camp wardrobe and mannerisms, in this way contesting a whole host of dominant notions applied to him as an Iraqi migrant man in Syria. The students at ISP engaged in innumerable acts of small and larger protests, whether it concerned deliberately crossing set-in-stone rules when the directors were not looking, or eloquently voicing disagreements with the NGO's principles and base-line assumptions. The broad lesson that could be gleaned from these observations, in addition to the theoretical questions of power and sovereignty, was that migrant-governance emerged out of a thick, and dynamic, interaction between actors mobilizing their power to influence each other. This power could lie in expensive bureaucratic structures and assumptions about the other as powerless, or in the ability to manipulate these assumptions and contradict them. Yet it was only from the interaction of people and their different ways of influencing each others' actions that the overall 'power' or effect of power appeared.

Deception and disobedience

The following, last section of this chapter focuses on episodes in which Iraqi migrants applied various forms of trickery and deception to undermine and manipulate the governance applied to them by various actors in Syria. In the UK (as in other European countries), migrants are often negatively stereotyped as fraudsters and cheats, who misrepresent their situation to selfishly obtain benefits and residency permits. It is not at all my intention to support this blanket, and often racist, assumption about migrants, which I firmly reject. The following analysis of how deception formed part of power relations related to state sovereignty is not aimed at creating any form of moral judgement over those who consciously deceived. The

power and assumptions found in humanitarian programs aimed at Iraqis themselves also contained, in a less visible way, deceptions and lies about these programmes' links to vested interests that had little to do with Iraqi welfare. From this perspective, it appeared as a hardly avoidable outcome that the interactions between Iraqis and humanitarian actors were riddled with half truths and misrepresentations.

One early, dark and rainy evening in January 2010, I was riding a public minibus in central Damascus together with one of my Iraqi friends, a young woman called Karima.[354] We were both on our way home from the flat of the NGO Iraqi Student Project (ISP), where I had taught a seminar to a group of Iraqi students. As we chatted, squeezed into the backseat of the *serviis*, Karima's mobile rang. She took the mobile from her bag, looked at it, sighed, and obviously did not want to answer. She said: *"It's the UN, but they are calling for my aunt, she gave them my number. I don't want to answer them."* She explained that her aunt had gone to Baghdad after her three-month residency in Syria had expired, and that she had given Karima's number to the UNHCR in case they would call. *"I don't want to answer because I don't want to lie to them"*, Karima said. I asked whether the UNHCR were not allowed to know about her aunt's expired residency, but Karima explained that it had to do with another matter.

Her aunt, who had obtained her three-month residency for health reasons, did not want to obtain a residency permit through UNHCR, as she wanted to return to Iraq regularly. Obtaining a permit via the UNHCR protection paper included a stamp into the passport stating that a return to Iraq was not possible, as one was supposedly threatened in Iraq. Karima said: *"She has her daughter there* [in Baghdad], *and also she and her husband worked and now they are retired so they receive a pension, which she wants to collect."* Karima added that her aunt did not want to tell the UNHCR that she was in Baghdad because before, when the aunt had staid in Syria, she had received money from the UNHCR: *"They were old, so they received money"*, Karima said, adding *"yes, they were greedy, you don't want to be a relative of people like that, they took everything they could get, even the food, they received food and*

---

[354] The names of most interlocutors have been changed.

money from the UN when they were here and then they lived off this money and did not spend their pension, they were here and spent this money on touristy things."[355]

Karima's mobile rang again; this time she answered. I heard her explain that there were two numbers for the person the caller was looking for; that this was Karima's number, which had been provided when the other person did not have a phone. She said that she did not know what was going on with that person and that anyway she did not have a clue. Then she hung up. Karima had been speaking quite fast and slightly grumpily, it was clear to me that she did not enjoy doing this and that she was annoyed with her aunt for putting her into this situation. Nevertheless, she told me very freely about the cheating committed by her aunt (although once we left the *serviis*, it was also clear to me that she did not want the other friends who were this us to hear about it, as we changed the topic).

In the backseat, Karima continued talking about her aunt: *"Then one day the UNHCR called and said that my aunt had received resettlement to Sweden."* I exclaimed: *"Wow, so they got what everyone wants!"* and Karima said *"Yes, what everyone wants."* I asked why her aunt had been selected, and Karima said that she had no idea and that she also did not understand why they were selected, as her aunt and uncle were old and had very good lives in Baghdad, collecting USD 1500 in retirement money and living in a big house in a good neighbourhood and that they were safe, as they had had no association with the military or the former government. *"They are having the life that we used to have in Baghdad, they used to be our neighbours and they live in a good neighbourhood. The money they collect is really good. Other people are in a much worse situation."* She explained that her father had been a pilot in the military, and therefore had been in a very bad security situation after the war. (I later learned that her father had disappeared, in all likelihood killed by militants due to his association with the former government's army). Karima expressed a lack of understanding that her aunt and uncle were selected despite their age. *"He is so old, over 70. They should send people who can still make something out of their life. Why do they want to start a completely new life in Sweden, with a new language, a new everything? They are old."*

---

[355] This section based on Fieldnote 190110.

This episode summarises several complex layers of deception, misunderstanding and disagreement in the relationship between Karima, her aunt and the UNHCR. Its emphasis lies on the aunt's successful manipulation of the UNHCR's humanitarian 'priority profiles' (which included the category 'older person at risk'), to her and her husband's benefit. The deception, which presumably involved hiding from UNHCR clerks the facts of her pension and property in Baghdad, and her frequent return-trips to the city, not only resulted in cash benefits paid out in Syria, but also to a resettlement ticket to Sweden, which would include additional benefit payments from the Swedish state. More importantly for our analysis, Karima's aunt's deception resulted in a failure of the UNHCR's stated goal to resettle only those refugees with the greatest needs, for whom integration or return was permanently impossible. Not only was return to Iraq an evident option for the aunt, but her state-pension and trouble-free travel powerfully dispelled UNHCR's construction of a refugee as a 'sovereignty-less' person, a person without the protection of a state. Clearly the aunt had a stable, and at least partly positive relationship with the Iraqi state. Through the aunt's deceit, the effect of the UNHCR's intervention on Iraqi daily life was turned into something completely different than what was portrayed in the UNHCR's publications; the organisation's powerful constructions about Iraqis' 'needs' were revealed as mythical, or at least badly implemented. Further, the image of UNHCR as an all-knowing, fair, quasi-sovereign was shattered.

While Karima disapproved of her aunt's behaviour, which she characterised as 'greedy', she also criticised the UNHCR's role and selection process that enabled her aunt to magnify her deceit from cash support to receiving resettlement. Echoing the opinions of several observers I encountered during field research, Karima disagreed with the UNHCR's focus on vulnerabilities, which selected people with few skills and opportunities for a life abroad. The selection was considered as illogical and unfair, not only resettling people who might in fact be better off remaining in Syria, as they lacked the skills to succeed in a foreign environment, but also depriving those who could indeed make the most of resettlement of a chance to begin a new life abroad. Instead of achieving the image of a compassionate and generous protector, the UNHCR appeared as an illogical, unfair, unpredictable and random patron-sovereign, who was not using available resources in the best possible way. Karima also drew attention to the potentially fatal effect of the UNHCR's political preferences in

choosing beneficiaries. Pointing out her aunt's relatively secure situation, Karima compared it with the heightened danger that her father had found himself in, due to his position as a retired pilot in Iraq's former army. Karima's father's association with the army had not only been a prime reason for her family's near-immediate flight to Syria after the invasion in 2003, but had, in all likelihood, also resulted in his murder on the border between Iraq and Syria, where militias maintained blacklists of former officers. As discussed in chapter four, the UNHCR's programmes explicitly excluded persons associated with the former regime, who were suspected of having participated in war crimes or crimes against humanity. This essentially political choice was lost on Karima, who as a consequence perceived UNHCR criteria not as focused on the most vulnerable and endangered refugees, but as incomprehensible and strange. Yet the actual, quasi-sovereign right of UNHCR to categorize and select Iraqis, and decide, via resettlement, on their location and citizenship, was not questioned. As most interlocutors, she accepted UNHCR as a power-that-is, without wondering about the organisation's legitimacy or raison d'être, indicating a relationship to government and authority not shaped by ideas and expectations of representation, but of unpredictability and beyond influence.

Karima, who had a great sense of humour, was also a good source on the ways in which the students participating in the ISP programme sought to undermine or contradict the heavy, quasi-parental authority that the ISP's directors (a husband and wife team called Gabe and Theresa) attempted to extend over them. The ISP environment was governed by certain rules, which were displayed on posters around the apartment, admonishing students to be on time, not hang around outside the entrance to avoid attention, to listen attentively to fellow students and so forth. In particular Theresa tried to impress certain values and ideas, one of which was her strong dislike of any romantic attachments by the students, which in her view would impede studies and should wait for later. Nevertheless, as the following extracts show, behind the director's backs, crushes and erotic tensions were a constant, and popular theme among the 'ISP kids'. These tensions may not show an obvious link to constructions of state sovereignty. Yet as the power over the Iraqi students that Gabe and Theresa were able to obtain was closely linked to they way sovereignty awarded more or less powerful positions to people according to their citizenship (see chapter six), it was noteworthy to observe how the students sought to undermine this power in

the most minimal way, which allowed them to maintain small spaces of freedom and independence from the ISP directors' overwhelming presence in their lives. As described in chapter six, several times the ISP directors expelled students from the programme for unclear, and minor digressions of the rules, creating fear and insecurity among the students. Even little misdemeanours, or simple expressions that one might not agree with the director's prescriptions, where therefore considered risky; a further reason why any mocking or disobedience had to be kept strictly secret. In this sense, the strategy to (secretly) emphasize activities that the directors' strongly disapproved of showed an example of how even the smallest areas of life could become arenas in which applications of power, linked to sovereign constructions, were contested.

One weekend afternoon I had invited a group of friends for a late biryani lunch to the flat I shared with another student. Karima also joined, and at some point we began chatting about ISP. Somehow we started chatting about Ian, one of the former volunteer teachers who spent around two years with ISP, and who had recently travelled back to the UK. I said that he had told me he was travelling to Sweden, because after all that was where his fiancée lived, who, scandalously, was a former ISP student. I said this with a grin, to inform Karima that I knew about this controversial and slightly taboo story. Karima laughed and said that he had told the directors that he was going to the UK, but that he probably lied and was in fact in Sweden. In the next couple of minutes we filled each other in about how much we knew about the incident, Karima confirming that Ian had said that he had immediately fallen in love with the girl, who was later resettled to Sweden. We both giggled and smiled throughout this conversation, aware that it was a 'naughty' thing that Ian had done, as a romance between a foreign ISP teacher and an ISP student was even worse that a regular romantic attachment an ISP student may have. It was clearly something that the directors were not happy about, especially as only Iraqi students without a chance of getting resettled were supposed to join the programme. I also said that I had been told that Ian had converted to Islam and Karima then added that ah, maybe that was why he had always asked them things about Islam, like how one prayed and things like this (again smiles and giggles).

Karima then started talking about erotic tension between the volunteer teachers and ISP students, asking whether I knew who Andrew was, one of the teachers, with

slightly red hair, who was quite good looking. She said that when he first started teaching, all the girls were fancying him: *"You know how Shiriin and Rana are, they really liked him – but even I liked him!"* It had then had come as a huge disappointment, when in the second or third week, he had mentioned that his girlfriend or fiancée was coming to visit. Karima – for comic effect – sighed dramatically, grimaced and repeated how all the girls had been disappointed when he said that (indirectly of course pointing out the hope/dream/fantasy that they must have had about themselves becoming his girlfriend). Karima carried on talking about a new female teacher called Seema, saying that she was very attractive and that the boys all thought that she was good looking. The director Theresa had told the young men in advance: *"There is this new teacher, Seema, she is very good looking, but don't look at her like that!"* Karima repeated this at least twice, raising her voice in a strict tone to mimic Theresa, saying that Theresa had repeated *"but don't look at her like that!".* I answered that this was a silly move, because it would get everyone even more curious and excited about the new teacher, to which Karima replied *"Of course!".* In fact, she added, after that episode, fellow-student Hamud had said that he now was already in love with Seema, even though he had never met her! I then asked whether all the ISP students were single and didn't get a straight answer out of her, her answer was like this: *"No, no, they are seeing people. Theresa always says to us 'Don't see anyone, don't have a boyfriend, don't get married before finishing your studies', but no one can do that…four years in college…how can you…".* [356]

These undercurrents, which were kept strictly secret from the ISP directors by talking about them in Arabic and out of class, could be read as small attempts to weaken the overwhelming and decisive power that the directors wielded over the students' future. Such expressions of opposition to the directors' vision of how Iraqi students should and could achieve a good and successful life, revealed the power structures inherent in the presumed liberating and self-less NGO programme. They showed that rather than fostering an atmosphere of truthful, trusting learning and intellectual growth, the ISP programme attempted to shape the participants according to very narrow ideas of what constituted acceptable behaviour. While these observations did not teach immediate insights into questions of sovereignty, they highlighted the intense power

---

[356] Field note 230110

relations contained in humanitarian aid projects, and how power was contained in well-intentioned ideas and imaginations.

Employees of humanitarian organisations were aware of the deception attempted by some Iraqis. One afternoon I was having coffee at the house of a Syrian friend who had worked at the IOM for several months, dealing directly with Iraqi resettlement cases. My friend's aunt (here referred to as 'GA'), who volunteered at a small, Syrian charity working with Iraqis, was also present. GA had taken the post of volunteer (which awarded a small stipend), after she was suddenly fired from her previous job in the public sector, in retribution against her husband's human rights' work (her husband, a human rights lawyer, was at the time of the interview serving a three-year prison sentence). GA started talking about her work, immediately mentioning that there were a lot of problems and a lot of corruption. She claimed that Iraqis engaged in false and corrupt behaviour in order to obtain aid. She described how since the UNHCR started providing money to women whose husbands had been killed, married Iraqi women with children moved to Syria with fake death certificates for their husbands, to claim the aid. While the husband continued working in Iraq, the woman claimed the extra money in Syria. GA's eyes were wide open when talking about this and she was relatively animated. Her outrage about this behaviour appeared moderate to me, it was more a description of facts about life, rather than an angry rant. *"There are lots of problems"* she said repeatedly. GA added that once the nuns started providing aid in Masakin Barza (an area of Damascus), Iraqis from all over the city start going there to claim aid. Another scam that she described related to UNHCR aid provided to victims of domestic violence, in which women came and claimed that their husbands beat and abused them, even if this was not the case.[357]

Another perspective on apparent fraudulent behaviour was offered by a UNHCR official, who during an interview highlighted how the organisation was highly sensitive to a perceived, constant threat of fraud on behalf of Iraqis, and how bureaucratic structures were put in place to minimize the perceived danger of cheating. He explained:

> *At the same time exactly because there is such a high number, we have to ensure that there is enough control measures to exclude possibilities of fraud. Because*

---

[357] Fieldnote 091009

like I said, exactly because these people are so desperate, there could be a lot of potential fraud attempts. And this ranges from, you know, identity fraud, people coming up with stories that have never happened, people coming up with fake children or family members that have died, which they said made them leave the country, people coming up with a lot of false documents and also attempts to contact various people in UNHCR, in IOM, outside, in government bodies, in immigration departments for example, and offering bribes. And I can relate to that, I can understand where that desire comes from, because for each of these refugees ... every time on Tuesdays, I'm there every day and it's very interesting because it helps you get the vibe of what's the feeling among the community, you will have a lot of people telling you 'I am the most deserving'. And you can understand why they are saying that. (...)

Now the way resettlement works here, is again one measure to exclude fraud. The resettlement unit is quite big, it's about 60 people and we don't do self-referrals. So we don't select which cases we are going to look at. We get these cases preselected by other units of UNHCR. So we have this first step done by other units, so that offers us a degree of protection. (...)

We have a scheduling team. The scheduling team randomizes the selection of case workers and interpreters for particular cases, which again excludes any possibilities for the interpretation team to decide which case should go, and decide who should deal with that. So that also does not happen. Then the case worker is selected randomly, the interview is conducted, after the interview the case worker recommends to the seniors, not a decision but a recommendation, whether this case should go ahead with resettlement or not. If that recommendation is approved then the case will be sent to our regional hub. The regional hub in Beirut then does another check of the case and then the case is submitted to the resettlement country.[358]

In this account, the Iraqi population does not appear any longer as the downtrodden and traumatised community that is presented in NGO and UN publications, and media reports. Instead, Iraqis are described as a population that is mischievous and treacherous, which had to be kept under strict disciplinary control so as not to

---

[358] Interview UNHCR official, 21.01.2010

undermine the supposed fairness of the systematic delivery of humanitarianism. These extracts highlighted once again the disciplinary element contained in the aid bureaucracy, and the expectations about the attitudes and behaviours that beneficiaries should display. The turn towards increasingly draconian measures to discipline and enforce humanitarian bureaucracy has been documented since the earliest days of humanitarian activity in the Middle East.[359]

Relating these observations to questions of sovereignty, it became clear that Iraqi deception also posed an important dilemma for UNHCR's primary, sovereign logic, on which its interventions in refugee lives were based. Iraqis' fraud attempts not only dispelled the fiction of a partnership of solidarity between humanitarians and beneficiaries, but also undermined the idea that Iraqis could become sovereign citizens, who understood their relationship to government as one of rights and duties, in which the government was understood as a part of the population via representation. If Iraqis would lie to the UNHCR, who was acting as their care-taker sovereign as long as they were left without any other sovereign protector, how could they hold the potential to become honest citizens on whichever foreign territory that would eventually offer them a 'durable solution'? Iraqi deception undermined a whole host of humanitarian fictions about refugee-hood, which were linked to modern sovereignty, and upon which the humanitarian edifice rested.

In this regard it was interesting to compare the way the Syrian volunteer GA spoke about Iraqi deception, with the descriptions given by the interviewed UNHCR official. GA spoke about the various scams she had witnessed quite neutrally, but still with a degree of disgust and rejection. She clearly did not consider the Iraqis' behaviour as particularly surprising, yet judged it morally and broadly as a human failure. Her narrative was unsympathetic to Iraqis, whose image emerged as unpleasant and deceitful, especially as they were, in her view and in summary, stealing from nuns and volunteers. The UNHCR manager on the other hand immediately offered an explanation of Iraqi behaviour that fitted into the humanitarian narrative: Iraqis deceived, because they were desperate. Going further, and presenting an image of fundamental similarity and solidarity between him and the Iraqi 'beneficiaries', he stated that he understood Iraqis' behaviour, adding that he

---

[359] Ilana Feldman, "The Quaker Way: Ethical labor and humanitarian relief," *American Ethnologist* 34, no. 4 (2007).

would be acting in the same way if he were in their situation. Instead of engaging in moral judgement, the UNHCR management used apparently neutral, technical solution to the rationally understandable, but problematic Iraqi deception. Education through leaflets and explanations during appointments, discipline and bureaucratic control-measures were devised to minimise the opportunities and possibilities that Iraqis might engage in fraud. But evidently, UNHCR also had to keep this aspect of Iraqi behaviour under wraps: nowhere in any UNHCR publication on Iraqi refugees was the problem of frauds, lies and deceit discussed, even though it was clearly a major concern that had led to operational restructuring, as well as to mistakes in selection procedures. Manipulation, secrecy and deceit were thus a significant feature in the daily-life encounters between Iraqis in Syria and humanitarian governance. These moments formed part of the emerging governance and management of Iraqi migration. As Iraqis tried to manipulate and deflect humanitarian governance and power, organisations reacted with bureaucratic changes, further education or sanctions aimed at making Iraqis conform with humanitarian ideas and rules.

Conclusion

If all people who I encountered during fieldwork were difficult to categorize, the Iraqi interlocutors that I sought out were even more so. This group of around 50 men, women and children came from very different backgrounds, pursued different lifestyles and had wildly different personalities. Considering this diversity it appeared meaningless to attempt to analyse this group according to standard categories such as gender or wealth; rather my research soon began to focus on how interlocutors dealt with the condition they all shared, that of being exiled or migrants in Syria. This shared condition placed all interlocutors into the focus of sovereignty-constructing power, which was applied to them by various institutions and organisations. How interlocutors reacted to this power, how they conformed to, contested and disputed it in the day-to-day was the focus of this chapter. These interactions on the one hand demonstrated the effects of sovereignty-constructing power on intimate aspects of Iraqi lives, but on the other also showed the limits of this power, which appeared whenever Iraqis' words and actions contradicted or undermined it. As the observations and analyses of this chapter showed, such undermining took place in direct and indirect ways. Directly, when Iraqis engages in behaviour and voiced opinions that weakened and criticised fundamental notions or routines demanded

from them by state and non-state agents. Indirectly, when such non-conforming behaviour forced ostensibly liberal agents of power to reveal the violence that ultimately backed up their non-violent techniques of bureaucracy and service-provision. Such momentary destruction of the self-image and self-portrayal of humanitarian agents shattered their portrayal as a meek protector of right-less Iraqis, and instead revealed their connection to and application of a certain understanding of sovereignty, in which Iraqis in fact where not holders of sovereign right, but non-sovereign lives over which these humanitarian agents could claim control.

Iraqis' reactions to the bureaucratic, biopolitical and violent forms of power focused on their lives were individual, rather than organised. They arose mostly out of 'instinctive' frustrations and rejections of daily-life experiences with sovereignty-constructing power, rather than conscious efforts to weaken or change such power. These individualised reactions could be in part explained with the individualised nature of many of the biopolitical techniques of power highlighted in this chapter, which targeted Iraqis very specifically according to their particular situation (demonstrating one of the benefits of such techniques, which, in the absence of collectivity, are much more difficult to reveal as power, and are much harder to resist). The absence of organised responses was also connected to the Syrian context, in which any form of social organisation was a likely target for government suppression. But beyond these contextual insights, this observation contains important methodological and theoretical implications and emphasises how power that is diffused through daily-life is met with what James Scott perhaps first referred to as everyday strategies of resistance. While Iraqis' everyday strategies may not have had the potential to overturn orders of rule, their observation and analyses were nevertheless important to understand where the limits of sovereignty-constructions lay. The ethnographic approach of this thesis played a key role in making these strategies visible, which may have easily been missed by other research methods focussing only on documents or interviews.

Reflecting this importance of ethnography, this chapter's structure and writing style differs from previous chapters in the way that pride of place is given to extracts from field notes and interviews, which present a variety of interlocutors' perspectives and opinions. By grouping observations according to three themes, (1) conformity, (2) contestation and (3) deception, arguments were presented about how Iraqis related to

humanitarian and state governance, and to the way that state sovereignty was produced by governing institutions.

The first theme, conformity, highlighted a case in which an Iraqi man was informed during the resettlement process that his poor health, due to overweight and smoking, was problematic. Each resettlement case required a sponsor in the US; if there were no relatives or friends, a case would be assigned to a charity or migrant-support group. Yet no organisation was willing to accept persons with potentially expensive health risks, as such costs might have to be covered by the sponsor. In response to the negative result of the health check, the Iraqi man in question began a regime of exercise and stopped smoking, with the result that after one year, he successfully passed the resettlement health check, and his case, which also involved his wife and children, was able to proceed. A second example of how Iraqis conformed with migrant-governance concerned the story of an Iraqi friend hoping to be hired as a waiter, and the requirement to obtain an official residency permit from Syrian state authorities for this job. After not planning on renewing his residency for a few months, the friend decided to renew it immediately, in order to be able to work. Both events were characterised by an interesting conversion of disciplinary measures and laissez-faire conditions shaping Iraqi life: both men could have chosen not to be resettled, or not to take a job, yet when opting to do so, a set of controls had to be obliged with. Further, the examples emphasised that local manifestations of state sovereignty could differ in terms of the type of power through which they were maintained. In the case of the man requiring a new permit, the fact that his permit had expired did not register with Syrian state institutions, but was pointed out and enforced by a private business man.

Contestation, the second theme of the chapter, collected several observations in which Iraqi interlocutors directly contradicted or disputed aspects of how they were governed as migrants in Syria. Specifically, these observations focussed on moments in which interlocutors voiced criticisms about ideas or concepts that related to the sovereign ideal or other sovereignty-related constructions. In particular, two discussions during a seminar with a group of Iraqi students were illuminating. When, on one occasion, students were prompted to consider their national identity, very different positions on the question of 'being Iraqi' emerged. In particular, one young woman held a minority position by contesting the necessity to identify with one's

hereditary nation, in this way disagreeing with one of the most fundamental assumptions of state sovereignty. During a second discussion, the students surprised my own assumptions and projections about them, highlighting that the positionality of researcher and interlocutors might not be the same.

Finally, the third theme, deception, emerged as an important topic in interlocutors' relationship with the UNHCR; frequently interlocutors complained about the way people misrepresented facts during UNHCR interviews, or reported themselves about fraudulent portrayals of heightened suffering that were considered as upping one's chances with the agency. The UNHCR in turn had put in place bureaucratic procedures such as randomization and double-checks to prevent fraud; in an interview a UNHCR manager spoke at considerable length about these concerns. In another relevant instance, Iraqi students participating in an NGO programme secretly contravened the rules and ideas set up by the NGO's directors. While outwardly pretending to agree and live by these rules, behind the directors' backs students frequently engaged in behaviour they knew was considered undesirable. These two examples showed ways in which Iraqis manipulated and played with humanitarian forms of governance employed by UNHCR and NGOs. In the case of the UNHCR, deceptive Iraqi agency also undermined the organisation's portrayal of Iraqis as meek, would-be citizens, who were seeking to become responsible and productive subjects. Further, it showed that Iraqis did not concur with, or were even aware of, these UNHCR's constructions, and instead considered the UNHCR as an often unfair and unpredictable patron-sovereign, who did not use resources particularly wisely or logically.

This chapter only presented a small selection from a wider pool of observations and quotes in which interlocutors critically or humorously undermined different forms of power applied to them. The overall governance of Iraqi migration to Syria emerged from this interplay of regulation, contestation and violence in the human encounters at UNHCR centres, Syrian state offices and NGO projects. Power was located in different locations and resources: in humanitarian bureaucracies and money, in the ability to manipulate or conform, in state repression and control. The interactions in this field of migration management were infused with constructions of state sovereignty, as ideas about migration, territory and nationhood led to shifting boundaries and exclusions for Iraqis in their lives in Syria. The fusion of the different

manifestations of sovereignty of the Syrian state, the humanitarian sector and Iraqis themselves ultimately led to the local form of state sovereignty as experienced by Iraqi migrants in Syria at the time of field research.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

When trying to explain a puzzling event in international politics through academic enquiry, one may quickly discover the limits of academic disciplines. The complexity of phenomena that occur inside, on and outside of national boundaries cannot be approached via one discipline alone. Similarly, the connection between the mundane and exceptional life-experiences of human beings, generally the subject of anthropological enquiry, and broader theories that attempt to explain patterns of behaviour across the globe, generally the focus of IR, is not frequently made within one academic discipline. The phenomenon of state sovereignty, which has been the focus of this thesis, is one such puzzling event that straddles disciplinary divides.

This thesis has drawn on a range of academic traditions to explain the manifestations of state sovereignty in a particular context: that of Iraqi migration to Syria. Most academic writing on state sovereignty attempts to explain it as an independent source, location or moment of absolute power. This thesis argues that this approach is methodologically and theoretically misguided, as it remains within the logic of sovereignty and therefore cannot explain its occurrence. In other words, such writings fail to enquire about the historical and social developments and constellations that enable the belief in and manifestation of the state as the ultimate source and arbiter of power in a territorially limited population. Instead they accept this belief and situation as given and simply search within them for a yard-stick that can allow academics to recognise the limits or actions of sovereignty's power.

This thesis has instead approached state sovereignty as a particular and historically contingent form of social organisation and behaviour, which produces the state as the location of sovereignty, as well as the belief in and exercise of sovereignty as such. Today, state sovereignty is the hegemonic way of thinking about how to organise human society across the globe. This hegemony is based on the one hand on a powerful, conceptual ideal of sovereignty, as visually captured by political maps of

the world or the set-up of the UN General Assembly, in which each state consists of a unified, defined territory, a homogeneous, national population, and a government that represents this territory and population. This ideal is closely bound up with powerful ideas about what constitutes political life and what constitutes good politics. On the other hand, the actual lived experience of state sovereignty is enforced and produced in a large variety of local contexts, which stand in various relationships to the ideal of sovereignty. In these local contexts, state sovereignty emerges as a necessarily 'messy' and complex lived experience, in which differing techniques of power, forms of population management and governance create the dominance of the state.

An important point for the arguments of this thesis is that the division of global space into domestic and international spheres of action is itself an effect of the hegemony of state sovereignty's social organisation. To understand this division as such an effect, it is necessary to analyse how different forms of behaviour are understood by humans to signify domestic and international space, and how, for example, complex bureaucratic routines teach humans about this division. The famous 'inside/outside' divide upon which sovereignty rests is created through daily-life human performance, habits, requirements and violence. Human beings learn to identify geographic locations as domestic or international through the practices that state sovereignty's social organisation requires from them.

The increase in Iraqi migration to Syria in the aftermath of the catastrophic, US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, quickly became an international political phenomenon involving the Syrian state and its neighbours, the international humanitarian sector and its North Atlantic funders, and of course a minimum of several hundred thousand Iraqi migrants. The management of migration by international and domestic political institutions has been widely recognised as closely related to state sovereignty, both in terms of its ideal and its local manifestation. Large-scale migration undermines the notion of the assumed-natural unity of territory, population and government and often results from a situation that is paradoxical from the perspective of the sovereign ideal, in which a government is not protecting, but persecuting the people living on its territory. The creation of international refugee-law and the UN's High Commissioner for Refugees thus came as a necessary afterthought in the 1950s, when it was realised that the firming up of state borders into self-determined entities did not result in

islands of peace, but often in large-scale displacement. The UNHCR treaties sit like a patch on international law, to fix a problem that had not been envisaged by the architects of the post Second World-War order.

The importance of strangers who can be continuously identified as outsiders and excluded from the domestic order has also been widely recognised as a crucial element in the maintenance of the domestic sovereign order. To maintain the fiction *and* lived reality of a territorially and nationally delimited state, all states operate some form of migration control. The orderly management of migration performs a state's control over its territory and population, while chaotic refugee camps and large numbers of un-managed migrants signify a state's loss of control and beckon international, humanitarian intervention. Large-scale migrations are frequently portrayed in international and domestic rhetoric as threats to international peace and security, and wealthy states mobilise extraordinary resources and violence to control migrants' bodies and agency.

The involvement of a number of different, domestic and international, powerful actors in the management of Iraqi mass-migration to Syria therefore presented a highly relevant and interesting opportunity to study how this management contributed to the maintenance of state sovereignty, both on the conceptual and physical level. One of the key findings of this thesis is that indeed all actors examined – the Syrian state, humanitarian agencies and foreign states – required some form of behaviour from Iraqis that marked them as different from people holding Syrian passports (or, in the case of onward migration, other nationals). Either through simple bureaucratic routine or more elaborate confessions of suffering and fear, Iraqi were forced by all 'managing partners' to perform their exclusion from the Syrian nation and territory at some point. Yet interestingly, the degree and intensity of the performances required by different actors strongly varied and made use of different techniques of enforcement and power. A detailed analysis and interpretation of these differences found that they were related to the different way in which these different actors enforced and produced state sovereignty, which was ultimately related to the different degrees of importance and truth they awarded to the sovereign ideal.

In terms of this thesis' location within an academic literature and its specific

contribution to this literature, its critical analyses of sovereignty as an experience of daily-life encounters most closely places it within the sub-discipline of critical, post-structuralist IR writing. This field has produced a significant body of work that interrogates the production of the social and spatial dimensions of sovereignty, often drawing on a Foucauldian tradition to examine the 'micro-capilleries' of power through which these dimensions are constructed. The daily-life aspect of power, through which sovereignty is produced, is, has been increasingly recognised and reflected by critical IR scholars, who also draw on insights from anthropology for their approaches.

The production of 'outsiders' – be it to the nation, the national territory or other sovereign categories – is, within this literature, an established element of sovereignty and frequently, critical IR scholars' works investigate the situation of migrants and refugees in the sovereign edifice. This thesis' mobilisation of Iraqi migration to Syria as a context to investigate the production of sovereignty thus fits well into this field.

With regards to this thesis' contribution to the field of critical IR, its key strength lies in the detailed ethnographic data that is convincingly used to demonstrate the workings of sovereignty-producing power in daily life. While critical IR scholars often draw on elements of ethnographic and other empirical research to back-up and emphasise their theoretical arguments, more large-scale ethnographic studies, which are fully embedded into a critical IR framework are relatively rare. Further, this thesis' mobilisation of strong regional and country-specific knowledge, including local language skills and long-term residency in the country of research, make it a particularly rich and useful application of a critical IR approach.

After an introductory chapter that reviewed the sovereignty-related, academic literature on which this thesis is based, the second chapter provided an overview of the physical and social research setting in Damascus, the research methods, and a first analysis of how the Syrian government governed non-Syrian populations living in the capital city. Chapter two also provides first insights into how the Syrian government, to construct the Syrian state's domestic sovereignty, intervened in areas of daily-life (such as the visual space in different neighbourhoods) to manage different population groups categorised as strangers.

Chapter three focused in greater detail on the Syrian state and its management of Iraqi migrants. The key finding of this chapter was that while in international interactions, i.e. at international conferences abroad or in exchanges with UN or foreign audiences, Syrian government representatives performed the Syrian state's sovereignty according to the sovereign ideal, the management of Iraqis in the domestic setting reflected this ideal only weakly. Contrary to expectations based on the sovereign ideal, Syrian state institutions distinguished only weakly between Iraqis and people with Syrian documents. To explain these weak state-mechanisms of exclusion of Iraqis from the Syrian body politic by the Syrian government, this thesis argued that the way the Syrian government produced the Syrian state's domestic sovereignty was based on different social and political relations than those stipulated by the sovereign ideal. Rather than rely on intricate bureaucratic routines whose set-in-stone power results from their abstract source in an apparently popular-determined constitution and legal system to distinguish who belongs to the nation, the Syrian way of sovereignty did not mobilise a myth of national identity and will in this way. As is elaborated throughout the thesis, this point goes far beyond the more common analyses of authoritarianism, which focus on the government's capture or ownership of the state. Instead, this thesis' analysis draws attention to how differing modes of sovereignty-production, which rely on different technologies of power, create violence and exclusions in different areas of society and individual life. This realisation goes beyond the dichotomy 'authoritarian-liberal' and allows for a much more incisive perspective on how states across the world maintain sovereignty against significant odds.

Turning to the humanitarian sector, chapter four and five focused on the programmes of the UNHCR and international, humanitarian NGOs that formed part of the overall management of Iraqi migration to Syria. The key finding of these chapters was that these programmes proceeded from an assumption that the position of Iraqis in Syria was as assumed by international refugee law, which is based on the sovereign ideal. Iraqis in Syria were considered as occupying a position outside sovereign space, and therefore without life-saving protection; they were understood to exist in a situation in which the assumed-natural bond of sovereignty between citizen and protective government had been broken. This perspective on Iraqi existence in Syria (and previously in Iraq), which was only possible by turning a blind eye to the fact that the Iraqi population in Syria was surviving quite well despite its 'vague' sovereign status,

fundamentally influenced the form and content of UNHCR's programmes aimed at Iraqis.

The two areas of humanitarian programming examined more closely for this thesis were the UNHCR's resettlement programme and the broad range of humanitarian services extended to Iraqis via UNHCR and NGOs (largely focused on financial/food aid, education and health). Humanitarian rhetoric portrayed Iraqi migrants' existence as flawed, frequently referencing psychological problems, promiscuity (through prostitution) and potential for violence, as attributes of Iraqi migrants. Such problems were consistently related to the fact that Iraqis were migrants, i.e. located outside their presumably natural location inside their national territory. The relatively stable existence of Iraqis in Syria was thus not taken as an indication that the assumed unity of territory, government and population was fictional, but was ignored in order to present Iraqi existence as an instance in which this unity had been tragically broken, and required international intervention to restore.

The interactions between the humanitarian sector and the Syrian state were a further focus of chapters four and five. These interactions showcased how international and domestic spheres of sovereignty were produced through separate practices. Concerning international sovereignty, the presence of international humanitarian actors, which had only been allowed onto Syrian territory since 2007, was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, this presence signalled to foreign observers Syrian openness to civil society and an interest in the welfare of its population, thus strengthening Syria's image abroad as a good sovereign. On the other hand, this presence also indicated that the Syrian government was not able to manage its internal affairs independently and required external help to maintain stability and security. As has been pointed out in development-critical literature, humanitarian assistance identifies the 'sovereign borderlands', those territories outside the fully sovereign realm. These interactions also highlighted how transformations to techniques of power can occur through the interactions between the global humanitarian sector, generally an agent of liberalism, and post-colonial states: while Syrian government institutions adapted certain processes in reaction to the expectations and ways-of-doing of the humanitarians, the latter also adapted their strategies to the Syrian setting. A related finding of these chapters was that the depoliticising, technical

rhetoric and programmes of humanitarian actors made an adaptation to the Syrian environment astonishingly easy, despite these actors' often proclaimed support for human rights and popular empowerment.

Chapter six focused on the involvement of foreign states in the management of Iraqi migration to Syria, in relation to the construction of sovereignty. This involvement was paradoxical. For although, as laid out above, international efforts focused on making Iraqi migrants' lives conform to the sovereign ideal, the cross-territorial intervention of foreign states into the Syrian body politic contradicted the principle of territorial exclusivity, a cornerstone of idealised state sovereignty. By managing the resettlement procedures of the donor states, UNHCR and IOM functioned as apparently neutral gate-keepers of sovereignty, which veiled the sovereignty-contradicting, direct interventions into the Syrian-based population, on Syrian territory, that donor states were carrying out. Once again, this finding highlighted how the humanitarian sector, far from undermining or weakening state sovereignty, transported the values of and protected the hegemony of the sovereign ideal.

Finally, chapter 7 focused on how Iraqi interviewees and interlocutors conformed to and contested the sovereignty-producing power in their daily lives as migrants in Damascus. The chapter used different examples of various techniques of power used by state and non-state institutions and provided nuanced details about how Iraqis reacted to these. By emphasising episodes that either demonstrated Iraqi conformity with, disobedience or open resistance to sovereignty-constructions, this chapter delved in greater details into specific micro-techniques of power through which Iraqi lives were made to conform to state sovereignty in daily-life encounters. The chapter showed the limits of these micro-techniques, which appeared in instances when Iraqi behaviour and opinion contradicted or out-did their desired effects and/or underlying assumptions and categories. By closely relating ethnographic observations with theoretical analysis, this chapter further showcased the relevance of ethnographic research when researching power in daily-life and highlighted a number of this thesis' key contributions to academic literature and research.

Significance

The arguments and empirical evidence presented in this thesis offer several new insights into how state sovereignty is maintained as a key organising principle of the global population, despite the weakening of direct state intervention in economic and social affairs. The thesis shows that while in theory and in the dominant imagination of global common sense, sovereignty awards to each state similar characteristics, in practice, different states translate their sovereignty into highly different social and political relations, and governance techniques. This means that although most states manifest themselves through similar material attributes, such as border crossings, government buildings, administrations, or a representative at the UN General Assembly, their less tangible presence in the lives of people living on their territory will manifest itself in highly diverse ways. This realisation means that writing and theorising about sovereign power in general, as if it is the same all over the globe, is of little use. In fact, state sovereignty and the belief in the existence of such a thing as sovereign power (as originating from the state or not) should be regarded as a historical and context-bound development, which originated in Europe and spread to the rest of the world through adoption, but mostly through domination. This is not to say that state sovereignty and sovereign power does not exist. It is to argue, that seeking the meaning, location or manifestation of universal and 'true' sovereign power is misguided if it concerns the intimate relations between state and human being (and not more general statements about the need for states to conform to certain norms at the international level). The understanding, manifestation, governance effect and domination of state sovereignty will vary in different contexts and can only be meaningfully understood through local, empirical enquiry.

In line with these broader insights into how sovereignty is constructed as the world's currently hegemonic way of organising politics, this thesis' central significance lies in its portrayal and analysis of how this construction takes place concretely, in a concrete setting. Against the mainstream understanding that sovereign power becomes apparent in moments of significant violence, under exceptional circumstances or indeed when humanity is reduced to bare life, this thesis argues that the power of sovereignty, while not excluding these extraordinary moments, mostly appears as something quite different. The thesis' various chapters offer a clear and accessible example of how large-scale, abstract ideas about sovereignty were translated into forms of power that manifested themselves as seemingly banal, daily-life encounters and transactions. Further, it showed, through the provisions of

documented, concrete examples, of how liberal interpretations of sovereignty and their associated techniques of power are inserted into post-colonial settings via the programmes and employees of humanitarian organisations. In this way, the thesis demonstrates the connection between the apparently banal 'daily-life' and global structures of power and domination, which are more easily visible and usually considered the stuff of international politics. The persistent belief that states are the natural and normal way for human beings to organise their society is the key manifestation of sovereign power, it's conceptual 'backdrop' so to speak. This belief is made tangible through innumerable practices of, inter alia, bureaucracy, education, law and violence that remind human beings continuously of the existence and power of the state. Far from only appearing in moments of exception, the state's sovereignty appears constantly in daily life, by shaping most of its aspects.

The realisation that sovereignty is constructed in and through our daily lives is also significant for academic and political analysis less concerned with questions of theory. It shows that to understand a political context, it is necessary to investigate how state-population relations function precisely in people's daily lives, and not to take for granted the assumptions of the sovereign ideal, according to which each person is a citizen and state-society relations are governed via some form of representation. To most astute regional analysts this might appear glaringly obvious, but the detailed analysis of humanitarian intervention in Syria presented in this thesis shows how shockingly easily UNHCR and international NGOs rolled out abstract, seemingly universal assumptions about population, territory and government in relation to Iraqi migrants in Syria, where they simply did not apply. This misplaced confidence in the sovereign ideal led to an apparent, perceived lack of necessity to conduct any official analysis of state-society relations in Syria and to adapt local programming and management of refugees accordingly. Further, it resulted in forms of programming that not only reproduced the broader forms of domination contained in humanitarian action, but created perhaps unnecessary, additional forms of discrimination and perceived unfairness that undermined the validity and belief in humanitarian actors. This example shows that the dominant academic and political belief about sovereignty as a universal form of rule have indeed very practical, and detrimental, political effects.

The points made in this thesis highlight a further, highly important effect of state sovereignty, which concerns global, often post-colonial structures of power. In particular chapter 6 shows that the separation of the globe's territory into seemingly independent and exclusively ruled units can act as a 'fig leaf' behind which the intervention of powerful states can be concealed. In Syria, the influence of other states over the management of Iraqi migrants in Syria was channelled through international institutions nominally representative of the international community as a whole. This allowed for the importation into Syria of detailed bureaucratic techniques of migration management, and notions of politics, that had very little to do, and were occasionally opposed to practices of the Syrian state, without any visible undermining of exclusive Syrian rule over Syrian territory. Mini-islands of foreign states' administrations were created on Syrian territory without a visible undermining of official Syrian state sovereignty. The myth of national independence and popular self-determination, which continue as powerful governance mechanisms in global and local politics, and are closely connected to the sovereign ideal, remained intact in this arrangement, even though in practice they did not. This arrangement, which allowed both for the continuing of the transnational domination of powerful states and of local power structures, was an effect of the international system of state sovereignty, which includes the apparently representative system of the United Nations that upholds the idea that all states (and therefore people) are somehow equally independent. The convenience that this system presents for the global and local status quo of power can be understood as one of the principal reasons for why an end to, or evening fading into significance of state sovereignty, is profoundly unlikely in the foreseeable future.

Finally this thesis shows how, despite the nominal equality and similarity of all sovereign states there exists even within the sovereign logic a kind of yardstick against which the sovereignty of states is measured. The lack of attention that the sovereignty-contradicting interventions of foreign states on Syrian territory in relation to Iraqi migration attracted were one indication of this hierarchy, in which states wielding more sophisticated technologies of power were allowed to transgress sovereign divides with impunity. Paradoxically, there exists in the rhetoric of humanitarianism and liberalism more broadly a set of values according to which a state becomes regarded as more or less sovereign (and therefore more or less entitled to independence and exclusivity of rule over its territory). This set of values goes

beyond being simply functional as a state, i.e. exercising control over territory and population, but includes questions of morality and care, as well as standards of technology and material power. Despite the difficult diplomatic status of the Syrian state on other issues, Syrian state agents were able to seize on Syria's 'kind and generous' treatment of Iraqi migrants as a way to increase Syrian sovereignty, even to the extent that diplomatic 'enemies', such as the US, could transfer large amounts of money to Syria without this raising significant contradictions.

This thesis reflects a growing awareness, reflected in academic writing, the media and fiction, that all is not well in the world of humanitarianism. Criticism of the humanitarian sector ranges from accusations of hypocrisy and waste, to analyses that regard it as vehicle through which transnational technologies of power are inserted into local contexts. This thesis tends to belong to the latter, yet with an awareness that power never flows uni-directionally, but emerges from complex social interactions. This means that, as touched on above, the humanitarian sector is also transformed in and by local conditions, which influence its transnational reach. The humanitarian sector is a social, economic and political assemblage of technologies that perpetuates the above-mentioned post-colonial domination, not necessarily simply of North Atlantic actors, but of a model of human life, on which the North Atlantic is based and which it does best. As I hope this thesis has shown, one aspect of this model is the sovereign ideal, which is used by humanitarian actors as a yardstick against which to measure the legitimacy of societies, and in how far they should be allowed to govern themselves. More research and critical analysis of humanitarian work, its growing professionalization and merging with state or government agencies is needed to better understand the effects of its power. Also, as I do not want to dismiss the positive human characteristics of solidarity, commiseration and outrage at human suffering that urge many to become humanitarian workers, such research could inspire the search for better, more basic and less teleological forms of assistance to the oppressed.

With regards to avenues for further research, this thesis' point is largely methodological: too much IR writing is conducted as grand literature reviews from the armchair, by people who have never done anything else but academia. It takes a rare genius to produce something meaningful through this method. Often, this method

produces writing about 'the other' that is offensive and arrogant. But at its best, the ability and power of intellectual reflection present in the IR discipline, has produced crucial insights into how to conduct critical analysis and interrogation of key, 'common sense' concepts long used to describe the world. On the other side of the disciplinary spectrum, too much regional-studies/anthropology writing is undertaken without an eye on or ambition for developing a wider social theory about the observed phenomena, or even conducting critical analysis. The best of such method produces highly informed, journalistic political/social/economic analysis or fascinating descriptions of far-away places. Yet to advance social or international theory in order to understand better the political developments and power constellations that lie behind observed events, it is not enough to rely on participant observations or long-term fieldwork. Strong academic analysis requires the best elements of both disciplines: a solid grounding in theoretical knowledge and a desire to advance critical interrogation, and a keen eye and collection of human experience.

Bibliography

Statute of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

Adamson, Fiona B., and Madeleine Demetriou. "Remapping the Boundaries of `State' and `National Identity': Incorporating Diasporas into Ir Theorizing." *European Journal of International Relations* 13, no. 4 (December 1, 2007 2007): 489-526.

Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer : Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998.

———. *State of Exception*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Agnew, James. "The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory." *Review of International Political Economy* 1 (1994): 53-80.

Ajami, Fouad. "Iraq and the Arabs' Future." *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 1 (2003): 2-19.

al-Asad, Asma. "Inaugural Speech to the First International Development Conference of Syria 2010." Summary of Asma al-Assad's speech to the conference: www.presidentassad.net, 2010.

al-Khalidi, Ashraf, Sophia Hoffmann, and Victor Tanner. "Iraqi Refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic: A Field-Based Snapshot." Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 2007.

al-Miqdad, Faisal. "Iraqi Refugees in Syria." *Forced Migration Review* Special Issue, no. June 2007 (2007).

Ali, Ali, and Kamel Dorai. "Under the Radar, but Not Invisible: Iraqi Activity in Syria's

Informal Economic Sector." 28. Damascus: UNHCR, September 2010.

Allen, John. "The Whereabouts of Power: Politics, Government and Space." *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 86, no. 1 (2004): 19-32.

Almond, Gabriel A., and Stephen J. Genco. "Clouds, Clocks, and the Study of Politics." *World Politics* 29, no. 4 (1977): 489-522.

Amnesty International Germany. "Press Release Eu Muss Irakische Fluechtlinge Aufnehmen Und Nachbarstaaten Des Irak Unterstuetzen." Bonn, Germany, 16.04.2007.

Anderson, J. "The Shifting Stage of Politics: New Medieval and Postmodern Territorialities?". *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 14, no. 2 (1996): 133-53.

Anderson, Mary B. *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace - or War*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc, 1999.

Aoki, Keith. "Considering Multiple and Overlapping Sovereignties: Liberalism, Libertarianism, National Sovereignty, "Global" Intellectual Property, and the Internet." *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 5, no. 2 (1998): 443-73.

Appadurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions in Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

———. "Sovereignty without Territoriality: Notes for a Postnational Geography." In *The Anthropology of Space and Place*, edited by Setha Low and Denise Lawrence-Zuniga. Blackwell Readers in Anthropology, 337-47. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.

Arendt, Hannah. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. A Harvest Book ;. New [5th] ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973.

Ashley, Richard K., and R. B. J. Walker. "Reading Dissidence/Writing the Discipline - Crisis and the Question of Sovereignty in International Studies." *International Studies*

Quarterly 34, no. 3 (1990): 367-416.

Ashutosh, Ishan, and Alison Mountz. "Migration Management for the Benefit of Whom? Interrogating the Work of the International Organization for Migration." *Citizenship Studies* 15, no. 1 (21 - 38.

Balibar, Etienne. "The "Impossible" Community of the Citizens: Past and Present Problems." Paper presented at the Citizens without Community, London, 2010.

Bar'el, Zvi. "Solo Voices in the Arab Chorus." *Haaretz*, 4 April 2003 2003.

Barnett, Michael. "UNHCR and the Ethics of Repatriation." *Forced Migration Review*, no. 10

———. "Sovereignty, Nationalism, and Regional Order in the Arab State System." In *State Sovereignty as Social Construct*, edited by Thomas Biersteker and Cynthia Weber. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

———. "Humanitarianism with a Sovereign Face: UNHCR in the Global Undertow." *International Migration Review* 35, no. 1 (2001): 244-77.

———. *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011.

Barnett, Michael, and Raymond Duval. *Power in Global Governance*. Cambridge Studies in International Relations. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Barrett, Christopher B., and Jeffrey W. Cason. *Overseas Research: A Practical Guide*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

Bartelson, Jens. *A Genealogy of Sovereignty*. Cambridge Studies in International Relations ; 39. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Batatu, Hanna. "Some Observations on the Social Roots of Syria's Ruling, Military Group and the Causes for Its Dominance." *Middle East Journal* 35, no. 3 (1981): 331-44.

Batatu, Hanna, and Georgetown University. Center for Contemporary Arab Studies. *The Egyptian, Syrian, and Iraqi Revolutions : Some Observations on Their Underlying Causes and Social Character*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University, 1984.

Bauman, Zygmunt. *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Polity, 1991.

———. *Postmodernity and Its Discontents*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997.

———. *Liquid Fear*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006.

Beck, Ulrich. *World Risk Society*. World Risk Society. Polity Press.

Bel-Air, Francoise de. "Iraqis in Jordan since 2003: What Socio-Political Stakes?" In *CARIM Research Reports 2009*, edited by CARIM. Florence: EUI, 2009.

Bernard, Russel H. *Research Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. London: Sage, 1988.

Bernard, Russell H. *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*. Walnut Creek, Calif. ; London: AltaMira Press, 1998.

Biersteker, Thomas J. "State, Sovereignty and Territory." In *Handbook of International Relations*, edited by Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth Simmons. New York: Sage, 2004.

Biersteker, Thomas J., and Cynthia Weber. *State Sovereignty as Social Construct*. Cambridge Studies in International Relations ; 46. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Bigio, Jamille, and Jen Scott. "Internal Displacement in Iraq: The Process of Working toward Durable Solutions." edited by The Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement. Washington, DC, 2009.

Bigo, Didier. "Security and Immigration: Toward a Critique of the Governmentality of Unease." *Alternatives* 27, no. Special Issue (2002).

Biswas, Shampa, and Sheila Nair, eds. *International Relations and States of Exception*. New York: Routledge, 2009.

Bodin, Jean, and Julian H. Franklin. *Bodin: On Sovereignty (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Bolton, Matthew, and Alex Jeffrey. "The Politics of Ngo Registration in International Protectorates: The Cases of Bosnia and Iraq." *Disasters* 32, no. 4 (2008): 586-608.

Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Berber House." In *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture*, edited by Setha M. Low and Denise Lawrence-Zunigais. Malden: Blackwell-Wiley, 2003.

Brown, Wendy. *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*. New York: Zone Books, 2010.

Bull, Hedley. *The Anarchical Society*. 3rd ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

Bundesministerium des Innern. "Press Release: 41.332 Asylantraege Im Jahr 2010." Berlin, 17.01.2011.

Burns, Ross. *Damascus: A History*. Oxford: Routledge, 2007.

Butters, Andrew Lee. "Can Former Iraqi Baathists in Syria Ever Go Home?" *Time*, 27.09.2009 2009.

Cabinet of Germany (Bundesregierung). "Antwort Der Bundesregierung Auf Die Kleine Anfrage Der Abgeordneten Ulla Jelpe, Jan Korte, Und Der Fraktion Die Linke." edited by Deutscher Bundestag. Koeln: Bundesanzeiger Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, 18.08.2006.

Campbell, David. *Writing Security - United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity*. Writing Security - United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity. Manchester University Press, 1992.

Campbell, David, and Michael J. Shapiro. *Moral Spaces : Rethinking Ethics and World Politics*. Minneapolis ; London University of Minnesota Press1999.

Cavatorta, Francesco. "The Convergence of Governance: Upgrading Authoritarianism in the Arab World and Downgrading Democracy Elsewhere?". *Middle East Critique* 19, no. 3 (217 - 32.

Cernea, M. M., C. McDowell, and Mark Duffield. "Risks and Reconstruction: Experiences of Resettlers and Refugees." *Journal of refugee studies* 13, no. 4 (2000): 424-25.

Chalfin, Brenda. "Working the Border: Constructing Sovereignty in the Context of Liberalization." In *National Science Foundation Grant Proposal*: American Anthropological Association, 2001.

———. "Sovereigns and Citizens in Close Encounter: Airport Anthropology and Customs Regimes in Neoliberal Ghana." *American Ethnologist* 35, no. 4 (2008): 519-38.

Chandler, David. *Constructing Global Civil Society: Morality and Power in International Relations*. Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2004.

Chandler, David et al. "Assessing the Impact of Foucault on International Relations Roundtable." *International Political Sociology* 4, no.2 (2010)

Chatelard, Geraldine. "Mobility Opportunities and Strategies for Iraqi Refugees in Syria and Jordan." Geneva, 2009.

———. "What Visibility Conceals. Re-Embedding Refugee Migration from Iraq." In *Dispossession and Displacement. Forced Migration in the Middle East and Africa*, edited by Dawn Chatty. London: British Academy, 2009.

———. "The Politics of Population Movements in Contemporary Iraq: A Research Agenda." In *Writing the History of Iraq: Historiographical and Political Challenges*, edited by Ricardo Bocco, J Tejet and P Sluglett. London: World Scientific Publishers/Imperial College Press, 2011.

Chatelard, Geraldine, Oroub El-Abed, and Kate Washington. "Protection, Mobility and Livelihood Challenges of Displaced Iraqis in Urban Settings in Jordan." edited by ICMC. Geneva: ICMC, 2009.

Chatty, Dawn. "Dispossession and Forced Migration in the 21st-Century Middle East and North Africa." *Bulletin of the Council for British Research in the Levant* 5 (2010): 39-42.

Cohen, Jean L. "Whose Sovereignty? Empire Versus International Law." Metaphilosophy Series in Philosophy. Oxford Malden MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

Cordesman, Anthony H. "Four Wars and Counting... Enduring Conflict and the Need for a New Approach to Us Strategy and Force Planning." *The RUSI Journal* 149 (24-30.

———. "Four Wars and Counting... Enduring Conflict and the Need for a New Approach to Us Strategy and Force Planning." *The RUSI Journal* 149 (24-30.

Cornelisse, Galina. *Immigration Detention and Human Rights Rethinking Territorial Sovereignty*. Leiden/Boston: Martin Nijhoff, 2010.

Cox, Robert W. "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory." *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 10, no. 2 (June 1, 1981 1981): 126-55.

———. "Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations : An Essay in Method." *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 12, no. 2 (June 1, 1983 1983): 162-75.

Crisp, Jeff, Jane Janz, Jose Riera, and Shahira Samy. "Surviving in the City a Review of UNHCR's Operations for Iraqi Refugees in Urban Areas of Jordan, Lebanon and Syria." 62. Geneva: UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service, 2009.

Danish Refugee Council. "Newsletter Winter 2008." edited by DRC. Damascus, Syria, 2008.

———. "Quarterly Report (Syria) July-September 2010." edited by DRC. Damascus, Syria:

DRC, 2010.

———. "Annual Report 2009." edited by DRC. Copenhagen, Denmark: DRC, 2010.

———. "Quarterly Report (Syria) October-December 2010." edited by DRC. Damascus, Syria: DRC, 2011.

Dauvergne, Catherine. "Challenges to Sovereignty: Migration Laws for the 21st Century." In *New Issues in Refugee Research*, edited by UNHCR. Geneva: UNHCR, 2003.

———. "Making People Illegal." In *Critical Beings: Law, Nation and the Global Subject*, edited by Peter Fitzpatrick and Patricia Tuitt. 83-99. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.

Denham, Mark E., and Mark Owen Lombardi. *Perspectives on Third-World Sovereignty : The Postmodern Paradox*. International Political Economy Series. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996.

Dewachi, Omar. ""Between Iraq and a Hard Place": Urban Governance and Transnational Laboratories of Intervention of Displaced Iraqis in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon." 2010.

Dewalt, Kathleen, and Billie Dewalt. "**Participant Observation**." In *Handbook of Cultural Anthropology*, edited by Russel H. Bernard. 259-301. Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 1998.

Di Iorio, Enza, and Martine Zeuthen. "The Benefits of Engaging and Building Trust with a Reluctant Government: The Experience of Community Center for Iraqis in Syria." In *Iraq Study Group*, edited by Refugee Cooperation: Middle East Institute, Washington DC, 2011.

Dillon, Michael. "The Scandal of the Refugee – Some Reflections on the "Inter" of International Relations and Continental Thought." In *Moral Spaces Rethinking Ethics and World Politics* edited by David Campbell and Michael J Shapiro. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

Dillon, Michael, and Andrew Neal, eds. *Foucault on Politics, Security and War*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008.

Dorai, Mohamed K. "Le Renouveau De La Question De L'asile Au Proche-Orient: L'exemple Des Refugies Irakiens En Syrie." Paper presented at the Migrants Craints et Espoirs, Le Monde Diplomatique Carrefour de la Pensee, 2008.

Dostal, Jörg Michael, and Anja Zorob. *Syria and the Euro-Mediterranean Relationship*. St Andrews Papers on Contemporary Syria. edited by University of St Andrews Centre for Syrian Studies Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2008.

Doty, Roxanne Lynn. "States of Exception on the Mexico–U.S. Border: Security, "Decisions," and Civilian Border Patrols." *International Political Sociology* 1, no. 2 (2007): 113-37.

Duffield, Mark. "Governing the Borderlands: Decoding the Power of Aid." *Disasters* 25, no. 4 (2001): 308-20.

———. *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security*. London: Zed Books, 2001.

Duffield, M. "Social Reconstruction and the Radicalization of Development: Aid as a Relation of Global Liberal Governance." *Development and Change* 33 (2002): 1049-71.

Duffield, Mark. "Social Reconstruction and the Radicalization of Development: Aid as a Relation of Global Liberal Governance." *Development and Change* 33, no. 5 (2002): 1049-71.

———. "Development, Territories, and People: Consolidating the External Sovereign Frontier." *Alternatives* 32, no. 2 (2007): 225-46.

Duffield, Mark, Devon Curtis, Fiona Fox, Joanna Macrae, Nicholas Leader, Mohammed Haneef Atmar, Susan L. Woodward, Michael Pugh, and Vanessa Pupavac. "Politics

and Humanitarian Aid: Debates, Dilemmas and Dissension." *Disasters* 25, no. 4 (2001): 269-372.

Duffield, Mark, Joanna Macrae, and Devon Curtis. "Politics and Humanitarian Aid." *Disasters* 25, no. 4 (2001): 269-74.

Duffield, Mark, and John Prendergast. "Sovereignty and Intervention after the Cold War." *Middle East report* 24, no. 2-3 (1994): 9-15.

Elden, Stuart. "Terror and Territory." *Antipode* 39, no. 5 (2007): 821-45.

Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995.

Fafo. "Iraqis in Jordan 2007 Their Number and Characteristics." Amman: Fafo, 2007.

Falah, Ghazi-Walid, Colin Flint, and Virginie Mamadouh. "Just War and Extraterritoriality: The Popular Geopolitics of the United States' War on Iraq as Reflected in Newspapers of the Arab World." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 96 (142-64.

Feldman, Ilena. "The Quaker Way: Ethical Labor and Humanitarian Relief." *American Ethnologist* 34, no. 4 (2007): 689-705.

Feldman, Ilana. *Governing Gaza : Bureaucracy, Authority, and the Work of Rule, 1917-1967*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.

Feldman, Martha, Jeannine Bell, and Michele Tracy Berger. *Gaining Access: A Practical and Theoretical Guide for Qualitative Researchers*. Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2003.

Ferguson, James. *The Anti-Politics Machine - "Development," Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. Cambridge University Press, 1990.

———. "The Anti-Politics Machine." In *The Anthropology of the State: A Reader*. Blackwell Publishing, 2006.

Ferguson, James, and Akhil Gupta. "Spatializing States: Toward an Ethnography of Neoliberal Governmentality." *American Ethnologist* 29, no. 4 (2002): 981-1002.

Ferris, Elizabeth. "Going Home? Prospects and Pitfalls for Large-Scale Returns of Iraqis." Bern: Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement, 2009.

Fioroni, Claudie. ""Société Civile" Et Évolution De L'autoritarisme En Syrie : Le Cas Du Syria Trust for Development " Master's Thesis, Institut de hautes études internationales et du développement, 2010.

Fitzpatrick, Peter, and Patricia Tuitt. *Critical Beings : Law, Nation and the Global Subject*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.

Focus. "Erste Irak-Fluechtlinge in Hannover Gelandet." 2009.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish : The Birth of the Prison*. London: Allen Lane, 1977.

———. "What Is Enlightenment?". In *Interpretive Social Science a Second Look*, edited by Paul Rabinow and William M. Sullivan. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.

Foucault, Michael. "Governmentality." In *Michael Foucault: Power*, edited by Faubian J., 202-21. New York: The New Press, 2000.

Foucault, Michel. *Security, Territory, Population (Lectures at the College De France 1977-1976)*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Foucault, Michel, Mauro Bertani, and Alessandro Fontana. *"Society Must Be Defended" : Lectures at the Collège De France, 1975-76*. London: Allen Lane, 2003.

Foucault, Michel, James D. Faubion, and Robert Hurley. *Power*. Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984. New York: New Press ; Distributed by W.W. Norton, 2000.

Foucault, Michel, and Robert Hurley. *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge V. 1.* London: Penguin, 1998.

Geertz, Clifford. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." *Daedalus* 101, no. 1 (1972): 1-37.

Geiger, Martin, and Antoine Pecoud. "The Politics of Migration Management." In *The Politics of International Migration Management*, edited by Martin Geier and Antoine Pecoud. New York: Macmillan, 2010.

George, Alan. *Syria : Neither Bread nor Freedom.* London: Zed Books, 2003.

George, Alexander, and Andrew Bennet. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*. Boston: MIT Press, 2005.

Gerring, John. "What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good For?". *American Political Science Review* 98 (2) (2004): 341-54.

———. "Gerring, John. 2007. Case Study Research: Principles and Practices. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Read Chapter 7 ("Internal Validity: Process-Tracing").". Chap. Internal Validity: Process-Tracing In *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Gille, Zsuzsa, and Sean O. Riain. "Global Ethnography." *Annual Review of Sociology* 28 (2002): 271-95.

Gramsci, Antonio, Geoffrey N. Smith, and Quintin Hoare. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci.* Lincolnwood: International Publishers, 1971.

Gupta, Akhil, and James Ferguson. "Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference." *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 6-23.

Haddad, Emma. "The Refugee: The Individual between Sovereigns." *Global society* 17, no. 3 (2003): 297-322.

———. *The Refugee in International Society : Between Sovereigns*. Cambridge Studies in International Relations. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Haddad, Emma Miriam, and European Institute (London School of Economics and Political Science). "Between Sovereigns: The Refugee in International Society." Ph.D. (London) thesis 2004 LSE., 2004.

Hakim, Hadia. "Palestinian Identity-Formation in Yarmouk: Constructing National Identity through the Development of Space." Irvine: University of California Irvine School of Social Sciences, 2009.

Hall, Alexandra. "Bodywatching: Attention and Indifference in a British Immigration Removal Centre." Department of Geography Durham University, 2009.

Hall, Chansonette, Navina Bapat, Daniel Ertley, and Marc Lancaster. "Perfect Allies? The Case of Iraq and Al Qaeda." *International Studies Perspectives* 8 (2007): 272-86.

Hansen, Thomas Blom, and Finn Stepputat. *Sovereign Bodies : Citizens, Migrants, and States in the Postcolonial World*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Hindess, Barry. *Discourses of Power : From Hobbes to Foucault*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996.

———. "Neo-Liberal Citizenship." *Citizenship Studies* 6, no. 2 (2002): 127-43.

———. "Citizenship and Empire." Chap. 5 In *Sovereign Bodies : Citizens, Migrants, and States in the Postcolonial World*, edited by T.B. Hansen. 241 - 56. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Hinnebusch, Raymond. "Toward a Historical Sociology of State Formation in the Middle East." *Middle East Critique* 19, no. 3 (201 - 16.

Hinnebusch, Raymond, Marwan Kabalan, Bassma Kodmani, and David Lesch. *Syrian Foreign Police and the United States from Bush to Obama*. St Andrews Papers on

Contemporary Syria. edited by University of St Andrews Centre for Syrian Studies Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2010.

Hinnebusch, Raymond A. *Syria : Revolution from Above*. London ; New York: Routledge, 2001.

Hobbes, Thomas, and J.C.A Gaskin. *Leviathan (Oxford World's Classics)*. Oxford: Oxford Paperbacks, 2008.

Hopgood, Stephen. *Keepers of the Flame: Understanding Amnesty International*. Ithaka: Cornell University Press, 2006.

Huisman, Kimberly. ""Does This Mean You're Not Going to Come Visit Me Anymore?": An Inquiry into an Ethics of Reciprocity and Positionality in Feminist Ethnographic Research*." *Sociological Inquiry* 78, no. 3 (2008): 372-96.

Hurrell, Andrew. "International Society, Global Order and Refugees." In *Lecture Series: Refugees in International Relations*. Oxford: University of Oxford, 2008.

Huysmans, Jef. *The Politics of Insecurity: Fear, Migration and Asylum in the EU*. New International Relations Series. London: Routledge, 2006.

International Crisis Group. "Failed Responsibility: Iraqi Refugees in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon." Brussels, Belgium: Crisis Group, 2008.

IOM. "Information Sheet." In *IOM support to the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP)*. New York, USA: IOM, 2008.

IRC. "Irc Press Release: International Rescue Committee Set to Begin Aid Programmes for Iraqi Refugees in Syria ", edited by IRC. Damascus, Syria, 02 September 2008.

———. "Fy 2010 Financial Statement." New York, USA: IRC, 2011.

IRC Commission on Iraqi Refugees. "A Tough Road Home Uprooted Iraqis in Jordan, Syria

and Iraq." edited by IRC. New York, USA: IRC, February 2010.

———. "Five Years Later, a Hidden Crisis." edited by IRC. New York, USA: IRC, March 2008.

IRIN News. "Starving to Survive: Iraqi Refugees Resort to Desperate Measures." Dubai: IRIN, 2 January 2008.

Isin, Engin. "Citizens without Nations." Paper presented at the Citizenship without Community, London, 2010.

Ismail, Salwa. *Political Life in Cairo's New Quarters. Encountering the Everyday State.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

Jabri, Vivienne. "Michel Foucault's Analytics of War: The Social, the International, and the Racial." *International Political Sociology* 1, no. 1 (2007): 67-81.

Jennings, Ronald C. "Sovereignty and Political Modernity: A Genealogy of Agamben's Critique of Sovereignty." *Anthropological Theory* 11, no. 1 (March 1, 2011: 23-61.

Kahn, Paul W. *Political Theology Four New Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.

Kaldor, Mary. *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War.* Cambridge: Polity, 2003.

———. *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War.* Cambridge: Polity, 2003.

Kawakibi, Salam. "La Migration Irreguliere En Syrie. Les Refugies Irakiens Comme Cas D'etude." In *Analytical and Synthetic Notes*, edited by CARIM. Florence: EUI, 2008.

Kayaoglu, Turan. "The Extension of Westphalian Sovereignty: State Building and the Abolition of Extraterritoriality." *International Studies Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (2007): 649-75.

Kent, Lia, and Jamileh Abu-Duhour. "The Struggle for Protection Resettled Refugees Reflect on Seeking Asylum in Asia and the Middle East." edited by Refugee Council of Australia. Surry Hills, 2009.

Khalili, Laleh. "Grass-Roots Commemorations: Remembering the Land in the Camps of Lebanon." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 34, no. 1 (2004): 6-22.

———. *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine: The Politics of National Commemoration.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Khoury, Philip S. "Syrian Urban Politics in Transition: The Quarters of Damascus During the French Mandate." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16, no. 04 (1984): 507-40.

Koser, Khalid. "Refugees, Transnationalism and the State." *Journal of ethnic and migration studies* 33, no. 2 (2007): 233-54.

Kothen, Andrea. "Irakfluechtlinge: Zweierlei Mass, Allerlei Gesetze." Frankfurt, Germany: Pro Asyl, 11.05.2009.

Kraft, Katherine. "Two Changing Spheres: Ngos and Iraqis in Syria." edited by Middle East Fellowship. Brea, CA: Middle East Fellowship, 2008.

Krasner, Stephen D. *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Kuperman, Alan J. "The Moral Hazard of Humanitarian Intervention: Lessons from the Balkans." *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (2008): 49-80.

Kyambi, Sarah. "National Identity and Refugee Law." In *Critical Beings*, edited by Peter Fitzpatrick and Patricia Tuitt. 19-36. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.

Lane, Marcus B., and Liana J. Williams. "The Natural Heritage Trust and Indigenous Lands: The Trials and Tribulations of 'New Technologies of Governance'." *Australian*

Geographer 40, no. 1 (2009): 85 - 107.

Latham, Robert. "Social Sovereignty." *Theory Culture Society* 17, no. 4 (August 1, 2000 2000): 1-18.

Lesch, David. *The New Lion of Damascus: Bashar Al-Asad and Modern Syria*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

Linklater, Andrew. "The Question of the Next Stage in International Relations Theory: A Critical-Theoretical Point of View." *Millennium - Journal of International Studies* 21, no. 1 (March 1, 1992 1992): 77-98.

———. "The Transformation of Political Community: E. H. Carr, Critical Theory and International Relations." *Review of International Studies* 23, no. 3 (1997): 321-38.

Loescher, Gil. "The UNHCR and World Politics: State Interests Vs. Institutional Autonomy." *International Migration Review* 35, no. 1 (2001): 33-56.

Low, Setha M., and Denise Lawrence-Zunigais, eds. *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture*. edited by Blackwell, Blackwell Readers in Anthropology. Malden: WIley-Blackwell, 2003.

Lukes, Steven. *Power : A Radical View*. London: Macmillan, 1974.

Macdonald, Terry. *Global Stakeholder Democracy Power and Representation Beyond Liberal States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Machiavelli, Niccolo, and George Anthony Bull. *The Prince*. Penguin Classics. Penguin, 2006.

Mahoney, James, and Dietrich Rueschemeyer. *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Malkki, Liisa H. *Purity and Exile : Violence, Memory and National Cosmology among Hutu*

Refugees in Tanzania. Chicago ; London: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Maragia, B. "Almost There: Another Way of Conceptualizing and Explaining Ngos' Quest for Legitimacy in Global Politics." *Non-State Actors and International Law* 2 (2002): 301-32.

Marcus, George E. "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995): 95-117.

Martin, Daniel C. "Annual Flow Report Refugees and Asylees: 2010." edited by Office of Immigration Statistics. Washington DC: US Department of Homeland Security, May 2011.

McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather : Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest.* New York ; London: Routledge, 1995.

Michael, Watts. "Resource Curse? Governmentality, Oil and Power in the Niger Delta, Nigeria." *Geopolitics* 9 (2004): 50-80.

Miller, Peter, and Nikolas S. Rose. *Governing the Present: Administering Economic, Social and Personal Life.* Polity Press, 2008.

———. *Governing the Present: Administering Economic, Social and Personal Life.* Polity Press, 2008.

———. *Governing the Present: Administering Economic, Social and Personal Life.* Polity Press, 2008.

Mitchell, Timothy. "The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics." *The American Political Science Review* 85, no. 1 (1991): 77-96.

———. *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.

276

Morgenthau, Hans Joachim, Kenneth W. Thompson, and W. David Clinton. *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. McGraw-Hill, 2006.

Moulin, Carolina, and Peter Nyers. ""We Live in a Country of Unhcr"—Refugee Protests and Global Political Society." *International Political Sociology* 1, no. 4 (2007): 356-72.

Moubayed, Sami. "Syria Offers Maliki a Life Jacket." *Asia Times*, 16.10.2010 2010.

Mountz, Alison. "Where Asylum-Seekers Wait: Feminist Counter-Topographies of Sites between States." *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 18, no. 3 (381 - 99.

Mowbray, Joel. "Visa Denial Puts Heroic Iraqi Translator in the Crosshairs." 03.04.2009.

Munn, Nancy D. "Excluded Spaces: The Figure in the Australian Aboriginal Landscape ". In *The Anthropology of Space and Place: Locating Culture*, edited by Setha M. Low and Denise Lawrence-Zuniga. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003.

Musharbash, Yassin. "Irak-Fluechtlinge Wollen Keinen Christenbonus." *Der Spiegel Online*, 23.05.2008.

Neocleous, Mark. "The Problem with Normality: Taking Exception To "Permanent Emergency."." *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 31, no. 2 (2006): 191-213.

Nyers, Peter. *Rethinking Refugees : Beyond States of Emergency*. Global Horizons. New York ; London: Routledge, 2006.

———. "The Accidental Citizen: Acts of Sovereignty and (Un)Making Citizenship." *Economy and Society* 35, no. 1 (2006): 22-41.

OCHA. "Regional Response Plan for Iraqi Refugees." edited by United Nations. New York, 2010.

Olwan, Mohammed Y. "Iraqi Refugees in Neighbouring Countries: A New Forced Protracted

Displacement in the Region." In *Research Reports*, edited by CARIM. Florence: EUI, 2009.

Olwan, Mohamed Y. "Iraqi Refugees in Jordan: Legal Perspective." In *CARIM Analytic and Synthetic Notes 2009*, edited by CARIM. Florence: EUI, 2009.

Ong, Aihwa. *Buddha Is Hiding : Refugees, Citizenship, the New America*. California Series in Public Anthropology ;. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

———. *Neoliberalism as Exception : Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*. Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2006.

Orlove, Ben. "Editorial." *Current Anthropology* 47, no. 2 (2006): 211-12.

Papadopoulos, Dimitris, and Vassilis Tsianos. "How to Do Sovereignty without People the Subjectless Condition of Postliberal Power." *boundary 2* 34, no. 1 (2007).

Parolin, Gianluca. *Citizenship in the Arab World*. Imiscoe Research. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009.

Perthes, Volker. "Syria's Bourgeoisie and the Ba`Th." *Middle East report* 21, no. 3(170) (1991): 31-37.

———. *The Political Economy of Syria under Asad*. New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 1995.

———. "Syrian Regional Policy under Bashar Al-Asad: Realignment or Economic Rationalization?". *Middle East report* 31, no. 3(220) (2001): 36-41.

Peutz, Nathalie. "Embarking on an Anthropology of Removal." *Current Anthropology* 47, no. 2 (2006).

Philmann, Salome, and Nathalie Stiennon. "10,000 Refugees from Iraq a Report on Joint Resettlement in the European Union." Brussels: International Catholic Migration Commission, International Rescue Commitee, May 2010.

Pierret, Thomas, and Kjetil Selvik. "Limits of 'Authoritarian Upgrading' in Syria: Private Welfare, Islamic Charities, and the Rise of the Zayd Movement." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41, no. 04 (2009): 614a-14a.

Porter, Patrick. "Last Charge of the Knights? Iraq, Afghanistan and the Special Relationship." *International Affairs* 86 (355-75.

———. "Last Charge of the Knights? Iraq, Afghanistan and the Special Relationship." *International Affairs* 86 (355-75.

Pro Asyl. "Press Release Bverwg: Widerruf Der Anerkennung Irakischer Fluechtlinge." edited by Pro Asyl. Frankfurt, Germany: Pro Asyl, 25.02.2011.

Rabinow, Paul, and William M. Sullivan. *Interpretive Social Science - a Second Look.* edited by Paul Rabinow and William M. Sullivan. 2nd ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.

Rain, David. "Damascus: A Geographical Field Note." *Geographical Review* 99, no. 1 (2009): 94-104.

Refugees, IRC Commission on Iraqi. "In Dire Straits Iraqi Refugees in the United States." edited by IRC. New York, USA: IRC, June 2009.

Reimann, Kim D. "A View from the Top: International Politics, Norms and the Worldwide Growth of Ngos." *International Studies Quarterly* 50, no. 1 (2006): 45-68.

Reinhard Grindel MP. "Rede Zu Irakischen Fluechtlingen Im Bundestag." edited by Christliche Demokratische Union Deutschlands (CDU). online: Christliche Demokratische Union Deutschlands (CDU), 13.12.2007.

Riller, Frauke. "On the Resettlement Expectations of Iraqi Refugees in Lebanon, Jordan and Syria." edited by UNHCR ICMC. Beirut, 2009.

Robertson, Jennifer. "Reflexivity Redux: A Pithy Polemic On "Positionality."

Anthropological Quarterly 75, no. 4 (2002): 785-92.

Romano, David. "Whose House Is This Anyway? Idp and Refugee Return in Post-Saddam Iraq." *Journal of refugee studies* 18, no. 4 (December 2005 2005): 430-53.

Rose, Nikolas, and Peter Miller. "Political Power Beyond the State: Problematics of Government." *The British Journal of Sociology* 43, no. 2 (1992): 173-205.

Rubin, Barry. *The Truth About Syria*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Russell, George. "U.N. Refugee Agency Budget Explodes as U.S. Foots Much of the Bill." 05.11.2009.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin Books, 1995.

Salamandra, Christa. *A New Old Damascus : Authenticity and Distinction in Urban Syria*. Indiana Series in Middle East Studies. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2005.

Salibi, Kamal, and Yusuf K. Khoury. *The Missionary Herald Reports from Nothern Iraq*. Amman: Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies, 1997.

Salter, Mark B. *Barbarians and Civilization in International Relations*. London: Pluto Press, 2002.

———. "The Global Visa Regime and the Political Technologies of the International Self: Borders, Bodies, Biopolitics." *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 31, no. 2 (2006): 167-89.

Salzman, Philip Carl. "On Reflexivity." *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 3 (2002): 805-11.

Sassoon, Joseph. *The Iraqi Refugees: The New Crisis in the Middle East*. International Library of Migration Studies. I.B. Tauris, 2009.

Schenker, David. "Syria's Role in Regional Destabilization: An American View." *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs* (October 2007).

Schlumberger, Oliver. "Opening Old Bottles in Search of New Wine: On Nondemocratic Legitimacy in the Middle East." *Middle East Critique* 19, no. 3 (233 - 50.

Schmelter, Susanne. "Erfahrungsbericht Studium an Der Universität Damaskus 2009/10." edited by Universität Marburg. Marburg, 2010.

Schmitt, Carl. *Political Theology : Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* [in Translation of: Politische Theologie.]. Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought. Cambridge, Mass. ; London: MIT, 1985.

Schmitt, Carl, and G. L. Ulmen. *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum*. Telos Press, 2003.

Scholte, Jan Aart. *Democratizing the Global Economy: The Role of Civil Society*. Coventry: Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation, University of Warwick, 2004.

Sending, Ole Jacob, and Iver B. Neumann. "Governance to Governmentality: Analyzing Ngos, States, and Power." *International Studies Quarterly* 50, no. 3 (2006): 651-72.

Seshadri, Kalpana Rahita. "When Home Is a Camp Global Sovereignty, Biopolitic and Internally Displaced Persons." *Social Text* 26, no. 1 94 (2008): 29 - 58.

Sewell, William H. *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Shami, Seteney. "Transnationalism and Refugee Studies: Rethinking Forced Migration and Identity in the Middle East." *Journal of refugee studies* 9, no. 1 (1996): 3-26.

Shoeb, Marwa, Harvey M. Weinstein, and Jodi Halpern. "Living in Religious Time and Space: Iraqi Refugees in Dearborn, Michigan." *Journal of refugee studies* 20, no. 3

(September 1, 2007 2007): 441-60.

Soguk, Nevgaz, and Geoffrey Whitehall. "Wandering Grounds: Transversality, Identity, Territoriality and Movement." *Millennium Journal of International Studies* 28, no. 3 (1999): 675-98.

Söndergaard, Hans Peter, Solvig Ekblad, and Töres Theorell. "Self-Reported Life Event Patterns and Their Relation to Health among Recently Resettled Iraqi and Kurdish Refugees in Sweden." *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 189, no. 12 (2001): 838-45.

Starr, Stephen. "Syrian Civil Society Empowerment 2010 New Directions for Syrian Society." *Syria Forward Magazine*, 03.03.2010 2010.

Steinberger, Jonathan. *Why Switzerland?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.

Steinmetz, Georg. "Odious Comparisons: Incommensurability, the Case Study, and Small Ns in Sociology." *Sociological Theory* 22:3 (2004).

Stepputat, Finn. "Violence, Sovereignty, and Citizenship in Postcolonial Peru." In *Sovereign Bodies : Citizens, Migrants, and States in the Postcolonial World*, edited by Thomas Blom Hansen. 61-81. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Syria Today. "120 Iraqi Refugees Resettled in Germany." Damascus, Syria, April 2009.

Syrian Arab Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Paper Presented by the Government of Syrian Arab Republic to the International Conference on Addressing the Humanitarian Needs of the Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons inside Iraq and in the Neighbouring Countries." In *International Conference on Addressing the Humanitarian Needs of the Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons inside Iraq and in the neighbouring Countries*. Geneva, 2007.

Syssner, Josefina. "No Space for Citizens? Conceptualisations of Citizenship in a Functional Region." *Citizenship Studies* 15, no. 1 (109 - 23.

Tadros, Mariz. "The Securitisation of Civil Society: A Case Study of Ngos-State Security Investigations (Ssi) Relations in Egypt." *Conflict, Security and Development* 11 (79-103.

Tait, Paul. "Iraqi Translators Struggle for Safety and a Visa." 24.08.2007.

Talhami, Ghada Hashem. "Syria: Islam, Arab Nationalism and the Military." *Middle East Policy* VIII, no. 4 (2001).

Tan, Sor-hoon. *Challenging Citizenship : Group Membership and Cultural Identity in a Global Age*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005.

Tascon, Sonia Magdalena. "Refugees and Asylum-Seekers in Australia: Border-Crossers of the Postcolonial Imaginary." *Australian Journal of Human Rights* 8, no. 1 (2002).

Thompson, E. *Colonial Citizens : Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon*. The History and Society of the Modern Middle East. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

Thomson, Janice E. "State Sovereignty in International Relations: Bridging the Gap between Theory and Empirical Research." *International Studies Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (1995): 213-33.

Toqueville, Alexandre de. *Democracy in America*. 1893.

Totah, Faedah M. "Return to the Origin: Negotiating the Modern and Unmodern in the Old City of Damascus." *City & Society* 21, no. 1 (2009): 58-81.

Troeller, Gary G. "Refugees in Contemporary International Relations: Reconciling State and Individual Sovereignty." In *New Issues in Refugee Research*, edited by UNHCR. Geneva: UNHCR, 2003.

Turner, Simon. "Suspended Spaces - Contesting Sovereignties in a Refugee Camp." In *Sovereign Bodies : Citizens, Migrants, and States in the Postcolonial World*, edited by

Thomas Blom Hansen. 312 - 32. Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005.

UNHCR. "Press Release Resettlement to Germany of Iraqi Refugees in Syria Gets under Way." edited by UNHCR, 19 March 2009.

———. "Press Release: Syrian Women's Union and UNHCR Inaugurate Centre to Empower Refugee Women." edited by UNHCR. Damascus, 25 November 2009.

———. "UNHCR Country Operations Plan 2006 Syrian Arab Republic." In *UNHCR Country Operations Plan*, edited by UNHCR. Geneva, 2006.

———. "Country Operations Plan 2007 Syrian Arab Republic." In *UNHCR Country Operations Plan*, edited by UNHCR. Geneva: UNHCR, 2007.

———. "UNHCR Global Appeal 2010-2011 Syrian Arab Republic." edited by UNHCR. New York, USA: UNHCR, 2009.

———. "Frequently Asked Questions About Resettlement." UNHCR, http://www.UNHCR.org/pages/4a16b1676.html.

———. "UNHCR Global Appeal 2011 (Update) Syrian Arab Republic." edited by UNHCR. New York, USA: UNHCR, 2010.

———. "Contributions to UNHCR for Budget Year 2010." edited by UNHCR. Geneva: UNHCR, 2011.

———. "UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs 2011." edited by UNHCR. Geneva: UNHCR, July 2010.

———. "UNHCR Resettlement Handbook." Geneva: UNHCR, November 2004.

———. "UNHCR Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas." Geneva, September 2009.

UNHCR, UNICEF, and World Food Programme. "Assessment on the Situation of Iraqi Refugees in Syria." Damascus: UNHCR UNICEF World Food Programme, March 2006.

UNHCR, Internal Audit Division. "Audit Report UNHCR Iraq Situation in Syria." edited by UNHCR Internal Audit Division. New York; Geneva: UNHCR, April 2009.

UNHCR, Syria. "UNHCR Syria Update April 2008." In *UNHCR Syria Updates*, edited by UNHCR. Damascus: UNHCR Syria April 2008.

UNHCR Syria. "UNHCR Signs Landmark Accord in Syria with International Ngo." *UNHCR Press Release*, 8 May 2008.

———. "A Round up of 2008." In *UNHCR Syria Updates*, edited by UNHCR. Damascus: UNHCR Syria, 2009.

———. "UNHCR Syria Update Autumn 2009." In *UNHCR Syria Updates*, edited by UNHCR. Damascus: UNHCR Syria, 2009.

———. "UNHCR Syria Update Summer 2010." In *UNHCR Syria Updates*, edited by UNHCR. Damascus: UNHCR Syria, 2010.

———. "UNHCR Syria Update Autumn 2010." In *UNHCR Syria Updates*, edited by UNHCR. Damascus: UNHCR Syria, 2010.

UNHCR Working Group on Resettlement. "Resettlement of Iraqi Refugees, Notes." UNHCR, March 12, 2007.

Valbjorn, Morten, and Andre Bank. "Examining the 'Post' in Post-Democratization: The Future of Middle Eastern Political Rule through Lenses of the Past." *Middle East Critique* 19, no. 3 (183 - 200.

Various. "The Investigation of Multiple Identities in the Middle East." *Bulletin of the Council for British Research in the Levant* 5 (2010): 75-101.

Weber, Cynthia. *Simulating Sovereignty: Intervention, the State and Symbolic Exchange*. Cambridge Studies in International Relations. Cambridge University Press, 1995.

———. *Simulating Sovereignty: Intervention, the State and Symbolic Exchange*. Cambridge Studies in International Relations. Cambridge University Press, 1995.

———. "Desert Designs: Design, Citizenship, and Political Acts of Citizenship with/out Community." Paper presented at the Citizens without Community, London, 2010.

Wedeen, Lisa. *Ambiguities of Domination : Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

———. "Seeing Like a Citizen, Acting Like a State: Exemplary Events in Unified Yemen." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 04 (2003): 680-713.

Weir, Lorna. "Sovereignty, Governance and the Political: The Problematic of Foucault." *Thesis eleven* 94, no. 1 (2008): 49-49-71.

Weiss Fagen, Patricia. "Iraqi Refugees: Seeking Stability in Syria and Jordan." edited by Georgetown University Institute for the Study of International Migration. Washington DC: Georgetown University, 2007.

Wendt, Alexander, and Raymond Duvall. "Sovereignty and the Ufo." *Political Theory* 36, no. 4 (August 1, 2008 2008): 607-33.

Wieland, Carsten. *Syrien Nach Dem Irak-Krieg : Bastion Gegen Islamisten Oder Staat Vor Dem Kollaps?* Islamkundliche Untersuchungen ;. Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 2004.

Zaiotti, Ruben. "Dealing with Non-Palestinian Refugees in the Middle East: Policies and Practices in an Uncertain Environment." *International Journal of Refugee Law* 18, no. 2 (June 2006 2006): 333-53.

Zisser, Eyal. *Commanding Syria*. London: IB Tauris, 2007.

UN Documents consulted

Statute of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.