History 232-601

Iraq: Sanctions and Long-Lasting Consequences

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Beginning in 1990, Iraq was subject to economic sanctions which effectively isolated the country from the rest of the world. Intended to force Saddam Hussein's regime into capitulation to international demands for disarmament or depose him altogether, the effects were felt not by the Iraqi government but by the civilian population. Demands for humanitarian relief were met with stop-gap measures unable to meet the needs of the most vulnerable, even as it was clear the regime was not going anywhere. It would take a full-scale invasion in 2003 to depose Saddam Hussein. By then, 13 years of hunger, sickness, damage, anger, and resentment had changed Iraq and its people.

On August 2nd, 1990 Iraq invaded the neighboring country of Kuwait on the pretext of an old border dispute, accusations of oil price manipulation, and diagonal drilling. The decade long Iran-Iraq war had put Saddam Hussein and his country in a weak economic position. Hussein had believed he could invade Iran under the justification of regaining what he considered Iraqi territory, and consolidate regional power, assuming the "mantle of Arab Nationalism."[1] These were oft-repeated goals of Hussein throughout his presidency. Unfortunately for Iraq, there was no decisive victory, but an 8 year stalemate where no territory was won and reparations would have to be made to Iran. Spending on the war was so great that it outstripped the oil revenues Iraq was taking in, and in order to finance the deficit, Iraq drew from international reserves and took on foreign debt, much of which from its neighbor Kuwait. To compensate, Iraq abandoned development plans, and reduced imports and social services.[2] In short, the war with Iran had left Iraq with a shrunken, disorganized economy. The invasion of Kuwait was supposed to be another short cut to prominence for Saddam Hussein, gain strategic territory for Iraq, and leadership over the Arab region.

International response to the invasion of Kuwait was swift. That same day, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 660 condemning the invasion and demanding the immediate withdrawal of troops. August 6th, 1990, Resolution 661 was drafted and passed. This resolution put into place the sanctions that would define Iraq for the next decade and after the war to come. This and a series of follow-up resolutions established an oil embargo, naval and air blockades, banned financial transactions, froze Iraq's international assets, and established trade sanctions that banned imports and exports of any goods, with the noted exception of those for humanitarian purposes.[3]

Had the Cold War not come to an end, the US response to the invasion of Kuwait might have been very different. The United States had supported Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war. US strategy in the Middle East hinged on three goals: protection of Israel, controlling oil access, and stability.[4] In furtherance of these goals, the Reagan administration backed loans to Iraq and defended Hussein against human rights violations and chemical weapons concerns; deciding he was a "lesser evil" than Ayatollah Khomeini.[5] With the Soviet Union in dissolution, Iraq was "elevated to the status of world-class villain"[6] to play against the US role of international superpower. The previous support for Saddam Hussein's regime and dismissal of humanitarian abuses was reversed. The United States now viewed Iraq as a destabilizing force in the region, allowing the US to embark on a campaign of demonization.[7] The American public would be largely unaware of the suffering of the average Iraqi, having been conditioned to accept that the population of Iraq, their government, and Saddam Hussein were all one and the same. With the backing of the United Nations, Operation Desert Shield brought military from 34 countries, including the US and Britain, to the Persian Gulf and bases in Saudi Arabia. At the same time, President George H.W. Bush pronounced in speeches that the oppressed peoples of Iraq should

rise up in rebellion against the regime. Hussein, a perpetual miscalculator, had no intention of retreating from Kuwait, and framed the inevitable confrontation in terms of a great Islamic struggle.[8]

Operation Desert Storm began on January 17th, 1991 and ended on February 28th, 1991. To say victory was decisive was an understatement. The so-called "ground war" began February 24th, after weeks of aerial and naval bombing. Beyond military targets, civilian infrastructure was heavily damaged, including power plants and water treatment facilities.[9] US-led coalition troops pursued the retreating Iraqi army out of Kuwait but fell short of marching into the cities or attacking Baghdad. The immediate reaction to the defeat of the Iraqi army was the predicted uprising of the Shia living in southern Iraq and the Kurds in northern Iraq, which had been encouraged by the US administration. Unfortunately for the rebellion, the support from the United States was moral, not military. This uprising, or *intifada*, was brutally crushed by regime forces.

In April of 1991 the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 687. This resolution affirmed the previous resolutions regarding the sanctions against Iraq, and detailed exactly what the terms for compliance were for the sanctions to be lifted. The UNSC required that boundaries between Iraq and Kuwait be settled, and that violence against Iraqi civilians by the government had to cease. Iraq was to be disarmed; all weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) were to be destroyed. A monitoring plan had to be adopted to ensure continued compliance with weapons bans, and Iraq was to establish a fund to maintain payments of all reparations.[10] To oversee Iraq's compliance, the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) was established. The Commission, in concert with the IAEA, was charged with reviewing documents that Iraq was to voluntarily provide with respect to its weapons programs, monitoring and inspecting

facilities for weapons material and records, and terminating development or production of these weapons. They were also tasked with ensuring the destruction of WMD's.[11] No commission was established to monitor and address the oppression of Shia or Kurds under the regime. This resolution made one alteration in that it dropped the reference to importing food only "in humanitarian circumstances," However, without the ability to export oil, and its assets frozen, this change had no impact on the humanitarian situation in Iraq in 1991.[12] Iraq sits atop the world's second largest oil supply, and was almost completely dependent on oil revenue.[13]

The United States and the rest of the international community expected that cooperation and compliance would be swift, or else the regime would collapse in short order. Saddam Hussein's expectation was that the United States and the international community would lose interest, and that his Arab neighbors' support would outweigh and outlast foreign opposition. Both sides possessed the operative intelligence to know these expectations would not be met, but in the case of Hussein, his associates' fear of him often prevented valuable intelligence about the West's positions and intentions from reaching him.[14] The United States had no such excuse.

Literature Review

There is a consensus in the literature on the subject of the sanctions decade in Iraq that the civilian population suffered greatly as a result. Scholars, journalists, and historians agree that an unintended effect of the sanctions, and a primary reason for their failure to depose the regime, is that the population that was supposed to rebel and overthrow Saddam Hussein was made dependent on his government for sustenance. It is apparent that the division between the United Nations and the US on the purpose of the sanctions caused difficulty in diplomatic negotiations and addressing humanitarian needs; and extended the length of time beyond which the sanctions

would ever be effective.[15] The final judgement regarding the effectiveness of the sanctions, as far as their intended purpose as stated in the UNSC resolutions, is that they in fact did work, that Saddam Hussein's ability to develop and deploy weapons of mass destruction was halted due to the work of UNSCOM and the IAEA.[16]

The disagreement lies in whether or not the sanctions were worth the cost. Part of this debate stems from the argument over who retains the most responsibility for the duration of the sanctions. While it is obvious that Saddam Hussein oppressed his own people, refused cooperation in an effort to get better terms, and provoked his neighbors with threats, the no-fly zones and weapons inspections effectively eliminated Iraq as a military threat in the region.

Several books covering Saddam Hussein as well as the history of modern Iraq debate these questions of responsibility with varying degrees of blame for each side. Journalist Saïd Aburish's *The Politics of Revenge* paints a picture of a leader inept in foreign diplomacy, "skin deep" movements towards modernity, and domestic concerns revolving solely around protecting his position. He also argues that the intransigence of both the US and Britain are equally responsible for the length of time the Iraqi people suffered. *A Modern History of Iraq* by Phebe Marr also assigns all sides responsibility. Much of her work details the inner workings of the regime to maintain power despite the hurdles of *intifada* and lost wars. Sandra Mackey's *The Reckoning* similarly addresses responsibility on all sides for the future struggle that would face both Iraq and the US in a future war, however it takes a different tack with respect to the sanctions and humanitarian crisis, claiming that Saddam Hussein stockpiled baby formula and high protein foods in warehouses, refusing to distribute them unless the sanctions were lifted. This claim does not cite any sources, and none of the primary source reports from the WHO, UNICEF, FAO or ICRC identify any such evidence. Each of these books takes into account the

assessment of the efficacy of the sanctions in ending the WMD programs, satisfying the conditions for sanctions to be lifted by the United Nations, while identifying the US and British demands for regime change as the stumbling block for the Security Council to do so.

Much of the papers published during the sanctions decade, especially early on such as the work done by Nimah Mazaheri and James Fine, address the inefficacy of sanctions in generating regime change, owing to the dependence on the government by the population for food. Later works produced prior to the 2003 invasion by Abbas Alnasrawi and Phyllis Bennis begin to cite the collapsed middle class as a lost source for regime change, and protracted infrastructure damage as another humanitarian issue prolonging and intensifying the effects of hunger and illness. All of these papers make it a point to cite the pre-existing conditions at the start of the sanctions as factors in the effect the sanctions would have.

A unique paper by Jean Dreze and Haris Gazdar, "Hunger and Poverty in Iraq, 1991" is an analysis of field work conducted by the authors as part of the International Study Team. While presenting a straightforward statistical analysis based on interviews and surveys through August and September of 1991, the study presents a picture contrasting Iraq's then-current state with pre-war conditions. Unlike much else written about Iraq and the sanctions, this study avoids any political judgements on either side of the conflict. In fact, the report praises the efficiency of Iraq's public distribution system, finds little evidence of corruption or mishandling of rations, and discounts the complaint that the Iraqi army was taking ration shares large enough to deprive civilians.

It does, however, address the problem of data cited by many in the West during the crisis, as well as after the 2003 invasion, as unreliable. Almost every paper admits that any data coming from the Iraqi government is suspect, but to compensate cite statistics from UNICEF, The Red

Cross, the WHO, and the FAO. Debate continues over whether statistics that came in part from the government are inflated or deflated, as many of the regions of Iraq outside of the cities are difficult for organizations to reach, as well as the practice of families not reporting deaths in order to maintain their rations.[17]

Similar is "Food Security and Food Sovereignty in Iraq: The Impact of War and Sanctions on the Civilian Population," published in the *Journal of Food, Culture and Society*; a study that determined sanctions effects on food security and sovereignty using NGO reports. There is no political discussion or blame, however it does identify continuing negative effects on the civilians that were not being addressed after the 2003 invasion.

On the far end of the spectrum, we have John Mueller and Karl Mueller's "Sanctions of Mass Destruction", which not only downplays the significance of WMD's and rogue states as threats but also makes the argument that the imposition of sanctions themselves are a weapon of mass destruction for the widespread, long-lasting damage inflicted on the civilian population.

While the invasion of Iraq by the United States in 2003 would make the debate over the use and effectiveness of sanctions moot, journalists and historians would make the case that much of the difficulties experienced by the coalition in rebuilding the country can be directly tied to the effects of the sanctions.[18]

The Sanctions Era, 1991-2003

It is undeniable that the sanctions imposed on Iraq following its invasion of Kuwait, which remained in place until the invasion by the US in 2003, did severe harm to the Iraqi people, their economy and their infrastructure. Further, due to the nature of Saddam Hussein's regime, sanctions supplied the dictator with both a means to maintain power through resource

control and an enemy to blame the suffering of the people outside of Iraq. More important, the sanctions made the job of rebuilding the nation after the invasion of 2003 all but impossible.

After the post-Gulf War *intifada*, Hussein sought to solidify his hold on power. He had lost two wars, the economy was in ruins, and the sanctions were having a powerful impact on food supply, medicine, and the ability to take advantage of their vast oil reserves to repair damaged infrastructure. Ensuring his leadership was secure required propaganda and repression. Iraq was a majority Shia country, however the government and security forces were almost entirely Sunni, and his inner circle were members of Saddam Hussein's family and tribe. Family and clan ties were drawn tighter to protect his position.[19] As soon as the embargoes were in place, Hussein distributed food and other supplies to loyalists and family. Sunnis in general living in the "Sunni Triangle" were provided greater access to what was available on the open market. Additionally, members of the Baath Party, Iraqi army, and security forces were given preferential treatment, with monthly allowances, and rations apportioned to their families which included those members serving even while the army was providing their meals.[20]

Saddam re-armed tribal *shaikhs* in a bid to use these groups in the countryside to control the population. Other benefits to the tribal leaders included the return of land and dispensing of cash, as well as restoring some tribal justice traditions into the country's legal code. This was to bring renewed prestige and legitimacy to tribal status, even going so far as to allow party, military, and regime figures to use tribal names, previously outlawed.[21]

Hussein had begun to pivot towards Islam during the Iran-Iraq war as a means to consolidate support among the Shia and tribesmen, but would now use religion to frame his battle against the west and the United States. Where the Baath party had been secular, changing identity to a nationalist, religious regime appealed to more of his own people as well as to other

Arab nations. Radio Baghdad began frequent Koran recitations on the air, Hussein was seen in public wearing traditional Muslim garb, and his many murals now included Islamic iconography.[22] Even the Iraqi flag added the *takbir* (allahu akbar) to bolster the appearance of embracing Islam. His speeches to the public were peppered with anti-American and anti-United Nations rhetoric, combined with nationalist symbols to rally support of his fight against the West. He sought to portray the sanctions as hypocritical, unjust, and a symptom of American imperialism, ensuring that Iraqis knew it was the Americans who were threatening their sovereignty and starving them, not Saddam Hussein.[23] The following is from a national address on January 17, 1998:

> "Harm might be done to Iraq, and blood might be shed on its land in larger or smaller amount than before, and cases of martyrdom increase among those who will be bitten by the snakes of perfidy and embargo, and the roll of the wheel of development might suffer to some extent and to a certain degree, but Iraq…will remain." [24]

Sovereignty and control of Iraq's own oil wealth were the principal arguments made by Saddam Hussein against cooperation. Hussein relied on his non-conventional weapons programs. Regardless of their actual operational status, it was imperative that the regime's enemies believe it had them. The knowledge that his weapons were destroyed or had never existed would indicate Hussein was weak, both to his Arab neighbors as well as his own people. From the outset of inspections in June 1991, Hussein made the work of UNSCOM difficult. He would order weapons secretly destroyed. He would move weapons inventory to palaces and declare them off-limits as private residences. The Iraqi government was asked to provide inventories, and evidence of what had been destroyed. Iraq would report there was nothing left, and when

inspectors would demand to see sites believed to be weapons facilities, these requests would either be granted, denied, or result in confrontations punctuated by bombings from US and British forces.[25]

Between 1991 and 1994, the IAEA and UNSCOM together located and destroyed the nuclear research facilities and equipment in the Iraqi nuclear program. By 1994 the IAEA declared the program ended. No stockpile of biological weapons was ever discovered. Over 148,000 tons of chemical agents such as sarin and mustard gas were destroyed by the weapons inspection teams.[26] There were denials from Iraq amid findings by UNSCOM of a VX program, all of which Iraq insisted was destroyed. The repeated pattern of partial cooperation, denying access, making false claims, threatening to move troops to borders, and interference with inspection teams prevented any amount of trust from being built on either side, and intransigence set in.[27]

It became apparent almost immediately after the conclusion of the Gulf War that despite George Bush's failure to support the *intifada* he had encouraged with military force, the goal of the sanctions was to bring regime change, not just compliance with U.N. resolutions. In May of 1991 in a conference with Helmut Khol, Bush was quoted, "At this juncture, my view is we don't want to lift these sanctions as long as Saddam Hussein is in power."[28] The earliest efforts involved the CIA planning options for the overthrow of Hussein in August of 1990[29]. It could not just be any Iraqi, the United States was looking for a "suitable replacement", or, in other words, someone who would support US interests and maintain stability, but who did not necessarily have to foster democratic reforms or stop the repression of the Shia and Kurds.[30] It was then US ambassador to the United Nations Madeline Albright who announced in 1997, "We do not agree with the nations who argue that if Iraq complies with its obligations concerning weapons of mass

destruction, sanctions should be lifted."[31] President Bill Clinton would issue a statement in November of 1998 that "over the long term the best way to address that threat [Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and provocations] is through a government in Baghdad, a new government that is committed to peace in the region."[32] The very incentive to cooperate, that through compliance with UNSCOM and the elimination of WMD programs sanctions would be lifted, was erased with the declarations and maneuvers by the United States and Britain to tie regime change to the lifting of sanctions. If nothing less than his removal from power would end the sanctions, then it did not matter to Hussein if he did or did not maintain WMDs; in either case he did not have any reason to cooperate with the United Nations.

This policy of regime change took shape while the US and Britain were taking a liberal reading of the details in the UNSC resolutions, particularly the language in Resolution 687 referring to the "need to be assured of Iraq's peaceful intentions", known colloquially as the "Saddam Hussein Clause".[33] They would later use this section and other language in the resolutions to justify periodic attacks when weapons inspections were disrupted, as well as insisting that sanctions could not be lifted if compliance with WMD program obliteration was secured so long as Hussein remained in power. Saïd Aburish attributes this important development to the problem that "the leaders of both countries elevated the overthrow of Saddam Hussein to a national aim. They promised this to their people without developing any sensible plans for achieving this aim or coping with the consequences of an unexpected internal coup in Iraq."[34] However, this loose interpretation of the language in the resolutions would create a rift between the US, the U.N., and the other members of the Security Council such as France and Russia.[35]

What was troubling to the other members of the Security Council, the international community, and the organizations working within the country before, during, and after the Gulf War, was the burgeoning humanitarian crisis. The sanctions imposed conditions on Iraq that would devastate the economy, health, and living standards of the civilian population beyond that which was due to war.

Operation Desert Storm reduced the electricity and water supply in Baghdad to 5% of what it previously was. Sewage systems and treatment plants were destroyed, allowing untreated sewage to be dumped into the Tigris River.[36] Infrastructure damage included oil refineries, food storage facilities, industrial facilities, power generation, and water treatment facilities. Transportation was hobbled by destroyed railroads, highways, and bridges; almost half the country's 900,000 telephone lines were beyond repair.[37] The embargo prevented any replacements parts, tools, raw materials, and other supplies necessary to repair this extensive damage from being imported. Iraq was practically relegated to a pre-industrial society.

The inability to generate and deliver power throughout the country would impede the operation of water pumping and treatment, such that more than half of the rural population and almost a third of those residing in cities were drinking contaminated water.[38] Even the chemicals for water purification were 30 times more impure than what was being used before the embargo, resulting in further deterioration of the system, requiring more maintenance for which were no parts to repair it with.[39] Because they might contribute to weapons programs, or what the Security Council called "dual purpose", even with humanitarian exceptions products such as chlorine, syringes, fertilizers, and radiology diagnostics were denied import.

The International Red Cross issued a report in the year 2000 entitled "Iraq: a Decade of Sanctions." As part of this report they assessed Iraq's 130 hospitals, finding bomb damage from

the Gulf War remained unrepaired. Electricity and ventilation systems were not working, and equipment for essential services like imaging and monitoring of patients were no longer being replaced when they failed. Basic medications were in short supply or simply absent. Basic supply shortages of stethoscopes, sterilizers, even paper affected doctor's offices as well as hospitals. The Red Cross noted a shortage in personnel, as doctors and nurses left the country. Under the embargo, scientific literature was banned, perversely including medical texts. The embargo presented difficulties in keeping medical professionals in touch with others outside Iraq, and so medical technology, treatment standards, and training standards all declined.[40]

Oil production between the start of the embargo in 1990 and 1991 fell by 85%.[41] Excluding Iraq (and its oil) from the world markets devastated the economy. Iraq lost over two-thirds of its GDP. Public services, infrastructure, and public employment all went unfunded. Lack of raw materials, spare parts, power, and basic infrastructure such as bridges, communications, and working roads also devastated the private economic sector. Unemployment soared.[42]

Wages for the average Iraqi fell to between 5% and 7% of their pre-crisis levels, when increases in prices for food and consumer goods were factored in.[43] Inflation rose drastically, but wages did not. In 1989, an Iraqi *dinar* was worth $3 US. Over the course of the 13-year sanctions regime, 2,200 *dinars* was worth a single $1.[44]

Iraq imported 70% of its food supply, or between $2 and $3 billion annually,[45] owing to geography and climate preventing self-sufficient food production. Immediately after the sanctions began, the Iraqi government initiated two programs to ensure food security. First, they implemented a rationing system that can be credited with preventing mass starvation. Ration coupons were distributed to every household, and the coupons were exchanged for allotted food

amounts at a subsidized price. In 1991, the average household reported a ration per person amounting to 1400 calories per day.[46] Due to hyperinflation and unemployment, the cost of food on the open market was skyrocketing, and Iraqis found themselves selling off their personal property in order to afford it. Second, the government attempted to boost agricultural production. Farmers were provided with monetary incentives such as price increases to try and cultivate as much land as possible. The World Health Organization in a March 1996 report entitled *The Health Conditions of the Population of Iraq Since the Gulf Crisis* declared that the result of these efforts was not increased food production but rather environmental damage.

Agriculture production suffered due to a variety of factors: migration to cities reduced the labor force, while the climate, always an issue in the region, turned against the Iraqis from 1989 on with little rainfall producing low yields.[47] Without spare parts, farm equipment went unrepaired. Pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizer were all denied under the sanctions. Damage to irrigation systems and drainage systems resulted in arable land being turned into useless marsh in many places. Where there were attempts at rice cultivation, stagnating water bred mosquitoes, and without insecticides for control and a shortage of drugs for treatment, malaria outbreaks ensued.[48] Long-term damage to cultivated land included deteriorated soil quality, soil salinity, and pest infestation; all resulting from lack of proper machinery for land preparation and crop rotation, lack of pest control products, and lack of proper irrigation systems. These necessities were absent to the sanctions.[49]

Child mortality skyrocketed in the first five years of sanctions. UNICEF reports on child mortality ranked Iraq at 50 deaths per thousand children under 5 years old annually as of 1990. By 1994, that number had climbed to 71. By 1996, it was up to 122.[50] Admission to hospitals for children suffering from malnutrition increased 50 times between 1990 and 1994.[51] Low birth

weights were recorded increasing from 4.5% of births in Iraq in 1990 to 21.1% in 1994.[52] The WHO concluded that malnutrition compounded the effects of daily hazards such as poor sanitation. Infectious and opportunistic diseases like cholera, typhoid, measles, tetanus, polio, diphtheria, and more were rampant as water was contaminated, malnutrition weakened the immune system, and few functioning medical facilities or drugs existed to treat the ill.

The suffering inflicted on the people of Iraq was no less than a humanitarian crisis, one that the United Nations is supposed to address, not perpetuate. This situation was not unknown to the U.N. As early as 1991, International Study Teams, UN agencies, and international humanitarian aid organizations submitted reports that conditions in Iraq, specifically caused by the total trade embargo, were resulting in illness, deaths, and growing crises.[53] In July of that year Sadruddin Aga Khan, the Executive Delegate of the Secretary General, led a mission to Iraq to determine humanitarian assistance needs. The Sadruddin Report, as it came to be called, concluded among other things that many of the supplies relevant to repairing the communications system and electrical power plants in Iraq were not being recognized for humanitarian needs[54]. As the reports mounted and the situation dragged on, notable resignations drew attention to U.N. inaction: Dennis Halliday, UN Humanitarian Coordinator, Hans Von Sponeck, Assistant UN Secretary General in Iraq, and Jutta Burghardt, World Food Programme head in Iraq, all tendered resignations in protest.[55] The United States and Britain maintained that "the costs of the sanctions are being caused by Saddam's policies rather than the sanctioners".[56] Again, for all their intelligence reports and diplomacy experts who understood that Hussein was in every respect a survivor and would never put himself in danger, it never occurred to the US that it was demanding exactly that.[57]

The chorus of humanitarian organizations, journalists, and reports directly to the United Nations would eventually provoke the Security Council to pass Resolution 986: The Oil for Food Program. It was determined that the costs of returning basic infrastructure to Iraq on par with pre-war levels, including oil refineries and pipelines, transportation and telecommunication systems, water, sanitation, and power, would cost in excess of $18 billion, while the cost of food, agriculture, and healthcare imports annually was estimated at $3.6 billion.[58] These financial burdens, even when recalculated to provide minimum levels of service for the country, were beyond the scope of the United Nations budget. There was already a process in place where the Security Council could approve the sale of Iraqi oil under resolution 661, and it was recommended that the U.N. take steps to loosen restrictions on repair supplies and utilize existing oil resources in Iraq to finance imports of food, medicine, and agricultural products. Resolution 986 was adopted in 1995. Every six months, Iraq could sell up to $2 billion of its oil. The Security Council was to monitor all sales and purchases, and 30% of the proceeds would be diverted to the Compensation Fund to pay for U.N. operations in Iraq.[59] To literally no one's surprise, Iraq rejected the terms of the program. It was not until May of 1996 that Iraq relented, and not until December of that year that they were selling oil on the world market. Over the next two years, the dollar amount cap was raised as it was apparent that needs were still not being met, and eventually the cap was removed altogether in December 1999.

While the Oil for Food program allowed much needed funding, food, and supplies to enter Iraq, the repairs and maintenance to infrastructure needed, combined with the food supply for the population, far outstripped the program's resources. Sanctions still prevented the import of parts for the majority of oil facilities and pipelines, hampering their ability to pump and process enough oil to meet their financial burdens. Supplies such as graphite, computers and car

parts were still denied entry into Iraq under the "dual use" designation.[60] The transactions were all processed through the Iraqi government; the same government that the United States insisted had to be deposed if the sanctions were ever to be lifted. The government, in turn, doled out these precious resources to wherever it would ensure the most support rather than who in the country was most in need of humanitarian aid.[61]

While the increase in imports allowed into Iraq after December 1996 resulted in the ration quantities increasing, there was still not enough food and no income to pay for more. A ration basket for a family lasted around 21 days, forcing Iraqis to find additional food at market rates, if they could afford it. The cost of food to sustain a family increased by April of 2000 to 72% of a household's income.[62]

The social costs of the sanctions can be traced directly to the economic costs, but cannot be calculated in lost GDP or price indexes. It is estimated that over 2 million people fled Iraq during this time. This was what Saïd Aburish called "the *crème de la crème* of Iraqi society."[63] The upper and middle class who had the resources to flee did so. The bulk of Iraq's engineers, doctors, lawyers, and professors who were unable to find work or suitable conditions moved to neighboring countries or to Europe and the United States. The middle class all but disappeared through attrition and downward mobility. This, ironically, was the segment of the population that would be in the best position to mount an opposition to Saddam Hussein.[64]

Government cuts led civil servants to seek out menial labor to supplement their reduced pay, sometimes holding three or four jobs. For the lower-class laborer, many men seeking work to support their families were not finding it in Iraq and fled elsewhere for income, leaving the women behind to raise their children. Divorces increased. Homelessness increased as people ran out of belongings and resorted to selling their homes. Children dropped out of school to earn

income for their families, often resorting to prostitution.[65] After a decade of sanctions a prosperous black market developed that taught a young generation of Iraqis the art of smuggling and desensitized them to criminal activity. These youth did not grow up in the modern, literate Iraq of the 1970s. The 1997 census of Iraq indicated that 56% of the population was age 19 or younger.[66] This meant that the majority of the population had been raised after Saddam Hussein was president, and had spent their formative years under the sanctions. This is an entire generation that lived in great poverty, was malnourished, and the vast majority unable to reap the benefits of an education, as books were out of date, and teachers and supplies were rare.[67] Phebe Marr cites numerous reports on the eve of the 2003 US invasion that a decade of sanctions had left 80% of primary schools in poor or critical condition, enrollment in schools had fallen to 50%, and the literacy rate to 57%.[68] The anchor of Iraqi society was the family, and both had collapsed.[69]

Sandra Mackey recounts an undated anecdote in *The Reckoning* where she speaks with an Iraqi woman who says to her, "I will teach my children to hate America forever."[70] No aspect of daily life was unaffected by the sanctions imposed on the Iraqi population. Even after humanitarian concerns were aired and changes made to the administration of the sanctions, it was not enough to feed, employ, and guarantee the safety of 22 million people. Their government fed them a diet of rations and propaganda about the struggle against the Western Powers framed as a holy war. When those Western Powers finally took it upon themselves to liberate the civilians under the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, there should have been no surprises what the result would be.

Conclusion

The chaotic post-invasion period, subsequent insurgency, and emergence of fundamentalist terrorist groups were the direct result of a broken society, lack of basic services, and radicalized youth coming out of a decade of international sanctions and isolation. Estimates of the death toll directly attributed to sanctions range from 500,000 to 1,500,000 people.[71]

Economic sanctions are meant to "spur collective action among domestic interest groups and civil society."[72] However the authoritarian regime of Saddam Hussein made use of the limited resources to provide comfort to his tribe and sect, inner circle, and closest supporters to maintain his power base. The national ration system that held starvation at bay also placed the population in complete dependence on the regime, removing any incentive for the ordinary citizen to attempt to foment rebellion. Finally, those very domestic interest groups counted on to overthrow Saddam Hussein were eliminated through the eradication of the middle class, who either sank into poverty or if they had the means and opportunity, fled the country.

Any time a country is invaded and occupied by a foreign power, there will be resentment and anger, regardless of the righteous reasons for military action or the liberated status of the people. For Iraqis, "the U.N. has been seen as the strangler of the people and as a corrupt organization."[73] The Coalition Provisional Authority headed by the United States to govern Iraq failed to involve Iraqi citizens in the process of setting up a new government, and did not prioritize the restoration of basic services and humanitarian aid over establishment of a new government.[74] The de-Baathification process and liquidation of the Iraqi army and security forces was without the input of Iraqis either. As a result, thousands who were experienced in government and civil services were excluded from rebuilding the government, and an army of men were sent home with their guns into an Iraq with an already 60% unemployment rate.[75]

After a decade of Saddam Hussein proclaiming America and the West as the enemy of not just Iraq but also Islam, and framing the sanctions battle as one of *jihad* and himself a hero in opposing them, it cannot be surprising that rising fundamentalism fueled the insurgency, giving birth to Al-Qaeda in Iraq and ISIS. In *A Documentary History of Iraq,* Stacy Holden provides excerpts from the lives of ordinary Iraqis. Post-invasion they are driven to martyrdom in defense of their families and livelihood from the invading force that was responsible for their suffering. Men like Omar Ibrahim Khalaf, of whom friends would say "He hated the Americans…He didn't care whether he died or not,"[76] are typical of the Iraqi citizen who knew only that the West was responsible for inflicting starvation, war, and humiliation upon Iraq and Islam

Before the Gulf War, Iraq was a modern nation that if not thriving was at the very least successful. War and sanctions not only halted their progress but set the country back decades. Hunger and illness attacked the most vulnerable. Civilization crumbled as modern conveniences such as clean water and power were destroyed, medical care became scarce, and education was nearly eliminated. Families were split, personal wealth and property were lost in search of food and security. None of the ill effects the Iraqi people suffered were suffered by Saddam Hussein and his family. The people became more dependent, more beholden to him as the sanctions cut off the rest of the world from Iraq. Sanctions did not play a role in the removal of Saddam Hussein from power, they prolonged his rule. Sanctions succeeded in disarming Iraq, but at the cost of the people themselves.

[1] Shiva Balaghi, *Saddam Hussein: A Biography* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2006), 78
[2] Abbas Alnasrawi, "Iraq: Economic Sanctions and Consequences, 1990-2000." *Third World Quarterly* 22, no 2 (2001), 205-218
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