
James Clark

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REACHING SYRIANS IN NEED:
AN ANALYSIS OF HUMANITARIAN AID IN THE 21ST CENTURY

By

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B.A., University of Louisville, 1988
M.A., University of Louisville, 2005
M.A., University of Louisville, 2012

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of the
College of Arts and Sciences of the University of Louisville
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in Humanities

Department of Comparative Humanities
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

December 2022
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents

Jim and Mary Clark

who always encouraged me to seek knowledge
ABSTRACT

REACHING SYRIANS IN NEED:
AN ANALYSIS OF HUMANITARIAN AID IN THE 21st CENTURY

James Gregory Clark
November 14, 2022

The objective of this dissertation is two-fold. One is to critically consider humanitarian aid delivery to and through Syria via a lens that combines the humanities and social sciences. The fields of anthropology, political science and postcolonialism are employed to accomplish this. The second is to investigate the process involved in this delivery amid the country’s ongoing conflict. Combining these two facets provides a view of humanitarian aid as it relates to the conflict in Syria while applying a liberal arts-humanities approach.

The introduction establishes the basis to discuss the existence of aid providers and those in need of aid in the midst of civil wars. The connective relationship between them is not a straight line. There are many boundaries that make aid transfer difficult if not impossible. To explain this, the introduction presents a brief historical survey of Syria’s civil war. Additionally, the concept of sovereignty is viewed in circumstances of civil war as a concern of international intervention. Lastly, the circumstance of besiegement is reviewed in its capacity to empower and limit.

Chapter One reviews relevant literature for this examination while articulating an interdisciplinary analytical model applied to the other chapters. The model merges
concepts and methodologies resulting from reviews of global relations, humanitarianism, and postcolonialism as they relate to humanitarian aid in the eastern Mediterranean region. Chapter Two historically reviews aid to Armenians, Palestinians, and Iraqis. Doing this allows a comparative and thorough understanding of assistance in this region over the last 100 years. Chapter Three presents the results of in-person interviews of both Syrian aid workers and Syrians in need of assistance. It specifically presents analysis and information from the interviews that demonstrate the disconnect that frequently existed between those trying to help Syrians and Syria’s residents who sadly were beyond the capacity of aid’s grasp.
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Human-made disasters in the form of civil wars have occurred throughout history. Two groups of people regularly found in the midst of these incidents in the last 100 years are people in need of relief and providers who supply it. The connection and relationship between these two parties is not a straight line. Providers must navigate many steps and hurdles to reach those in need. Whether maneuvering through international relations, contending parties and non-state militias, securing funding, negotiating government restrictions, or monitoring delivery, the tasks of aid providers are many and complicated. Those seeking relief also negotiate multiple difficulties. The actual impact of war, lack of proper information, distance, and black markets can make it difficult, if not impossible, for support to make it to innocent victims caught between battling factions.

This scenario is the focus of this dissertation. Through fieldwork in Jordan and the use of secondary sources, I examine the availability and accessibility of aid to Syrians during the current war in their country. The conflict began on March 6, 2011, when a group of teenagers was arrested for writing “the people want the regime to fall” and “the people want to overthrow the regime” in Arabic on the walls of buildings in the southwestern Syrian city of Daraa. These graffiti illustrated the view many Syrians held toward their country’s government led by Bashar al-Assad and the Ba’ath regime. This
was reflective of the Arab Spring, a succession of anti-government uprisings and protests occurring in much of the Arab world (Bahrain, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Yemen) in the early 2010s. In coming weeks and months, this incident sparked many forms of public protest throughout Syria including demonstrations that were met with violent police and military suppression. This situation escalated to a civil war, and twelve years later, it has drawn in entities from across the globe in proxy wars. The conflict has become complex with a diversity of players, internal and external, holding differing geo-political interests and territory. These include Iran, Israel, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and the US. Internally, the Assad government and those who want to see it removed, such as the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and a host of smaller groups, continue to battle. Externally, countries with differing interests in Syria support its varying factions.

At the core of this unrest that has left more than 500,000 dead, 5.6 million refugees and 6.6 million internally displaced people (IDPs – who have been forced from their homes while remaining in the country). The human toll of the Syrian conflict, in terms of death and serious injury, to say nothing of the long-lasting psychological effects on a traumatized population and massive infrastructure damage, has been compared to


A current count of Syrian deaths and displacements does not exist. The last official count provided by the United Nations was in 2016 and is based on 2014 data. The death count above is provided by the website Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. Numbers reflecting refugees and internal displacements is provided by the United Nations.
World War II.² Like that conflict, this confrontation marks a turning point in the development of humanitarian aid.

The objective of this research on aid in Syria is two-fold. The first is to critically consider its availability and accessibility to and throughout Syria via a lens that combines humanities and social sciences frameworks. It does so in the attempt to identify and explore the factors that shape the delivery and level of ease when accessing humanitarian aid in Syria amid its civil strife as well as the hardships endured by Syrians who do not receive this aid. A theoretical framework employing global relations, humanitarianism and postcolonialism is used. These represent three independent disciplines and provide two ways to consider this dissertation’s research. One is the separate unique perspectives each provides. Second is their ability to complement each other. Both factors come together to assist this research’s focus on questions around the varying successes in the delivery of aid: what sets of factors determine its availability; which agencies and their workers deliver it and through what networks; and how those who do not receive it survive. Combining these three issues enables a comprehensive understanding of discrepancies within humanitarian aid as they relate to human-made disasters. This includes challenges faced in distribution as well as the difficulties of living without it.

The second objective is to investigate the multi-step process for making a determination of where aid is directed to amassing it to its delivery amid ongoing armed

conflict. To do this one must recognize the human consequences of the Syrian war both qualitatively and quantitatively. Aid procurement, shipment, storage, distribution and delivery is a complex, multi-sited process involving many actors from donors to recipients as well as various states. This activity begins with the origination of aid bound for Syria. The considerations and evaluations of different parties determine whether aid can or should be made available. The UNSC and multiple NGOs each have a role in shaping the availability of aid.

This is followed with the distribution of aid within Syria. Many elements influence where aid is provided once it reaches its destination. Because of the civil war, the country has been divided into different geographic territories. Some are under the influence of the Assad government while others are controlled by opposition forces. Those beholden to the regime are viewed as part of the sovereign state of Syria. Because of its sovereignty, the Syrian government is in a position to approve or deny aid delivery by NGOs, the Syrian Red Crescent, International Medical Corps, and Save the Children throughout the country. This often means that aid intended for Syrians truly in need instead ends up in the hands of civilians and military persons who support the current government. Related to this problem is the practice of aid agencies in Syria using information provided by the Assad government that often overlooks areas and groups of people who oppose them, which again results in assistance not reaching those truly in need because the aid agencies are not aware of their existence. This includes IDPs who may or may not be in besieged areas. Complicating this further is that some communities are under military siege which blockades aid and workers going in and, often, people

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3 The names of these organizations are derived from interviews conducted for this research.
getting out. Thus, those not under the purview of the Assad government suffer greatly. What aid they do receive, if any, comes from a combination of self-reliance, rebel forces, and aid organizations that are present without the approval of the regime. Such aid providers, like Adam Smith International, Blumont, and Mercy Corp, are on their own as they operate without the consent of the Assad government.4

The end result is hardship for Syrians disconnected from aid distribution. As stated above, the provision of aid is largely based on the approval of the Assad government and the information it disseminates about its citizens to the outside world. This often means, during the war, that only pro-Assad regions within Syria regularly receive assistance from either internal government resources or external providers. In turn, Syrians who do not support the national government or exist in rebel-controlled areas are not included in information the government distributes about its citizens. Again, over six million Syrians have been displaced internally. Half of the country’s healthcare facilities have either been damaged beyond repair or are barely functioning. How do those in need who are not recognized by the Syrian government deal with these hardships? How do they address the restrictions placed on their activities by the Assad government? How do they exist and survive? Those living in militarily besieged areas must subsist on what is immediately available in their community and/or surrounding area. These are critical considerations and questions this study seeks to address.

This research contributes to the knowledge of the give-and-take, or politics in intensive conflict, with a multiplicity of actors in the delivery of aid in several ways. One, it provides insight into the provision of assistance in the harshest of human-made

4 The names of these organizations are derived from interviews conducted for this research.
conditions. Countless incidents of human hardship resulting from intra- and inter-fighting have existed over the course of history but as previously stated, the unrest in Syria has produced a level of atrocities not seen for more than half a century. With this understanding, this study presents a view into the complexities of aid provision amid an ongoing human-made disaster of the most extreme proportions. Because of this situation, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on aid in a time of rapidly changing warfare and increasing civilian death and displacements. Two, to fully appreciate the delivery and accessibility of aid throughout Syria and how its workers and those in need deal with the lack of assistance, ethnographic field research is conducted to provide both commentary and analysis that engages and expands on previously published work on this topic. Three it presents a view of this information that is unique to the struggle in Syria while engaging with theories related to postcolonialism, orientalism, and neoliberalism, highlighting issues such as otherness, displacement, postmodern economies, and global-north/global-south type subject matter which this study argues are necessary for a truly academically enlightened appreciation of those who are most at risk per the Syrian struggle.

Finally, one must ask: what is aid and to whom does it belong? Typically, one thinks of food, water, shelter, and medicine as minimum for survival. But what of the psychological needs of those who are traumatized or the lack of education for displaced children? What type of security infrastructure is necessary for various examples of aid to be delivered? What happens when such an infrastructure does not exist? From donors to organizations to field workers to recipients, is there just one entity that retains control of
the aid and its distribution, or does ownership change over time? These questions are necessary for a full appreciation of aid.

0.1 SOVEREIGNTY VERSUS RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

A pathway that is both tangible and intangible is necessary for external assistance to reach people in need during civil strife. The feasibility of using these conduits is complicated by local, regional, national, and global forces. Of the various issues that affect this fluidity, the concept of sovereignty presents a major stumbling block. This autonomy is recognized internationally as a country’s right and ability to be free from outside interference by other countries. But what if a sovereign country in the midst of civil war is unable to care for its citizens who are suffering because of the conflict? Even more, what if the atrocities to which these citizens are subjected are the result of the actions of their own government? Should external parties assist innocent victims enduring, and often dying from, hardships resulting from a military conflict? This debate over the balance of state sovereignty and external involvement has been a recurring issue since the end of the Cold War and is very present in the ability to assist Syrians in need.

The concept of sovereignty has evolved over time. Its roots are found in the seventeenth century with the Peace of Westphalia. This series of treaties included the idea of sovereignty which was understood to mean that European states were entitled to govern themselves as they wished, free from external meddling or intrusion. This included the understanding that every nation had the authority to control its own affairs as it chooses within its borders as long as it did not injure its neighbors. The only exception

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to this was when a country was unable to quell internal unrest. The French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars propelled discussions of sovereignty to enter a new realm. Revolution was viewed as unlawful and a threat to international order. In such a case, external involvement was seen as a possible resource to maintain international order. The theme of nonintervention remained intact with the signing of the UN Charter in 1945. Individual states preserved the right to domestic dominion while preservation of international peace and security rested in the control of the UNSC. In the coming decades, many postcolonial states, including the short-lived United Arab Republic (Egypt and Syria), pushed the UN General Assembly to approve more transparent and categorical declarations on the sovereign right of non-intervention and “to protect the weak from the depredations of the strong.”

In the 1990s, wars in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Rwanda, compelled the international community to reconsider the sovereignty of countries in the midst of war. In response, UN member states unanimously adopted the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) at the 2005 World Conference. At its core, R2P argued that “sovereignty implies responsibility.” Accordingly, every government was seen as having the responsibility to protect its own people. If that government failed to do so, then the international community had the responsibility to intercede. This marked a departure from what had become a combative

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8 Mohamed, 223.
rift between Western advocates for humanitarian intervention and its Southern cynics.\(^9\) R2P was to be able to defend populations from some of the cruelest offenses while at the same time allaying fears that assistance from the West masked its ulterior motives to interfere in weaker states. R2P bound all governments of the world to guard populations from crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and war crimes.\(^10\) This, combined with the end of the Cold War, created a surge of hopefulness with the expectation that the UNSC would take on a valuable role in dealing with global conflicts.\(^11\)

This was short-lived as the collaborative posture of a reduced Russia was supplanted by the reassertion of a new Russia that proclaimed its position as a global power, coupled with an increasingly confident and economically dominant China.\(^12\) With both countries serving as permanent members of the UNSC, their stature made the ability to implement R2P problematic in reflection of the views of the other permanent UNSC members, France, the United Kingdom, and the US.

Syria’s sovereignty is at the core of the UNSC’s inability to deploy R2P. It is necessary to understand that while permanent UNSC members, such as the US, have sought to have the Council enact measures against Assad, other permanent members, such as China and Russia, have rejected such moves most notably when, in February 2012, China and Russia vetoed a second Council resolution targeted at making Damascus

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\(^9\) Hindawi, 31.
\(^12\) Ibidem.
responsible for crimes against humanity. After the vote, and convinced that he would not suffer retribution, Assad deployed more extreme types of violence. A third UNSC veto on July 19 led to Assad’s first use of aircraft in his onslaught. The number of killings in Syria climbed from approximately 1,000 per month at the end of 2011 to an estimated 5,000 a month by the middle of 2012. From February to November 2012, the death toll soared from 5,400 to 59,600. As long as the Syrian war continued, reaching those in need was hampered if not cut off.

In the aftermath of each UNSC veto, Russian diplomats defended their disapproval of the resolutions targeted at stopping the carnage in Syria as a matter of “defending a sovereign state from Western interveners who wanted to invoke ‘Responsibility to Protect’ to mask their ‘regime change’ motives.” Russia’s stance was supposedly one of honorable impartiality. But Russia’s long-term bonds with the Assad government and the fact that many deaths in Syria were the result of Russian-supplied weapons likely played a role as well.

Assad’s use of chemical weapons on his own citizens appeared to be the one act that seriously challenged the validity of Syria’s sovereignty in the eyes of the international community. On August 21, 2013, the Syrian military launched rockets carrying sarin gas into the Damascus suburb of Ghouta. After two and a half years of gridlock, the UNSC swiftly approved a resolution in support of a Russia-US agreement

13 Adams, 1.
14 Adams, 2.
directing Syria to relinquish its chemical weapons. The diplomatic negotiation later settled by Russia and the US over Syria’s chemical weapons, though prompted by the risk of military action external to international law, was notable because Syria quickly agreed and consented to the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons. In doing so, the Assad regime agreed to allow the inspection and removal of its supply of chemical weapons.

Assad’s non-use of chemical weapons during the war was short-lived and ended with an attack on civilian targets in the town of Khan Shaykhun, in Idlib province, on April 4, 2017. The World Health Organization confirmed that at least 70 people, including 21 children, died of “exposure to highly toxic chemicals” resulting from the incident. As a counter measure, the US took an unprecedented step by firing missile strikes on the Shayrat military base from where the attacks on Khan Shaykhun were launched. In keeping with the theme of sovereignty, Syria was quick to condemn the US attacks, claiming the attack on Shayrat was an example of ‘blatant aggression.’ Russia echoed this sentiment by denouncing the US actions as “aggression against a sovereign state in violation of international law.”

This is not the first example in recent decades of Middle East heads of Arab countries being treated lightly when utilizing chemical weapons in the name of sovereignty. Though there was no question of Saddam Hussein’s use of chemical weapons on the Kurds at Halabia in March of 1988 and his expulsion of workers of the UN and Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons in October of the same

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16 Adams, 4.
17 Naik.
18 Naik, “Syria and the Crisis of Sovereignty.”
year was viewed as a justifiable step as a sovereign right. Mummar Gaddafi purportedly used toxic gas at the Chad/Libya border in 1987. Still, like Hussein, Ghaddafi remained head of state for several years.

The UNSC stance and the US bombing were actions taken against Syria in response to its use of chemical weapons. Granted, these were steps against Assad’s sovereignty. However, no official steps have been taken by either party, or the international community, to halt the continued infliction of mass atrocities as long as conventional weapons are used. To find a reason for this, one should look to the post-Iraq sentiment that has many in the West not wanting to enter another long drawn out intervention in the region. In what could lead to a “balance of consequences,” inciting a broader regional conflict by becoming intimately involved in another war in the Middle East was not desired. Ultimately, it can be argued that many foreign powers circumvented Syria’s sovereignty by implementing proxy wars instead of becoming directly involved.

Ironically, Assad may find that he has sacrificed his sovereignty if he is ultimately successful and victorious in the war. Over the course of the war, Assad has allied himself with supportive countries and organizations. A question arises regarding these coalitions and whether he acquiesced too much to their interests. As already discussed, Russia has played an intricate part in Assad’s military endeavors. Since joining his efforts, Russia has persistently bombed targets throughout Syria. Because of this, by 2018, it appeared that Russia had changed the direction of the war and ensured that Assad would remain in power.

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19 Ibidem.
20 Adams, 6.
power. Russia is not alone in its support of Assad. Iran financially supports Assad’s military needs. Hezbollah has maintained a ground presence since the start of the war. Recognizing he could not rely solely on his official military to hold onto his power, Assad created various Syrian paramilitary groups, such as the Desert Hawks and National Defense Forces, which recruited from local townships within Syria.

In his desperation to save his regime, Assad may have created a new set of local and international rulers that he will have problems controlling should he succeed in winning the war. The entrenchment of paramilitary groups in their local communities has created a Syria that is less administered by a national government out of Damascus. Instead, the situation is more decentralized and appears much like a “feudal empire” with internal militias clashing with each other for territorial control and implementing “warlordism” to vie for power. Assad has permitted many militias a comparatively large amount of independence as long as they do not directly threaten his authority. Both Iran and Russia appear to be supportive of integrating militias and paramilitary groups into a post-war Assad-led Syria. Thus, Assad may have actually forfeited his position as the sovereign leader of Syria as, after the war, some decisions may have to go through Moscow and Tehran. This is not to be interpreted as saying that Assad would be one of many leaders of Syria should he win the war. But it does imply that significant decisions in a post-war Syria with Assad retaining office will need the consent of Iran, Russia, and local militia leaders.

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23 Joplin, “How Bashar Al Assad Ceded Syrian Sovereignty to Win the Civil War.”
In the end, it appears that sovereignty and R2P are standards with both supporters and defectors depending on which side of a civil war a party finds itself. There is a fine line between the use of chemical and conventional weapons. Condemnation and extraction of chemical weapons appear to be a universal norm, but actually removing those employing the weapons and militarily retaliating against them does not find consistent support. Even holding Assad criminally accountable holds little possibility. Only ISIS (Islamic State in Syria) can be held accountable by the International Criminal Court for the various harsh realities resulting from its actions in relation to the Syrian war.24 Regardless of who is accountable, the continuation of the war has had disastrous effects on those in need of aid and the ability to reach them. For every day the war continues, the number of people at risk of danger and harm increases. The war’s extension also means that physical channels to reach these people are either clogged or cut off. The Assad government’s claim to sovereignty includes the right to determine what aid can enter the country, to whom it should go, and who it deems as even existing in the country. The objective of R2P is for states to respond to hardships people face when their governments are unable or unwilling to do so.25 Thus sovereignty and R2P act in disharmony, much like magnets that repel each other. If sovereignty does not allow the implementation of R2P, people in Syria will continue to suffer and die because aid will not reach them. Thus, the effectiveness of the UNSC and the international

community and the ability to act in a way that positively impacts humanitarian need is questionable.²⁶

0.2 THE POWER OF BESIEGEMENT

The literature on humanitarianism tends to use the words ‘besiege’ and ‘siege’ interchangeably. The most narrow, precise description of the word siege is found in Chas Morrison’s, “Providing Basic Services Under Siege: Preliminary Insights from Interim Councils and Medical Providers in Besieged Urban Areas of Syria.”²⁷ Here one learns that a siege is a severe form of battle that is “a process of political domination aimed at isolating an entire population as a means of imposing collective punishment on ordinary people.” In times of war, this punishment takes two forms, both related to how those physically inhabiting a geographic area are allowed access to the world outside their locale. This can range from a small rural commune to a village to a community within a city, to a city itself. On one hand, a powerful entity like an army limits and monitors the ability to enter and exit the area. On the other hand, the entity acts as a human militarized wall that shuts off any connection between the residents and the world outside their geographical area.

In times of peace, resources such as water, electricity, food and medicine are readily available. When war breaks out, areas are besieged by one or more opposing

forces and these resources and supplies become weapons themselves. 28 Their availability and use can save and rescue the population, or their deprivation can bring harm and devastation. It is the latter of these two that results from besiegement. Cutting off a community allows for these items and war to “make…good bedfellows.” 29 At times referred to as “breadboat diplomacy,” limiting access to food alone has been noted as a key ingredient in weakening an opponent, as pointed out by Henry Kissinger’s alleged quote that “control oil and you control nations, control food and you control the people.”

Besiegement often means that factual information about these communities is not available. In 2016 an estimated 4.8 million Syrians lived in what was termed as “hard-to-reach” areas within the country. 30 Granted, this number includes IDPs, but one must realize that this count of besieged individuals is likely not firm but rather an estimate given that access to these people is limited or nonexistent. These inaccuracies are compounded further by the fact that the Assad government sanctions the availability of information about its citizens and what areas can be reached by non-Syrian entities.

Healthcare is another resource that, if limited or eliminated from a population, can be ruinous. In Syria, the Assad regime’s bombings in both besieged and non-besieged areas have included hospitals and health centers. 31 This leaves many besieged areas with little or no access to medical facilities, doctors, nurses, equipment, or medicine. If

anything does exist, the lack of consolidation or inability to share information and knowledge, and lack of proper training, places the fate of ill and wounded besieged Syrians at risk.

Besiegement is not limited to the physical boundaries of the area in which a population lives. While points of entry and exit can be blockaded, the destruction of paths of transportation has the same effect of disconnecting a people from the outside world. The closure or elimination of roads and runways via blockades and bombings is another example of how besiegement cuts a community off from much-needed resources. In 2019, an estimated 90 percent of Syrian roads were not navigable.\(^\text{32}\) Besiegement can also impact communication like the internet and telephone lines.\(^\text{33}\) Such damage may start as a temporary shortage but easily becomes long-term insufficiencies.\(^\text{34}\)

Besiegement does not act only as a means to weaken and deter targeted populations. It can simultaneously strengthen others. In times of civil war when the state government has a viable military presence, like the Assad regime in Syria, besiegement allows for resources and supplies withheld from one population to be given to another. During civil war, authoritarian governments provide access to goods and services to strategically selected key segments of their population.\(^\text{35}\) Acting as a hope for a quid pro quo, such actions are taken with the expectation of political support in return. This is also


\(^{33}\) Morrison, Chas. “Civilian Protection in Urban Sieges Capacities and Practice of First Responders in Syria,” 47.

\(^{34}\) Eng and Martinez, 29.

done with the supposition that the threat of hostility and rebellion against the state will be less of a possibility from populations favored with access to goods and services than those who were alienated. Such public spending is employed to purchase loyalty which in turn reduces the chance that the public benefitting from this preference will support those challenging the regime. In times of civil war, state governments like Assad’s realize that using besiegement, oppression, and violence to deter internal opponents alone will not help them hold power. Instead, they must also provide material and political resources to sections of the population it deems essential to its ability to stay in power. Of course, civil war limits the availability of domestic resources. Besiegement is seen as a solution to this problem because it keeps goods and materials from unfavored portions of the population so they can be diverted to favored ones.

In an ironic twist, besiegement can empower rebel forces who can maneuver access for those cut off by the government. Groups like the Free Syrian Army (FSA), Jabhat al-Nusra, and ISIS were able to provide items such as grain to Syrians who could not access them because of actions by the Syrian regime. But in situations like these, the Syrian public was savvy of the level of actual support they were receiving from the resources these groups held. FSA in particular was infamous for neglecting the assistance responsibilities it purported that it was giving. An example of this is evidence pointing to the FSA purportedly capturing stored Syrian grain and selling it abroad

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Eng and Martinez, 31. Jabhat al-Nusra was originally associated with al-Qaeda in its attempt to overthrow the Assad government. Al-Nusra broke away from al-Qaeda in 2015. This splintering enhanced the Syrian war as rebel groups fought among themselves in addition to wanting to remove the Assad government.
instead of distributing it to the Syrians forgotten by the regime the FSA claimed to help.37 Besieged citizens and IDPs in Syria were further angered with the FSA when they learned that the rebel group retained the proceeds from these sales instead of transferring them to the citizens they were to assist. Besiegement by isolating the public from resources and removing accessibility to them allows this capture and sale of goods for money that is kept for internal betterment.

Unlike the FSA, Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS used besiegement to gain support from Syrians cut off from access to aid. Both groups were able to not only gain access to basic food ingredients such as grain but also to create and repair equipment needed to create staples like bread.38 ISIS even advertised its ability to help people cut off by the actions of the Assad government with pamphlets stating that they “manage bakeries and mills to ensure access to bread for all.” Both were able to gain a reputation from the Syrians they reached as disciplined, honest, and efficient. Again, unlike FSA, rebel groups like Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS were able to turn the besiegement of the Assad government to their advantage. What is interesting in comparing their cases is that FSA used it to empower itself internally at the expense of the Syrians in need while groups like Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS combined control of resources and the ability to deliver them to gain support and strength from Syrians. Ironically, it can be argued that Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS followed the same model as the Assad regime by realizing that they could gain support from the public by presenting themselves as the provider of life-saving nourishment and human necessities. Nevertheless, it is quite evident that the Assad regime and rebel

38 Ibidem.
forces like FSA, Jabhat al-Nursa, and ISIS saw the ability to strategically strengthen themselves and move forward with their goals by using besiegement to their differing advantages.

Regardless of who is creating besiegement or incorporating it into their initiatives, it is those who are being besieged who are the victims. People living in areas with little or no access to food, medicine, transportation, and communication, generally face an intensified threat of violence whereas areas with accessibility are more likely to remain calm.\(^3^9\) Food uncertainty and unequal access causing people to suffer from hunger and malnutrition are prevalent. Looting and pillaging are normal.\(^4^0\) Any semblance of rule of law is rare if not nonexistent. This works to the advantage of the besieger. The combination of weakness from lack of resources and daily life under the peril of hostility leads a besieged community to be more likely to give up and surrender to the stronger body.\(^4^1\) This is a key goal for besiegement as it is warfare carried out in a ruthless organized and calculated manner, targeted at pressuring a population to surrender.\(^4^2\)

The effect of such action regularly leads to a community that is captive to unfair business practices like black markets, price gouging and bribe payments.\(^4^3\) This includes extortion and kidnapping. Electricity is an example of a necessity taken captive by unfair business practices. If available, providers inflate prices and make it available for only a

\(^{39}\) De Juan, 102.
\(^{40}\) Syrian Center for Policy Research, 13.
\(^{41}\) Eng and Martinez, 30.
\(^{42}\) Ferris and Kiriş, 93.
\(^{43}\) Ibidem.
few hours each day.\textsuperscript{44} On top of this are the horrendous circumstances that are part of the normal daily life of trying to survive.

The production and storage of nourishing but unpreserved foods like fruits and vegetables is very challenging. Secured and protected warehouses for food and other goods are absent.\textsuperscript{45} The alternative is to store items underground, but this runs the risk of dampening food and causing it to spoil. Accessing clean water is also a major difficulty as water is typically adulterated and not drinkable. Contaminated water also means raising crops is not possible nor is washing bodily cuts and injuries. Syria’s besieged have been reported as resorting to using firewood for fuel, boiling weeds, eating cats and dogs and foraging for scraps of anything edible.\textsuperscript{46} This includes extracting glue from shoes to be used as an ingredient to make bread. The alternative is to do nothing and freeze or starve to death. Children suffer as well. Destroyed schools makes education impossible. Instead, they are subject to sexual violence, early marriage and prostitution. They are also often found being used as human shields or enlisted in the armed forces, particularly by opposition groups.

All of this keeps a besieged community from being self-sufficient and, in turn, makes them fully dependent on and captive to those providing the resources. The large majority of besieged Syrians are omitted from what little economic and social life exists in their country. Instead, they are held hostage by circumstances over which they have dwindling control.\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{44} Morrison, “Providing Basic Services Under Siege: Preliminary Insights from Interim Councils and Medical Providers in Besieged Areas of Syria.” 317.
\textsuperscript{45} Morrison, 320.
\textsuperscript{46} Ferris and Kirişi, 96.
\textsuperscript{47} Syrian Center for Policy Research, 8.
0.3 CHAPTER OUTLINE

While this introduction provides a brief historical survey, the main corpus of this dissertation is divided into three chapters. The introduction provides a brief historical survey of the Syrian civil war and of the main conceptual tools. In addition, the notion of sovereignty is discussed in situations of civil war as the issue of international intervention. Finally, the condition of besiegement is explored for its ability to limit and empower.

Chapter One provides a review of the literature relevant to this study and articulates the interdisciplinary model of analysis that is applied to the other chapters. This model weaves together concepts and methodologies derived from discussions of global relations, humanitarianism, and postcolonialism as they apply to humanitarian aid in the eastern Mediterranean region. This provides an adequate and sophisticated framework to discuss complex problems and situations. Chapter Two is a historical overview of aid to Armenians, Palestinians, and Iraqis, allowing a comparative and comprehensive appreciation of assistance in this area over the last 100 years. This is critical to gain an understanding of the context of aid for other human-made disasters in the greater-Levant area. Chapter Three describes the methods used to conduct the research, challenges and problems in the field, and how material from interviews was analyzed, and presents the findings of field research. It also provides a historical presentation of aid in the ongoing Syrian conflict. It shares information and analysis of interviews with both aid workers and Syrians who unfortunately fell outside the scope of aid’s reach.
CHAPTER 1
A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

This chapter is an examination of humanitarian assistance through the application of a theoretical framework considering four interrelated themes: global relations, humanitarianism, postcolonialism, and neoliberalism. This chapter provides a literature review that includes a presentation and a comparison of texts and constructs a lens through which these themes can be used to frame and analyze the information provided in later chapters regarding aid and its availability to the greater-Eastern Mediterranean over the last 100 years. Combining these two targets not only allows for a critique and framing of literature as it relates to humanitarian aid in the region but also organizes the material in a way that is applicable to the purpose of this research. Simply said, the literature discussed allows for understanding how postcolonialism and neoliberalism influence global relations which, in the end, affect the type of humanitarian aid provided and its availability.

1.1 GLOBAL RELATIONS

When trying to understand humanitarian aid, it is necessary to grasp the pertinence of global relations. Different entities, be they states or organizations, come to crises with their own specific internal or domestic objectives. These varying purposes can result in aid delivery that is disproportionate and incongruent. Aid provided by
outside entities is not the only source of evidence of this. The actual activity of war caused by and persisting due to the actions of external players also impacts the ability of aid to maneuver throughout the country or area in crisis.

To begin the discussion of global relations in connection to aid accessibility and availability in times of human-made crises, one must back away from examining unique individual motivations of providers and facilitators. Instead, one must consider the theoretic view of such entities working together or not doing so. To appreciate the dynamics of these two approaches, it is essential to know the difference between what Balboa and Deloffre label as “government” and “governance.”48 The authors explain that under their concept of government, many global public policy issues are commonly approached by the governments of different states. Each has its own interest and limits its participation with a singular focus. While some may overlap and have commonality, they do so per coincidence and not cohesive agreement. Thus, in the case of humanitarian aid, instead of all the needs of those suffering being met by providing states, a practice of selectivity and pick-and-choose occurs. The result is not only that those suffering are placed within an unbalanced setting, but also that the multiple external interests that come to assist can cause an overlap, if not conflicting purposes with innocent civilians caught in the middle.

An isolationist approach to foreign affairs is an example of government in this context. This has been a mainstay of US foreign policy since Washington’s farewell address as president. His advocacy for lack of US involvement in European politics and

wars was followed throughout the 19th century. During this time, the expanse of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans allowed the US to stay largely removed from world conflicts. While the first half of the 20th century saw the multi-continent devastation of two world wars, it took direct attacks on the US for the country to enter the conflicts. Ironically, even though President Wilson was a key architect of the League of Nations after the conclusion of the first World War, the US refused to enter the collective. Thus, both war and the aid that derives from it are affected by how Balboa and Deloffre’s concept of government is implemented as a nation-state determines how and why it is to interact in global affairs.

To solve this, Balboa and Deloffre suggest replacing the assistance of different governments who have different interests with creative strategic partnerships. This solution, which they refer to as “governance,” is blind to national boundaries and separate agendas. To prove their point, they argue that differing practices by separate entities can have direct negative consequences on various issues including the human condition, climate change, resource use and waste disposal. For the authors, there is greater potential for a positive outcome through communication and information via governance than there is through government, if policymakers are willing to make the change. Per governance, the provision of goods to a community, such as humanitarian aid, at any level of the development spectrum is made possible. Every actor brings their unique strengths and weaknesses to tackling public policy issues per governance. This cooperation allows for the shortfalls of one participant to be made up by the valuable

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49 Balboa and Deloffre, 417.
contributions of another, and vice versa, as well as not duplicating the services and work of each other.

These concepts of government and governance are definitely applicable to discussions involving how international parties approach the unrest in Syria and how that, in turn, affects the availability of aid and the circumstances that facilitate access to it. As discussed in the Introduction, it took Assad’s use of chemical weapons to create agreement among all bodies. They unanimously agreed that such an atrocity should not be allowed. However, when the US militarily retaliated after the Syrian government’s second use of such weapons, Russia officially denounced those with whom it had previously voiced agreement in a similar situation. Thus, the US and Russia originally followed the concept of governance when it was in their interest to do so but moved to the concept of government when they found it convenient to do otherwise. Their practice of governance was an official statement against an atrocity in which neither acted with military force, whereas they exemplified government when one, the US, used armed action and the other, Russia, did not.

Risse takes this concept further by arguing for “governance without government.” Key for this to exist is that those involved operate in a non-hierarchal framework that employs communicated actions upon which all have agreed. The author presents his concept as being much like everyone having a voice at the table of public discourse. Through governance, everyone is able to acquire new data while assessing their own interests in light of new empirical and ethical information. Taking this approach leads to communally and instinctively assessing the legitimacy of declarations

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of standards and norms of correct conduct. By achieving this status, Risse argues that order can be attained and resources provided for a given community, wherever they exist. The ultimate conclusion is what the author labels as “soft steering.” This, as an example of governance, produces an atmosphere of civil argument and persuasion. Through this collectiveness, a diverse group of stakeholders is given the opportunity to speak and deliberate to determine the legitimacy of problems and find a way to resolve those deemed as genuine.

It can be argued that Price’s discussion of Transnational Civil Societies (TCSs) is an example of Balboa, Deloffre, and Risse’s discussion of governance.\textsuperscript{51} In many ways, TCSs act to bridge the differences that keep separate entities who follow the government model from being able to overcome it. They do not act to change or usurp a government’s decision-making process but, instead, act to persuade them to embrace or halt certain policies or practices. By doing this, the needs of the people at risk are deemed notable by a wider group of public interest instead of being limited by the narrow agenda of a select few. TCSs fit the parameters of NGOs, which will be discussed later. Still, it is appropriate to interject them into this discussion of governance versus government.

It must be noted that to embrace Price’s argument for TCSs as a form of governance when discussing global relations, one must accept a level of pragmatism. Instead of bold actions being taken that are quantitatively exponential in effect, Price calls for incremental steps. From the combination of the texts of these authors emerges the realization that hard choices have to be made that result in compromises. The end

result of such concessions can vary and conclude as successes, failures, or middle-ground incidents that leave little or no impact.\textsuperscript{52} Thus, there are considerations for all independent states who consider following the practice of governance when approaching a situation of humans at risk that is outside the states’ borders. By forgoing government and embracing governance they are not only sacrificing their own economic and security interests for a shared agenda but also may produce outcomes that are negative failures and are harmful to the overall scenario. Applying this to actors involved with the Syrian war who are also interested in the humanitarian well-being of those in the country, the question to ask is: What, if anything, is each willing to sacrifice from their agenda that might better the lives of Syrians with the realization that the end product may not produce positive results for the Syrians?

This accreting process of give-and-take to move away from government and toward governance was illustrated in the Oil For Food initiative following the Iran-Iraq and Desert Storm wars. As will be discussed in the following chapter, it took the UNSC and Iraqi governments three resolutions over nearly four years to reach an agreement whose core was the provision of overdue humanitarian aid to the Iraqi public. Both had to sacrifice some internal government-centered pretenses to arrive at a governance-centered interparty agreement. Though both still did not relinquish all their steadfast standards, each had to forgo stalwart pillars to allow needed assistance.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibidem.
Fassin mirrors the distinction between government and governance by introducing the terms “ideal universality” and “practice of difference.” Just like governance, ideal universality is the theoretical standard of “treating everyone in the same way.” As its opposite, the practice of difference, like government, represents “concrete confrontation to the distant other.” Applying this to global relations and how they pertain to humanitarian aid, the author argues the discourse brought about by ideal universality is necessary when recognizing the responsibility of entities when helping those subjected to threat. Fassin’s terminology broadens the understanding of government and governance as they relate to humanitarian aid. While Balboa, Deloffre, and Risse discuss government and governance as outside entities acting on a population in need, Fassin makes the population part of the equation. In other words, according to Balboa, Deloffre, and Risse, those in need exist in the shadow of governance but they are acknowledged with agency only through the ideal of universality.

Fassin’s argument of making the aid recipient an active participant in the process can be seen in the Armenian response to France’s implementation of the Final Settlement project. As will be discussed in the next chapter, France gave Armenian refugees living within the French Mandate near Aleppo and Beirut favorable housing aid attention above native Arabs. Armenians realized they needed to be proactive in the process to continue to receive French support. Thus, they aggressively communicated and lobbied France with a message centered on the need to continue and strengthen commonalities. It was through these activities that Armenians hoped to continue to receive preferential aid

attention from France over the native population. Therefore, as Fassin suggests, aid recipients can play an active role in the assistance they receive. Accordingly, that role is not simply asking for help and presenting facts regarding their need for it. Instead, a recipient body has direct influence on the decision-making process and may even attempt to become part of the decision-making team.

With an understanding of governance as a step toward the collaboration of international bodies for the betterment of a third entity, it is worth inquiring as to its validity in relation to the focus of this dissertation. To do so, it is necessary to review texts reflecting the constituent organizations that play a role in the Syrian situation. One, the UNSC appears in publications that discuss aid to Syria. Comprised of a total of 15 members, five of them permanent, the UNSC is arguably a significant example of governance over government in action. But its capability to assist Syria is reportedly very poor. Al-Istrabadi, Egeland, Ferris, and Jafarova strongly condemn the UNSC’s incapacity to work toward a peaceful resolution in the country. Ferris specifically blames the UNSC for continued unrest. While the Syrian conflict originated internally, Ferris explicitly points to members of the international community, such as the UNSC, as the reason for both its continuation and the resulting displacement of Syrians.54

55 Ferris and Kirisci, 110.
As if to downplay the ability of separate states to bypass government and coalesce per governance, Al-Istrabaldi and Egeland agree that at the root of the UNSC’s inability to act are the individual interests of its members.\(^{56}\) Jafarova goes to the heart of these differences and singles out Assad as the key point of debate. The author notes that Western members want the leader to go while China and Russia want him to stay.\(^ {57}\) While all four authors agree that the international community cannot relieve the situation, only Egeland and Ferris step forward with solutions. While both are laudable, only Egeland specifically addresses the warfare element of the unrest by calling on the international community to encourage a ceasefire and halt the transfer of ammunition and arms.\(^ {58}\)

While the UNSC may be indecisive, regardless of what it determines there are global relations parameters to which it must adhere. Of note is the ability of international bodies to enter countries in a state of unrest. Davenport and Lombardo both address how various states decide on where to focus their attention and what steps are required once a tragedy has been acknowledged.\(^ {59}\) On this point, Davenport and Lombardo present differing views. Davenport notes that some see external involvement, like the efforts of Western countries, as an example of colonialism seeking to increase its power.\(^ {60}\) Opposing this view, Lombardo not only embraces interjection by external interests but

\(^{56}\) Al-Istrabadi, 120.
\(^{57}\) Jafarova, 27.
\(^{58}\) Egeland, 303.
\(^{60}\) Davenport, 39.
also argues that they should look beyond their work to alleviate current difficulties and provide stabilization for the future.\(^6^1\) Thus, while Davenport presents views that question the motives of aid providers, Lombardo looks beyond the immediate needs and suggests the actions of external agencies should include long-term commitments to rebuild infrastructure essential to a country’s revival. It can be argued that Davenport presents the inescapability of government when trying to bring differing parties together while Lombardo sees both current and future good being reached with the practice of governance.

History shows, however, that reality is not as simple as this. As will be discussed later, multiple populations within a sovereign-bordered country can receive unequal aid. This was particularly true of those living in Iraq after the Desert Storm War. Not only were there citizens the Iraqi government recognized as in need of help but Kurds living in the country’s north and Shiites in the south were in need of aid as well. All three received aid according to Iraq’s view of them: whether they were Shia or Sunni, whether Turkey viewed them as a threat, and the level of support Iran and Kuwait were willing to offer. Strife within a country does not mean that all inside can be considered as a whole set. Instead, there can be multiple subsets that the outside world (aid and non-aid providers) views differently based on what is in the “government-centered” best interest.

The multiple intra-dimensional interests that have caused unrest in Syria reflect globalization. The unfortunate situation Syrians face is not per a singular catalyst but rather is multifaceted. There are internal and external players with wide-ranging interests in the matter. Sassen explains how an “oppressor” can be a complex system that

\(^{61}\) Lombardo, 1191.
combines people and networks with no obvious center.\textsuperscript{62} In this situation, people who are its unequal opposite are oppressed and/or expelled. This serves as an ironic twist when considering the governance versus government model. While governance is supposed to bring together separate entities who divorce themselves of their internal agendas to achieve good for another entity, Sassen’s concept of oppressor is an actual conglomeration of different interests coming together that is blind to the harm it is doing. Still, Balboa, Deloffre, and Risse’s discussion of governance suggests an organized, cohesive effort by all external parties involved whereas Sassen’s oppressor speaks of outside entities combining while having no evident consensus among them. Thus, for governance to actually work, all parties must acknowledge each other to form a common agenda.

Based on the literature discussed, it appears that government is a reality and governance a fantasy when considering the ability of individual countries to cooperate for the betterment of populations beyond their borders. With this understanding, one must reflect on the objectives and motivations of different entities when they approach such scenarios.

One dichotomy discussed is that of East and West. With particular attention to the West, it can be argued that it has used humanitarian aid in efforts to increase its influence in the area since the late-19\textsuperscript{th}/early-20\textsuperscript{th} centuries. Its presence and activities related to humanitarian assistance have existed since the turn of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century and continued through World War I, the interwar period, World War II, the Cold War, and the post-Cold War periods. While its approach and actions have changed with different

events, the West has continually used its operations in the area to achieve its goal of shaping the region for its benefit. As will be discussed in the following chapter, this includes situations such as how the US approached Armenians in need in light of its relation with the Ottoman Empire during World War I, how Britain selectively provided certain assistance to Palestinians while favoring the Jewish community prior to the creation of the state of Israel, and how both Britain and the US used bureaucracy to roadblock approved aid from reaching Iraqis in need of it after the Iraq/Kuwait and Desert Storm wars.

Watenpaugh provides an in-depth narrative on the origin, existence, and evolution of Western influence in the greater Levant through humanitarian aid over the course of the first half of the 20th century. The author argues there was a direct correlation between humanitarian work and colonialism in the area during this time. Colonialism in the form of humanitarian aid, however, was different. Instead of planting a Western flag on foreign soil and claiming it as a part of a territorial empire, humanitarian colonialism was subtle. While human rights and helping those in need were core to the humanitarian aid work in the area, Western politics and paternalism fueled the work done there. Absent were forms of the harshness of foreign rule which are often part of colonial reign. Still, modern humanitarian aid, which originated per the ambitions of Western Europe and North America, linked colonialism with humanitarian aid and was based on their concept of democracy. It could be argued that a joint agreement among countries of the

64 Ibid, 56.
West to bring Western standards and influence to the Middle East is a form of governance in that all external parties agreed on what was to be achieved. But this does not mirror Risse’s discussion of soft steering nor Price’s regarding the needs of the people at risk being deemed significant by a wider group. Instead, this seems to echo the criticisms Davenport shared which argue that external involvement is a form of colonialism.

Britain’s aid-related activities before and during its Mandate post-World War I certainly illustrate Davenport’s point. As will be discussed in the next chapter, Britain saw Palestine as a key to its military interests during the war and geoeconomics concerns after its conclusion. The British cloaked the assistance it gave both the Jewish and Palestinian communities in the region. This was done in a fashion calculated to weaken the Central Powers during the war and sustain or increase imperial commercial trading after. Hence, while Britain claimed to want to help Palestinians for humanitarian reasons, it used it as an excuse to empower its empire.

To complete this presentation of literature that reflects what the West viewed as its prerogative to mold the Levant and the use of humanitarian aid to do so, focus on three incidents that occurred during the first half of the 20th century is necessary: the Sykes-Picot agreement, the League of Nations, and the Four Point Program. Each demonstrates that while they included altruistic purposes, they were driven by broadening and empowering Western interests and prerogatives.
Barr provides a thorough narrative of how Britain and France approached the Eastern Mediterranean during the first half of the 20th century. The period between the two world wars saw a continued increase of the West’s reach and power. This includes the Arab Eastern Mediterranean falling under British and French colonialism. This process had actually begun during World War I with the Sykes-Picot agreement. Per this arrangement, the two countries split the Ottomans’ Arab Middle Eastern empire by creating a territorial divide that ran from the Mediterranean Sea coast to the mountains of the Persian frontier. Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine came under a British Mandate while Lebanon and Syria were under French Mandate. In other words, land to the north would go to France, and most of the land to the south would go to Britain. A compromise was made by the two in regards to Jerusalem, which was to be overseen by an international administration.

Barr’s discussion of British and French activity via Sykes-Picot does not correspond with Watenpaugh’s presentation of the absence of direct foreign rule and colonial reign. Britain and France both negotiating their own footholds in the Levant area is different from a new form of colonialism focused on humanitarianism. It’s critical to point out that Watenpaugh makes no reference to Sykes-Picot in his book. While this is not a critique of Watenpaugh’s work, it must be noted that given the implications of his text’s title that it includes events that formed modern humanitarianism in the Middle East during the first half of the 20th century, it is surprising that it does not include this major historic event that shaped the area during that period.

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Watenpaugh continues to show the increase of Western presence during the interwar period with the creation of the League of Nations. This is demonstrated by the fact that three of its four permanent council members – Britain, France, and Italy – were all from Western Europe. Formed in 1920, the League’s international activities often occurred with Britain and France trying their best to use it as a tool to further their colonial interests. Because of this any distinction between the world order the League was trying to bring about and colonialism was blurred. This was further complicated by whether the purpose of humanitarian aid was to serve the interests of Britain and France or the people of the Levant they supposedly wanted to help. Here again is evidence of governance in the form of outside countries collaborating to affect people of foreign lands. But in this case, it is not the same as what Balboa, Deloffre, and Risse discuss.

In relation to the League of Nations and whether Britain and France as its permanent council members acted for the betterment of their own colonial interests or those of the people they were trying to help, one finds some agreement between Barr and Watenpaugh. Continuing his discussion regarding Sykes-Picot, Barr notes that it was the League that eventually granted mandates that clarified Britain’s and France’s interests and operations in the Levant. Britain was given jurisdiction over Palestine, Transjordan, and Iraq, while France took control of Lebanon and Syria.

New in the mandate directives from the League was that both were to direct these emerging countries to swift independence. Though they agreed, neither party acquiesced to this condition in practice. Instead, they both started to slow down the process. The Arabs inhabiting the areas responded furiously. To them, the freedom they had been assured was continuously

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67 Watenpaugh, 129.
68 Ibid, x
Britain and France blamed each other for the resistance they faced from the residents. Both refused to assist the other in dealing with the Arabs’ aggressive opposition. They feared doing so would make themselves look even more unfavorable. 69 Both chose to resort to employing violent methods to squash the protests, which in turn only angered the Arabs more. In this situation, one sees complete agreement between Watenpaugh and Barr. It is evident that not only did Britain and France use directives from the League to strengthen their positions in the Levant, but they also backed away from those directives when they gained the power they wanted. Even more, both authors would agree that they used the authority given to them by the League to gain control and to employ cruelty to the very people they were instructed to assist in obtaining independence. In what is a divorce from the charge they were given, Britain and France’s actions reflect both Watenpaugh and Barr’s contention that the two used the League to their betterment when convenient for them. This also exemplifies that the practice of governance amongst countries is possible when doing so betters one’s interests. Once the furtherance of interest is not possible, as with the Arab unrest in response to the actions of Britain and France, they blamed each other instead of trying to resolve the situation jointly.

Moving forward to the end of World War II, Watenpaugh provides another example of the West’s continuing use of its assistance work to expand its influence. For this, the author discusses the US’s Four Point Program. 70 The close of the war brought about the Cold War with the polarization of East and West that included a stronger Soviet Union. Curtailing the threat of communism was a key element of Western foreign policy

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69 Watenpaugh, xi.
70 Watenpaugh, 193.
and played a significant role in its various initiatives including humanitarian aid. Implemented during the Truman administration, the US’s goal to direct and finance development projects that would “win the hearts and minds” of the Third World population, in turn stemming the spread of communist influence and Soviet power was central to the Four Points. This was part of the post-World War II frame of mind for the US and Western Europe. This echoes the previous point made that pragmatism must be present for governance to occur. Governance in humanitarian aid facilitation is, in its purest form, utopian in nature. It calls for multiple parties unselfishly and voluntarily divorcing themselves of personal interests and coming together as a whole for the betterment of a separate body. This seems a far reach if not impossible. For a nation-state to commit to providing external humanitarian care without reservation based on how it relates to its domestic and/or foreign interests appears insurmountable. Thus, although Western parties collaborated, in the theory of governance, as a whole to give aid per programs like Four Points, they did so under the umbrella of anti-Communist/East policy. So, governance can exist, but one has to accept that pragmatism is attached to it.

Kazin echoes Watenpaugh, explaining that at this time the country now embraced the concept of “American Exceptionalism.” This meant that by use of American “beneficence” of “military force,” the US could or should take the “lead in creating a better world.” This was a strong sentiment throughout the country. Anyone who doubted this thought was seen as odd and often criticized. Thus, here again, per Watenpaugh and Kazin, one sees how global relations determined the foreign interests and activities of one

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71 Watenpaugh, 193.
country toward another. The US was using both aid and military action to enhance its influence and weaken its foe. The theme of American exceptionalism echoes the model of government over governance. While the US was part of the West’s contingent against Russia, with Four Points the country was going it alone for its singular benefit. Much like Britain and France turning on each other when trying to quell unrest among Arabs in their League of Nations’ mandated areas, the US relinquished governance and sought its own betterment through government.

To bring this section regarding global relations to a close, one must remember the literature about governance versus government and the reality of the possibility of the two. Balboa, Deloffre, and Risse, present the positive outcomes that would be possible if governance were implemented. Price and Fassin texts take these possibilities further by discussing the work that can be done by implementing governance. This is countered by Al-Istrabadi, Egeland, Ferris, and Jafarova who particularly note the inability of a governance-like organization, the UNSC, to operate per the governance model. Instead, its individual members act out the practice of government. Because of this, Syrians at risk have suffered. Finally, Watenpaugh and Barr show how the West has used the practice of government to better its standing in the Middle East. To do this it has used the greater Levant and its people as pawns on a geopolitical chessboard while trying to gain influence against its Eastern foes.

1.2 HUMANITARIANISM

Central to humanitarianism’s meaning is caring for one’s fellow human. Feldman and Ticktin provide parameters for such interest. They explain that this concern is
triggered by the recognition by one individual or a group of individuals that a “breach” has occurred in what is considered the “humane” status of another individual or group of individuals. In such a situation, those suffering become subjected to the most damaging and harmful conditions. The result of this rupture of the humane is what defines a status of “inhumane.” In what the authors label a “civilizing mission,” people feel the need to engage in a “humanitarian endeavor” to assist those distressed so they may develop their “human capacity.”

The providers must meet the various needs of those who suffer. Sonn and Fisher discuss the absence of resilience that must be filled. Often they have been negatively affected by chronic stress and prolonged, if not severe, trauma. This results in adverse consequences both biologically and psychologically. The authors identify two groups of “supplies” which are disrupted or nonexistent for these people. One, physical supplies, refers to food and shelter. The other, sociocultural supplies, is comprised of various influences that reflect the customs and values that create their culture and social structure. The impact of this devastation leads to not only risky physical health conditions but also mental problems that include self-hatred, negative identities, and low self-esteem. It is the realization and recognition of the existence of the hardships of these people by those who are able to provide and deliver aid that leads to humanitarianism.

74 Feldman and Ticktin, 4.
Those acting on the realization that such need exists have changed over the course of the last 100 years. As will be discussed in the following chapter, during the transition from the 19th to the 20th-century religious organizations facilitated aid provision. Over the following decades, those delivering aid were practitioners specializing and trained in the various facets of humanitarian assistance. The need for aid has noticeable manifestations, and those tracking and acting on those manifestations have moved from a majority body drawn to the work by a spiritual faith practice to a diverse group driven by secular interests. This is not to say that religious organizations are not present in humanitarian aid work. But workers are no longer likely to be primarily identified by their faith tradition or their role as clergy or layperson within a religion. Instead, identifiers such as medical education, procurement and logistic experience, and language acquisition are critical to aid’s delivery.

Fassin recognizes the official structure for this practice by identifying it as “humanitarian government.” Unlike the discussion of the term government in the previous section, Fassin uses the word to explain what he sees as a procedural system that gives structure to the organized production and delivery of attention, care, and aid. Looking beyond this definition, anthropologists Fassin and Redfield identify limits on just how much good can be done through humanitarian work. Fassin doubts that humanitarianism can save all the wrongs done to humans in the world. While the author admits that humanitarian work does help those in need, he argues that it acts more as a

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provider of hope to counter injustices. Redfield, in his ethnography on Doctors without Borders, explains that aid organizations are faced with many atrocities in the field but that their mission and resources limit what they can do. He further argues that humanitarian aid organizations provide temporary substitutes in times of crisis that sustain and prolong lives rather than saving them. This occurs to its fullest extent when the state is no longer able or willing to provide survival necessities and security to its people. He advances his explanation of these difficulties by sharing that “you can’t stop genocide with doctors,” as if to say any agency can help one in need today but that until the catalysts are stopped, the carnage will continue.

Unfortunately, external aid often becomes a valuable resource to a belligerent leader providing it to a public that supports them and withholding it as punishment for those opposing them. As previously stated about Assad (and will be later regarding Saddam Hussein), aid can strengthen nation-state leaders who are dealing with strife within their countries. For Assad, this meant aid was legally permitted to reach only Syrian government-approved recipients. For Hussein, not only was his supportive base able to “double-dip” for multiple rations but he used it to gather controlling evidence on the general public and limit their mobility. So, Redfield is correct that aid can do only so much good when the catalysts for its need continue to play a role in the turmoil causing it.

The goals of some humanitarian organizations lead to questioning their purpose. Lasker notes that the objectives of some providers are different from actually improving

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79 Redfield, 15 and 16.
80 Redfield, 104.
the needs of those they serve. One reason is that their fiscal validity is often tied to their ability to expand, finances, and reputation. Another is that some have donors have outsized influence on what they do. At times conflict exists between the organization’s mission and the requirements of its benefactors. Thus, the organization’s own “humanitarian” aims become only part of the work they carry out. The author particularly notes organizations that include conversion of non-Christians in their work. In such situations, these providers operate within the “10/40 window.” This term refers to the African and Asian countries located between 10 and 40 degrees north of the equator which are populated by few Christian communities.

Christianity was a common anchor in determining who received aid in the Eastern Mediterranean. As will be seen in the following chapter, the West viewed Armenian Christianity as an anchor for their aid, particularly favoring them over Ottoman Muslims during World War I. The French also used Christianity as a litmus test leading France to give more attention to Christians than Muslims in their Mandate.

In another article, Feldman complements Lasker’s argument that the directive of aid providers does not necessarily match the needs of those they intend to help. She writes about the inadequacy of humanitarianism from a quantitative perspective. In doing so, she breaks aid into two categories: assistance directed toward immediate needs and that which provides for development. Using Gaza to illustrate this dichotomy, she shares that Israel allows aid such as food and medicine to enter the area while barring

82 Lasker, 589.
tools and building supplies that can be used for infrastructure. This allows for an
expansion of Redfield’s argument that the activities of aid organizations are more likely
to maintain and prolong lives instead of actually saving them.\textsuperscript{84}

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees’ (UNHCR) transition in its Palestinian
work is another example of a shift in the identification of aid’s recipients. As will be
discussed in the next chapter, the agency started with a focus on providing short-term,
temporary aid for Palestinians. This was because the initial plan was to either return
them to their homes or compensate them should they decide not to. As time progressed,
return and payment was replaced with resettlement. Aid altered to reflect this change.
Now long-term goals were the norm for UNHCR’s aid programming. This was done
minus Palestinian acceptance because they saw the shift from temporary aid to aid that
was more far-reaching in its effects against the commitment made to them. Thus, aid can
reflect helping the current, immediate needs of the recipient or providing for a longer-
term, more permanent status.

In this light, aid becomes a tool or weapon for the provider. As will be discussed
later, a supplier or distributor of aid can strengthen their control over their clients by
controlling not only the flow of aid but also the type of aid provided. Their position is
increased with the understanding that recipients become dependent on the aid but can be
physically and mentally manipulated by its provision. This exacerbates Sonn and
Fisher’s discussion of the bodily and psychological damage suffered by those in need
from the onset of hardship.\textsuperscript{85} Combining Feldman, Redfield, Sonn, and Fisher’s points, it
is possible for aid to be used for protracting an already unpleasant situation of those in

\textsuperscript{84} Redfield, 15 and 16.
\textsuperscript{85} Sonn and Fisher, 458 and 461.
need instead of actually bettering their unfortunate circumstances. Thus, it appears that humanitarian suppliers and workers can cause the inadequacy associated with humanitarianism through their actions toward their clientele.

McCorkindale narrows the focus of Feldman’s discussion of both short-term and long-term aid by focusing on food. She explains that starvation and controlling the availability of food is not a new tactic.86 Dating back to World War II, Germany used food to encourage laborers to work or to reduce the psychological ability of others to contemplate resistance. Moving to war in Bosnia and the siege of Sarajevo during the early 1990s, the author explains how controlling the amount of food allowed for consumption can affect the well-being and stamina of people at risk. She uses this example to argue the differences between immediate and protracted food needs.

According to McCorkindale, a basic ration is enough in short-term emergency situations. Whereas, beyond this, the lack of sufficient nutrients leads to a long-term deficiency which lowers the body’s ability to resist disease and infection. Thus, food can be used as a weapon through its regulation for short-term and long-term benefits as the provider attempts to control the recipient.

As aid can be used as a controlling tactic through its short- or long-term purposes, it can also elongate the crisis causing the hardship it was called to relieve. Should aid become a weapon unto itself for which warring forces battle for control, additional aid could become necessary to address the byproduct of a war drawn out simply from the initial injection of aid. In other words, if battling factions begin to fight over control of

aid, additional aid will likely be provided, which in turn will make the initial conflict longer than necessary.

Not only can aid be a weapon in time of war, but it can also act as a catalyst for prolonging it. Perouse de Montclos discusses what he calls, “the dark side of humanitarian aid.”\(^{87}\) The author points to the fact that while the Biafra War degenerated to a stalemate in 1968, the provision of humanitarian aid from the global community allowed it to continue until January 1970. Using this as an example, he argues that aid worsens conflicts by feeding militants, sustaining their dependents, supporting war economies, and providing belligerents with legitimacy. In the case of Biafra, it became difficult to protect the civilians for whom the aid was intended. When soldiers took food by force, aid workers hired armed guards to protect supplies from looting. He notes that of the $250 million of humanitarian aid provided to the conflict, an estimated 15 percent was spent on military supplies. The author then strengthens his case with evidence from three similar situations. In one, combatants in Sierra Leone and Liberia starved their own citizens to draw aid and deflect it. In another, in 1994, NGOs providing aid to Rwandan refugee camps fed criminals who had perpetrated genocide. Lastly, in the Democratic Republic of Congo aid was redirected by the belligerents and maintained and aggravated local corruption.

Terry agrees with this sentiment by stating that “aid is becoming a major factor in the continuation of conflicts.”\(^{88}\) She explains that there are new wars in the current age in which combatants increasingly exploit global connections that include international aid


agencies that function in the center of wars. With a focus on tragedies in Afghanistan, Cambodia, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Rwanda, and Thailand, Terry argues that humanitarian aid, which was intended for victims of these situations, actually bolstered the power of the very parties who had caused the tragedies.

Wood and Sullivan expand on the association of aid and conflict zones. They explain that there has been a quickly increasing correlation between the flow of aid into battle areas since the turn of the 21st century.89 Using the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development as an example, the authors note that humanitarian aid commitments nearly doubled, from $7 billion to $13.8 billion annually, between 2000 and 2010. While this appears to be a growth of funding for those in need, Wood and Sullivan argue that the opposite has happened in regions at war. Assistance has not only influenced the violence faced by intended recipients, but it has also exposed them to new risks. Aid creates incentives for armed participants to deliberately target civilians for violence. Aid acts as a catalyst for increased rebel activities which include looting. This in turn gives state forces reason to intervene against the rebels’ actions.90 Thus, the authors believe that the influx of international humanitarian aid into conflict zones creates fierce, negative effects by emboldening government and rebel militaries to commit violence against local populations.

While the weaponization of aid causes an unbalance in its availability, there are inconsistencies within the facilitation of its accessibility that are beyond the basic effects from war. Aid distribution in this context is directly addressed by Alkopher and

89 Reed Wood and Christopher Sullivan, “Doing Harm by Doing Good?,” Journal of Politics 77, no. 3 (July 2015), 736.
90 Wood and Sullivan, 736
Both concur that the allocation of aid is problematic. They argue that a one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate for the apportionment of humanitarian aid. Instead of employing a standardized method, distribution regularly reflects consequences of human character instead of historically created models. Because cruelties and offenses differ in causes, types, and effects, the means of response to humanitarian needs cannot be universal. To partially counter this, Gallagher contends that a consistent process should be used in establishing the correct avenue of aid provision. In what he labels “the empire of circumstances,” the author acknowledges that aid delivery should be addressed through multiple methods but argues that the process for choosing the best method of delivery from multiple options should be universal.

In commentary that complements Gallagher, Denne argues that management and supervision of aid provision should be narrowed. The author uses the first Iraq war to explain how various inconsistencies related to Iraqis who needed aid but did not receive it could have been overcome with fewer parties involved at the higher levels of direction. Arguing in favor of the International Committee of the Red Cross, she believes it, along with a re-working of the UN humanitarian system, would bring about better results.

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92 Alkopher, 55-56.
93 Gallagher, 3.
Returning to Terry, one learns how multiple players and lack of centrality in operations mirror what Denne writes about. Here the author explains that the Khmer Rouge was able to deceive aid organizations in Cambodia by exaggerating beneficiary numbers and dispensing smaller rations than those determined by providers to those living in refugee camps.95 The lack of oversight by relief agencies allowed camp leaders to accrue large amounts of rice, oil, and other items, which they then sold on the black market or transferred to military camps.

Terry also writes about lack of oversight in refugee camps in the Democratic Republic of Congo. UNHCR warehouses were often looted. Tens of thousands of refugees employed by international agencies to work in the camps they lived in were taxed by camp leaders. These leaders would also charge refugees in the camps for supplies from the UNHCR which they were freely allowed to have. Terry’s accountings here, combined with Denne’s commentary, lends to an argument that lack of organization and oversight of aid operations provides more manipulation of aid for those in need of it.

Though the authors’ points in the last four paragraphs are well-meaning, there is a discrepancy between the two. In the first two, Alkopher and Gallager argue for a methodology for delivering aid that calls for not pigeonholing it into a single or narrow set of processes. This is understandable. Causation between disaster and aid can vary widely. A tragic event can be natural or human made. It can occur in an area supplied with clean water or one that is arid or has contaminated lakes or wells. The population in need might be easy or difficult to reach. These are all viable reasons for the method of aid’s delivery to alter from case to case. The authors’ commentary finishes by

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95 Terry, 129.
acknowledging that while every aid-necessitated event should receive unique assistance based on its individual circumstances there should be a streamlined approach in how determination is made in all situations.

This is followed by Terry’s account of specific cases of mismanagement of aid that directly benefited entities who did not need it. As will be seen in the next chapter, those taking illegal advantage of such scenarios are not limited to individuals and parties that exist within the area of aid. Individuals working for or on behalf of organizations such as the UN commit crimes for which they are later punished for taking personal advantage of aid programs. The accounts of Terry and others of such wrongdoing are alarming and should play a prominent role in the models Alkopher and Gallager discuss. Granted not every aid outlay is going to include a criminal act. But much more attention should be given to such possibilities instead of simply arguing that all situations are different. Safeguards against illegal actions should be at the forefront of all program templates regarding aid facilitation.

Regardless of the difficulties aid creates in the field where it is being delivered, there are workers on the ground carrying out the duties of trying to help those in need. With a focus on the aid worker, Malkki examines the intricacies of what drives individuals to carry out humanitarian work and the hurdles they encounter in doing so.96 A feeling of obligation as a citizen of the world to help others is a common thread for these people. But once in the field, they often find themselves faced with situations where they cannot save all of those they are trying to serve. The knowledge that they cannot save all who are in need has emotional and psychological impacts. Realizing that

even work done to its finite limit does not produce complete sustainability for those suffering can lead to a feeling of ambivalence and inadequacy. In what seems like a numbing process, to move forward in one’s work a person must stop thinking emotionally and help save whoever can be saved within the time and resources available in the moment. Some rejoice at the opportunity for inner growth while others find the situation stressful and too much to handle. These points are used to uncover what leads aid workers to conduct their work and how they handle unsurmountable circumstances.

A deeper examination of what leads people to engage in the work of helping those in need is provided in multiple articles. Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Miene and Haugen point to three core functions that draw individuals to such work.97 One, knowledge, is an individual’s desire to have a sense of understanding of the world. Malkki agrees with this by noting that workers viewed international mission work as an opportunity to learn new things and escape from their mundane life at home. They have a desire to travel and experience the world in ways that are different from traditional tourism. Second, people feel a need to express themselves in a way that reflects their convictions and values which they can find in assisting others.98 Last, such work acts to defend one’s ego by protecting them from accepting threatening or undesirable truths about themselves.

It is necessary to take a moment and consider who benefits from aid work based on Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Miene, and Haugen’s points. All discuss such labor benefiting only the worker with no direct mention of the recipient. It is understandable that the worker should have some personal benefit from giving of their time and, as Malkki points

98 Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Miene, Haugen, 1131.
out, mental stamina. From the authors’ descriptions, it seems that experiencing or transitioning to something they are not is a benefit for the worker. To better comprehend the world through an event that departs from traditional vacationing is stepping outside one’s comfort zone. The point that doing such work protects the worker from admitting self-truths they do not want to acknowledge is of particular note. A deeper review of Clary, Snyder, and Mine’s text reveals that they are alluding to such work allowing one to feel less guilty about being more fortunate than those they are assisting. While this is true, it seems like it is a brief numbing moment, not a permanent one. Yes, an aid worker, volunteer or paid, separates themselves from whatever life of privilege they believe they live that does not exist for those they help. But this is likely not a permanent condition. The worker will likely leave the person(s) they are helping (be it a refugee camp, difficult-to-reach area, etc.) and return to more desirable, if not permanent, dwellings for themselves. For those who work on assignment, this could mean completely leaving the location in which they are working to return to their home. Such a setting might be a brief humbling moment, but the ability to return to a better, and possibly safer, life setting does not appear to provide a complete escape from any guilt of having it better than those being helped.

Bussell and Forbes echo much of what Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Meine, and Haugen discuss. They point to such work as an exercise for one to express their core beliefs and values as well as an opportunity to pass them on to others.99 They too discuss ego but from a different perspective. Here one understands ego’s role in the activities of helping

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others as a way to satisfy significant psychological and social aspirations. Camaraderie is also significant. Those working in the field desire a feeling of affiliation and belonging which provides them with a sense of prestige and self-esteem. These combine under a motivation of altruism in which workers are selfless with the goal of helping others. Omoto and Snyder agree with this by pointing out that aid facilitators are more motivated by work that allows them to provide assistance to people who were originally strangers to them.\(^{100}\) Malkki echoes these points by noting that many view this type of unselfishness as an opportunity to lose themselves in intense and demanding work that was continual.\(^{101}\) According to Malkki, workers do not want to be recognized as “humanitarians.” Instead, they want to be viewed as “aid workers.”

While Malkki presents workers as having a general concern for those they serve, she also explains the narrowing conceptions that the former places on the latter. The author argues that those assisted lose their uniqueness as an individual and, instead, become “pure victims in general.”\(^{102}\) Focusing on refugees in Tanzania, Malkki shares that those in need of help were viewed as being so traumatized that their reason and judgment had been compromised. When sharing the atrocities they experienced, aid workers considered them as “unreliable informants” who were “dishonest, prone to exaggeration…crafty and untrustworthy.” Thus, instead of valuing each refugee as an


\(^{101}\) Malkki 11.

individual person whose suffering may differ from others, a “real refugee” was presumed to be one of a set of a general type of person.\textsuperscript{103}

Fassin also addresses these two entities involved in the transmission of aid. He does so by presenting the relationship between “benefactor” and “receiver.”\textsuperscript{104} Through humanitarian action, Fassin explains, an association of inequality comes into existence. Benefactors gain a standing of superiority in a relationship that includes subjectivity. Recipients succumb to a sense of being poor and unfortunate. McAllum concurs by arguing that as provisions increase the recipients’ dependence grows.\textsuperscript{105}

This benefactor versus recipient model within the discussion of aid is not limited to the relationship between the assistance provider and those living in harm’s way. Ashman discusses the dichotomy between Northern Hemisphere supplying organizations belittling organizations in the Southern Hemisphere who receive and distribute those supplies.\textsuperscript{106} Per his research, Ashman found that northern partners held a higher measure of satisfaction in their work than their southern counterparts.\textsuperscript{107} With a specific focus on the US and African countries, the author shares that organizations located in the latter of the two expressed a feeling of inequality coupled with an absence of joint influence as to how the former treated them. While this is not a discussion of a direct relationship between an aid provider and the individual or individuals in need of assistance, it does provide another insight into how the benefactor treats the receiver as the second of the

\textsuperscript{104} Fassin, \textit{Humanitarian Reason}, 3.
\textsuperscript{107} Ashman, 80.
two is the ultimate recipient of the work done by African organizations whose work is directly affected by US organizations.

Though not commentary reflecting on the benefactor versus recipient model relating to aid, Bhabha elaborates how negative treatment by one group of people toward another group of people causes the latter to mentally and psychologically embrace the harmfulness attached to the poor conduct.\textsuperscript{108} Connecting this to Fassin’s point that providers consider those they serve in negative terms allows for such treatment to become internalized by recipients. Thus, not only are those in need of aid trying to survive the hardships they endure per the civil unrest where they currently live or left but they also must take on the negative scrutiny of some assistance providers.

Bhabha also discusses the dangers of selective collection of information.\textsuperscript{109} Focusing on the polarization between Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda, he argues that much is lost when people disappear, things are destroyed, histories are hidden, records are lost, lands are expropriated, and minorities are murdered. This can be used as a model to argue that should aid benefactors be selective in gathering information about the people they are to serve, or do not conduct due diligence in their research, those in need will suffer.

In sum, this review addressed five themes. The first explained humanitarian government and the shortfalls of humanitarian work. Specifically, Feldman and Ticktin as well as Sonn and Fisher explained the circumstances in which those in need of aid find

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themselves. Then Fassin, Redfield, and Lasker outlined the parameters of humanitarian aid work and its limitations. The second theme was the weaponization of aid. Feldman provided the Israeli approach to aid for Palestinians in Gaza as an example of how assistance can be used to control those in need. McCorkindale’s text complemented Feldman by providing food aid in the midst of the war in Sarajevo in the 1990s. Feldman was also illustrated in de Montclos’s discussion of the war over aid that occurred in the Biafra War during the late 1960s. Third, the discussion of inconsistencies of aid included Alkopher’s and Gallagher’s articles that explained the difficulties of delivering aid in the vast array of circumstances in which it is needed. Denne and Terry provided examples of how the involvement of too many entities in the process can cause irregularities also.

Fourth, was a discussion of the motivations and mindset of aid workers. Articles included Malkki who explained that workers struggle with trying to help those in need while being limited by available resources. Bussell and Forbes point out the internal motives of workers as they seek out the work they do. Last, Malkki, McAllum, Ashman, and Bhabha discuss the perceptions of aid workers toward those they serve.

1.3 POSTCOLONIALISM

While the last two sections discussed the literature on humanitarian aid, this section deals with a theoretical approach that develops a perspective on humanitarian aid that pushes beyond that of global relations and humanitarian operation models. Thus, while the texts discussed here do not specifically examine humanitarian aid, they provide theories which can expand the comprehension of assistance to those in need of it.
Edward Said and Homi Bhabha are key to an understanding of postcolonial terms in relation to humanitarian aid. Both discuss otherness and how parties around the world view each other. David Harvey’s work on how neoliberalism gave impetus to the rise and power of NGOs is also included. When possible, writers’ texts will be used to expand upon the literature of Bhaba, Said, and Harvey.

Bhabha explores how otherness can be applied on a geographic basis. The 1980s gave birth to what he labels the “politics of difference” and the culture war became prominent in the West, particularly in the US. Gone was a cultural community grounded on collective and negotiated affiliations. Instead of equality through interaction being negotiated by equalization and universality, it centered on contingencies and specificities.

This laid groundwork for the creation of the “World of Order” and the “World of Disorder” which further divided the globe after 9/11. According to Bhabha, the latter is comprised of “failed” and “messy states,” including Arab countries. Ironically, he includes China, England, France, Russia, and the US in the World of Order group. In an examination of Syrian aid, these are the same members of the UNSC that act as stumbling blocks to the UNSC’s attempt to address the Syrian situation. In other words, Syria, as an Arab country, falls into a section of the world looked down upon and manipulated by more powerful countries.

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111 Ibid, 234.
Elsewhere, Bhabha suggests this dichotomy of how one entity views another as the other is naturally ingrained.\footnote{Homi K. Bhabha, “On Cultural Choice,” In The Turn to Ethics, edited by Marjorie B. Garber, Beatrice Hanssen and Rebecca Walkowitz, (Park Drive: Taylor and Friends, 2000).} He discusses the perspective of the individual person and then expands to groups of people or societies. He explains culture is not chosen by an entity. Instead, it culminates over multiple experiences that alter one’s perception over time. This is not a choice that a person or society makes on its own. Core and fundamental values found in the organized public life they exist and live in frame and mold their perceptions. This is evidenced not only by Britain, China, France, Russia, and the US being permanent members of the UNSC but also by the authority they exude with such placement. All have decades, some centuries, of wielding their influence imperially, economically, and militarily to benefit themselves. The fact that this occurred and increased over long periods of time mirrors Bhabha’s contention that such a belief would not occur in a brief moment. These countries, again some former empires, have existed as shapers of human global doctrine for elongated epochs, allowing their citizens to be engrained with an acceptance of enfranchisement that became part of the public consciousness that drives their national and international agendas. Replacing a UNSC permanent member with countries like Brazil or India, both of which have higher GDPs than Russia, seems reasonable but will likely never happen.\footnote{GDP by Country - Worldometer (worldometers.info).} The inability to upend long-established norms and upset the proverbial applecart that is the UNSC permanent membership demonstrates Bhabha’s point of a long and nurtured belief by individuals that come together to form a collective thought.
When different cultures meet, there is “considerable moral and social disorientation” that leads to estrangement between the “self and other.”114 This is modeled in what Bhabha calls the “You/I” and “third person.” While the third person does not physically exist, it acts as a representation of the relationship between the two cultures. This relationship does not represent speech-act, thus it is absent of meaningful dialogue. One can infer that states’ interactions across the globe are guided by each country’s unique and internally derived cultures. When the states interact together, the third-person scenario limits their ability to have progressive dialogue. Thus, it can be argued that members of the UNSC’s inability to have meaningful cross-cultural-based dialogue greatly reduces their ability to have a joint-positive impact on people, like Syrians who are in need. This is expanded by the placement of Syrians in the World of Disorder, creating a negative perception of them by UNSC members who are part of the World of Order.

Spivak complements Bhabha by discussing what she calls “metropolitan countries[’]” treatment of the Third World.115 Though focusing on language as expressed through literature, the author explains that universality does not exist in human relations. Marginality is key to cultural identity. Yes, prejudiced lines of separation based on class, ethnicity, and gender exist, but for Spivak narratives of one culture toward another are based more on global financial control and the interest of production. Even though countries exist in a postcolonial world, according to Spivak, they operate within neo-colonialism which still allows for elite existence. Connecting this to Bhabha, it is

114 Ibid, 184 and 185.
possible that prejudice is grounded in a country’s culture and drives it to act to pursue monetary growth. Though Syria may not provide direct fiscal gain for UNSC members, the ability to maneuver through its crises for strategic betterment provides for subjective thinking toward other countries and the Syrian people.

This does not mean that aid has escaped criminal activity carried out by organizations like the UN or other aid activists. As will be seen in the next chapter, the Oil for Food (OFF) program is an example of this. While OFF was designed to get assistance to Iraqis in desperate need of it, key UN staff charged with carrying out its operations personally and illegally benefited from their activities. Companies throughout the world contracted to facilitate OFF also acted wrongly.

One finds a deeper understanding of the roots of Bhabha’s discussion in Said’s writings, especially Orientalism.116 The West has approached itself and the Islamic world through the labels of “us” and “those.” This is necessary for explaining how West-rooted aid agencies may hold a superior view when determining how to help Syrians. Complementing this is Said’s explanation that the West’s view of the greater Levant as the other not only dates back seven centuries but also fueled a conviction of its superiority over Oriental backwardness giving a foundation to colonization economics, trade, and the spread of Christianity. Applying Said’s discussion to the issues at hand leads to asking whether aid providers believe they are superior to the Syrians they work with, or as Bhabha would argue if there is evidence of Western uniqueness found in the aid delivered to Syria. Questions about how the West’s involvement in Syria is affecting the situation there can be drawn from Said’s argument that nothing goes on in the world

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that has ever been isolated and absent of outside influence. How is the activity or inactivity of the West affecting the Syrian war and the needs of citizens living in its midst? Evidence of the West’s belief in its grandiose importance in relation to the rest of the world helps in the examination of what affects aid’s journey from origin to those in need.

In 2004, three years after the al-Qaeda September 11, 2001 attack on the US, Said sees no ebbing in the chasm of the West’s Arab world-view. Singling out the US’s policy toward the region and its people and culture, Said explains that there is a sense that the “people over there are not like ‘us’” and do not “appreciate ‘our’ values.” He uses this line of thought to argue this empowers Western countries to construct foreign, economic, and strategic policies related to the regions they look down on. Seeing it as “modern imperialism,” he argues it continues into the 21st century. At the core of this is the West’s lack of logical rationale. Instead of deliberative argument, debate, and reflection, the West’s belief in its own exceptionalism drives discussion and policy determination toward the Middle East.

This is a point to consider again in the following chapter when reviewing Iraqi aid financing. It was understood that Iraqis needed aid after both the Iran-Iraq and Desert Storm wars concluded. Unfortunately, other global crises drained assistance financial coffers. The result was OFF which allowed Iraq to sell a limited portion of its oil to pay not only for the aid but also for the UN’s administrative operations to manage the program. Granted Iraq was the original catalyst for what led to its people’s need for aid.

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Still, an outside entity dictated to Iraq how much oil it could produce and how to spend
the proceeds that outside entity managed it all and who was being paid by the same
extracted oil represented multiple incursions on a country by outside interests. This
demonstrates Said’s concept of exceptionalism with an organization thinking it knows
best how Iraq should take care of its needs and telling the country how to do it. This is
complicated more by the UNSC drawing out aid available to Iraqis long after its need
was known.

Said sees this as not only a continuation of Western thought toward the “other”
but also as enhanced and more prevalent than before.119 The West’s demeaning
generalizations and hardening attitudes combine with a dominance of power when
considering the Middle East. From this comes a belief that the Middle East’s map can be
changed and ‘we’ can engrave our future there while imposing our forms of life for these
lesser people to follow.120 These points are important when discussing what drives
Western members of the UNSC to act on matters that affect Syria which in turn
influences aid’s presence and accessibility there. This shows colonialism mutating to
adapt to new circumstances.

Additionally, Said strengthens his contention that the West holds itself at a level
of superiority by viewing Britain, France, and the US as the great empires.121 Labeling
these three as empires illuminates a difference that exists when discussing the word
empire. There is a difference between Britain and France on one hand and the US on the

119 Ibid, 870.
121 Edward W. Said, “Secular Interpretation, the Geographical Element, and the
Methodology of Imperialism,” In After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial
other when discussing empire and imperialism. As we have seen, per Barr, Britain and France represented rule over a people by a foreign power, but this was not the case for the US. The US expanded its influence throughout the world but not in the form of land acquisition and governing foreign people. Effectively controlling the Philippines during the first half of the 20th century and the Virgin Islands of St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas, since 1917 are examples of this.122 Thus, viewing empire and imperialism through Said’s argument, one sees these two terms applicable to foreign influence situations regardless of whether they are direct and on-the-ground control, or indirect and subtle power.

Bhabha agrees with Said’s contention, seeing it as a mistake of Western countries.123 Global markets, which do not recognize individual countries or separate national economies, cancel the notion that the West and what it purports to illustrate is the best in the world. It is important to note Bhabha’s contention that regardless of how much Eastern countries modernize their economies to join the global marketplace, the West, particularly the US, will never view them as par with Western economic standards. He argues that the West sees non-Western countries’ actions working to join the global market as “anarchic.” Instead of seeing the activities of its geographic neighbors joining the global economic system and bringing additions to it positively, the West views such activities as destroying old capitalisms and generating new ones while endangering all with perpetual volatility. Such activities will never measure up to Western standards as

they are seen as “not quite social” and “not yet civil.” This article, and others like it that discuss postcolonialism, is relevant to this discussion of humanitarian aid because it strengthens the argument of the West slighting the non-West and viewing only Western practices and standards as the correct way to view and work with the rest of the world.

Bhabha’s point here allows one to consider if aid providers see their work as a way to keep these populations subjugated. Transitioning them from dependency on aid to long-term development projects allows benefactors to continue control and have the upper hand. Furthering this, and relative to the discussion of aid, is Bhabha’s belief that the West’s blindness or devaluation of those who once suffered from marginalization is a loss for much can be learned from the histories of such people and scenarios. The US and other Western countries not only shortchange themselves when believing their way of democracy and economics is the only way, but they also hurt the very people they purport to help (i.e., Syrians (and other Middle East countries as previously shared by Barr)) when they figuratively wear blinders to those people’s histories and needs.

Bhabha supplies a model for this selectivity by the West. To do this, he presents the terms history and historicism as a dichotomy in which past events can be viewed, recorded, and recalled. To explain these differences Bhabha employs the articulations of past people about themselves, their cultures, and the events that illustrate who they are. Using history to explore and present such expressions produces a selective, point-by-point presentation, whereas historicism generates linear, cause-and-effect accountancy. The choosiness of the first approach allows only for a limited discernment

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that presents the “slenderness of narrative” and thus, not a well-informed accounting. The latter allows for a fuller cultural and social phenomenon that better represents the people. Applying this to a discussion of humanitarian aid, it is necessary to ask if information used to facilitate delivery of assistance is a collection of nominally selected and arranged factoids or a full representation of people and their needs.

This establishes that the gulf between the West’s understanding of the non-West is arguably of its own making. Bhabha offers a discussion of what is lost from such a deficit of appreciation.\textsuperscript{125} This limited gaze means that a true grasp of an individual or group of people is non-existent. Liminality is necessary to avoid fixity. With the former, the possibility of a transition from one status to another is possible. This is critical if a person or population in a geographic region is to move beyond their inborn concept of another person or region of people. Without it, the latter occurs, and an ill-informed prejudice is generated. Because of this, an expansive division exists between peoples of the First and Third Worlds and between the North and South hemispheres instead of a legitimate appreciation of each other. This division is comprised of antagonistic and oppositional elements that are beyond conditions of negotiation.

Bhabha explains that good “tension” occurs when such entities abandon their limited thoughts.\textsuperscript{126} Minus this, ethical and political reflection is absent and connections are not made. Relative to the need of aid, Bhabha argues that without this bridging of different peoples, traditional assumptions and paradigms remain in place.

\textsuperscript{125} Homi K. Bhabha, \textit{The Location of Culture} (New York: Routledge, 1994).
Bhabha, et. al., continues their discussion of the dangers of fixity arguing that the Western definition of cosmopolitanism is outdated and limited.\(^{127}\) Someone from the West who is cosmopolitan looks at the world with a mindset that is anchored in a Western perception of the rest of the world. In what the authors label as “a history of dead ideas,” under this mode of cosmopolitanism, Western philosophical thought about people and cultures beyond the comforts of home is self-limited. Banishing the sightlessness created by this limitation requires the pursuit of self-education about the diversities that make a non-Western person or population unique. In other words, someone outside the West should not be categorized based on Western precepts. Instead, they are to be recognized as distinctive unto themselves because of who they are. Without this basis, the West will forever narrowly pigeonhole others within preconceived and outdated classifications. This is significant when discussing whether aid facilitators base their considerations on a limited cataloging of past recipients or on an openness to new and unknown information.

Said agrees with the problems of such shortcomings.\(^{128}\) He condemns the premise of Samuel Huntington’s “The Clash of Civilization?” that the West will only benefit by having the upper hand as it relates to the rest of the world.\(^{129}\) Said finds fault with Huntington for focusing on predominantly Islamic regions, which the West “fends off.” According to Said, Huntington goes as far as to argue the West is superior culturally with statements such as “we have Mozart and Michelangelo and they don’t.” Said uses this

\(^{127}\) Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha, Carol Appadurai Dipesh Chakrabartty, “Cosmopolitanisms,” *Public Culture* 12, no. 3 (Fall 2000), 577-589.


\(^{129}\) Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations?,” *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993), 22-49.
opportunity to point to the dangers of the West not understanding non-Western populations. He explains such statements as Huntington’s confusion and misleading resulting in a disordered reality. For Said, the only possible outcome for following policies such as Huntington’s is a reinforcement of defensive self-pride and a lack of critical understanding. An aid provider’s ability to reach this critical understanding of those they assist is important when considering the type, quality, and quantity of aid being delivered. Otherwise, if aid given to the eastern Mediterranean region is forcefully narrowed to reflect what the West thinks the people there need, the Levant will not get what it truly needs.

What providers understand is the importance of the strategic use of favoritism toward those to whom they give aid. Narang singles out the US as providing aid based on its own interests and not those of the recipient. More often than not, aid consideration is based on the provider’s economic interest in the recipient. The longevity of life and previous colonial ties to the region are also factors. Writing in 2016, Narang provides evidence from conflicts in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Iraq, and Kosovo during the last two decades when they received the bulk of international humanitarian aid. During the same time East Timor, Sierra Leone, and Somalia were comparatively abandoned. This provides an apt illustration of Bhabha and Said’s contentions that Western actions and thoughts are based on internal convictions and not those of the people they claim to assist.

1.4 NEOLIBERALISM

Key to understanding the facilitation of aid delivery is comprehending the role of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Crucial to doing this is appreciating neoliberalism. David Harvey presents the three key components of its existence. The first is the public sector’s retreat from its previous efforts to provide a social safety net while simultaneously insisting on the individual’s responsibility for their own well-being. This includes the state privatizing its assets. Harvey explains that since the late-1970s/early-1980s, neoliberalism has come to influence not only the world’s economy but also the very existence of humans regardless of their fiscal wherewithal.

Second, the effects of neoliberalism were not limited to transferring assets from the public sector to the private sector and free-market capitalism. This move had a direct influence on how NGOs came into a prominence that continues today. Not only have NGOs filled the space the public sector once held, but because of neoliberalism they have also established global dominance in the area. Harvey argues that government’s withdrawal from public welfare services created a vacuum that has been filled by NGOs like Amnesty International and Doctors Without Borders.

Third, as a result of Harvey’s first two points, central control over such needs and operations now resides in the hands of a select few as the state retreats and deregulates. Because of this a hierarchy arguably exists in NGOs’ approach to those they serve and in how the organizations themselves interrelate. This illustrates why it is necessary to consider neoliberalism as it relates to how aid is delivered to those in need of it in Syria.

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Though writing about neoliberalism and its impact on NGOs in a different region of the world, Gideon provides evidence supporting Harvey.\textsuperscript{132} Here the author provides insight into the before-and-after effects of neoliberalism on NGOs. In a dual examination of NGOs that existed prior to the onset of neoliberalism and those that came later, one learns that the former struggles to continue while the latter thrives. Labeling the latter as “opportunistic,” Gideon explains they have misgivings about accepting state contracts and international donor funds. This undermined the credibility and legitimacy of older “ideologically based” NGOs. The result has been that NGO goals and activities are often aligned with those providing them with work and fiscal backing than those they are supposed to serve. This certainly echoes Narang’s previous contention further illustrating the motives of aid facilitators are driven more by their supporters than by those in need. This is a factor when considering aid being delivered throughout the Middle East.

Porteria explains how neoliberalism thrives in situations where populations have been devastated by circumstances beyond their control.\textsuperscript{133} Referencing the destruction and hardship wrought by various disasters, the author argues that “disaster capitalism” is a byproduct of neoliberalism that allows those who are better off to profit from disasters suffered by those who are not.\textsuperscript{134} According to the author, in the neoliberal era of the present, disasters are viewed as openings to generate markets. “Elites and oligarchs” embrace the opportunities to profit from the disasters and people’s despair. While


Porteria writes about natural disasters, the author provides descriptions of those who suffer which are applicable to Syrians in need. Arguing that disaster capitalism affects the most vulnerable the most brings to mind how the Syrian situation has been placed alongside the human devastation found per World War II. As if discussing a predator waiting until its most opportune moment to attack, Porteria explains that advantage is taken particularly when those who suffer are most vulnerable and reeling from trauma. This leads one to wonder what advantages have been taken and profits made by all warring internal Syrian parties as well as those participating as proxies in the unrest.

Dichter continues the theme of neoliberalism leading to an increase in NGOs and influencing their practice. 135 Echoing Gideon, he argues that the NGO arena is full of questionable new arrivals who entered the field for less than moral reasons. This occurred within a scenario in which NGOs were forced to be “less church-like” and “more corporation-like.” Corporate financial and management strategies have been embraced, making it difficult to distinguish between the principles of NGOs and the for-profit sector. As a result, the key question was not whether or not they were doing a good job but if they were continuing to grow their donor base.

The outward presence of NGOs has developed a more for-profit-like demeanor while the relationship of NGOs with each other mirrors the hierarchy of a corporate structure. Developing countries and Southern NGOs are fiscally challenged in their efforts to carry out their missions. Because of this, they often have to turn to Northern-

based international NGOs.\textsuperscript{136} This means that Southern NGOs have become clients of Northern NGO grant providers causing the former to make difficult trade-off decisions when considering their mission and the requirements faced when trying to fund them. Because of this, the question arises as to whether Southern NGOs are fulfilling the mission they set out to achieve or whether they instead are serving as conduits for the goals of Northern NGOs.

Rockliffe also notes the differences in the relationship between organizations located in developed and developing countries, explaining that there is a disconnect between the two.\textsuperscript{137} Quite often representatives of organizations based in the developed world hold a sense of superiority of themselves that is centered on racism.

Bush expands on Dichter’s commentary regarding the evidence of for-profit practice taking a noticeable presence in NGOs.\textsuperscript{138} Though not writing specifically about NGOs, Bush’s argument reflects the effects of non-profit organizations, which NGOs are, adopting for-profit modes of operation. Specifically stating four key examples, Bush first notes that following for-profit approaches causes a loss of “selfless values.” For-profit models advocate practices that are the opposite of the non-profit spirit of a system that promotes a sense of cooperation, habits of the heart, and support. Second, he argues that the for-profit atmosphere supports a sense of internal competition to a point where new ideas are not shared and considered. This includes a sense that a novel program will fail and waste resources. Third, an internal shift from non-profit to for-profit alters the

\textsuperscript{136} Dichter, “Globalization and Its Effects on NGOs: Efflorescence or a Blurring of Roles and Relevance?,” 49.
internal character and culture of the organization. This is illustrated by the replacement of volunteer boards with professional management staff. The by-product of this is an organization that is more economically goal oriented as it loses focus on its mission. Last, cooperation amongst non-profit organizations is key to the betterment of the public and needs they serve. Sharing information, resources, best practices, etc. leads to collaboration for betterment. The competitive nature of for-profit practice negates such sharing which separates much of the positive cohesive operations and outcomes that are possible otherwise. Again, while Bush does not directly discuss NGOs, the author does compliment comments like those of Dichter’s which begs the question as to how affected non-profit organizations like aid providers really are under such circumstances.

Dichter also expands on Harvey’s contention that NGOs have replaced the public sector. The author notes that the prominence of NGOs has risen to a level in which their relationship with governments is not only blurred but also darker, negatively productive, and worrisome.139 Dichter points to two specific examples to support this argument. One is that NGOs influence significant points of US foreign policy, and the other is that critical policy conferences have been both instigated and dominated by NGOs in recent decades.

Dichter’s points are applicable to considering aid in the Middle East. What drives aid organizations and their workers to operate? Are they able to do so based on what they learn from those suffering in the field or are they focused on a home office whose donors dictate their cooperation? If the answers to these questions show both external forces dominating the process and the input of those in need holding little weight,

139 Dichter, 43.
Harvey’s contention that neoliberalism effectively moves capital and control of operations into the hands of a select few is proven.

Balboa echoes this sentiment of NGOs’ broad and heavy influence. Here one learns that the rise of NGOs to prominence has given them so much effect that the actions of one NGO may help or hurt the efforts of another NGO. This is amplified in what one might consider too much focus on the big picture without considering the impact on smaller levels. This is garnered from the author’s contention that broad global initiatives are sought without proper attention given to the lasting effects on the local level. Because of this, quite often an NGO may appear successful in a broad-global sense while having notable failures when analyzed at a local level.

This resonates with Balboa and Deloffre’s dichotomy of governance versus government. When an NGO operates in tunnel vision that does not appreciate the positive potential of governance then money, labor, and time are just a few of the precious resources wasted under the operation of government. This could result in worse future suffering for those truly in need than what they are currently experiencing.

Fisher continues the conversation on NGOs usurping the role of governments as well as the lack of balanced relationships between North and South participants. NGOs directly compete with governments when the provision of foreign funding is available for human rights issues. The after-effect of this is that these NGOs end up in direct opposition to state practices. In respect to hemispheric relations, the author explains that Northern NGOs are selective about which Southern counterparts they work

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with and base their decision on which ones further their own itineraries. As a result, Fisher argues that adequate assistance for the world’s poorest has failed in recent decades. Thus, he believes that the power NGOs have to do good is also the power to do harm.

Sacouman provides a case study of what the true interests of an NGO can be.¹⁴² Focusing on Manejo, an NGO in Argentina, the author debunks positive sentiment toward the work NGOs do in impoverished communities. Though not like the situation in Syria, Sacouman presents information that is relevant to understanding the relationship between the provider and the recipient of assistance. The study found Manejo’s relationship to its beneficiaries structured as a vertical hierarchy. Workers created a configuration that was centralized, paternalistic, and undemocratic. The NGO leaders viewed themselves as educated professionals who were distinct and elevated above the people they served. Instead of placing their main focus on those in need, they directed it toward funding agencies on whom they depended. These are key points to keep in mind while evaluating the relationships between aid workers and recipients in the Middle East.

To conclude, one must understand that these texts provide a conceptual lens through which such assistance can be viewed in a different light. The writings can be broken into three theses. The first discussed otherness and the history behind it and looked at the potential negative impact of this perception. From Bhabha, one learns that the politics of difference both fuels the West’s perception of the non-West and is molded into two spheres – Order and Disorder. The latter includes what the West perceives as failed and messy countries. Spivak expanded on this to explain that this viewpoint is a

catalyst for the West to see itself as elite over countries such as Arab states which includes Syria. Thus, a question for this dissertation is how does humanitarian aid reflect a transfer from the sphere of Order to that of Disorder?

Second, Said explained that this is not a new phenomenon but one that has existed for centuries. He went so far as to repeat this sentiment and argue that it has gotten worse since he first presented his discussion on Orientalism. As if to say the West feels a duty to use its negative thoughts toward the other to save them from themselves, Said shares that there is a sense of empowerment by the West to impose its way of existence on those it sees as unlike them. This poses another question; this is one as to whether this impetus is present in Western provision of aid.

Third, Harvey pointed out how neoliberalism acted as a catalyst for the rise of NGOs to global dominance. This was complimented by texts that include Gideon and Dichter who question the motives of new NGOs that seem driven by opportunism and corporate-like practices. Within this presentation is the argument that NGOs serve those in need less and focus on the motives of their sponsors more. Thus, this dissertation asks how much those in need of aid suffer, not only because of the difficulties in which they live but also because those who can provide the assistance are influenced by entities that hold sway but are away from the actual need in the field.

1.5 MODEL FOR STUDTY/AN INTERDISCIPLINARY MODEL OF ANALYSIS

Chapter Two of this dissertation gives a historical overview of aid as it relates to the Armenians, Palestinians, and Iraqis. Chapter Three will present the results from field
research interviews of Syrian aid providers and recipients. The following key points provide a model that will act as a lens when discussing the material of Chapters Two and Three. I created it to reflect an interdisciplinary approach that combines the humanities and social sciences literature previously presented. These are the themes that will be kept in mind while reviewing literature that directly represent aid availability and deliverance as they relate to Armenians, Iraqis, Palestinians, and Syrians.

**Government versus Governance**

As discussed prior, the term government refers to when entities who are independent of each other approach situations with their own partial interest. This can cause the most opportune outcome to be missed because common ground is not possible. On the other hand, per governance, agendas and information is shared which allows for the best interests of the task at hand to be served.

Do these two practices appear in the material to be discussed?

- If yes, how are they personified?
- What is the catalysts for their existence?
- When and where are they present?
- If government exists, is there evidence of selectivity in the provision of aid?
- Is there evidence of shortcomings of aid availability if government is employed?

**Humanitarian Government**

How is the operation of providing aid similar and different when executing its availability?

**Sovereignty**
Does state sovereignty exist in the delivery of aid to Armenians, Iraqis, Palestinians, and Syrians?
  - If yes, how can its presence be described?

**Shortfalls of Humanitarian Aid**

Is there evidence that all in need could not be provided for?
  - If yes, what circumstances describe the situation and why it happened?
  - How were these shortcomings handled?

**Inconsistencies of Aid**

Realizing that aid facilitators dealt with donors/sponsors on one hand and recipients on the other – what was the balance/imbalance of influence?
  - How did this affect the mission being carried out?

What oversight methods were in place to make sure distributed aid was reaching those in need?
  - Did scenarios such as price-gouging/black markets/etc. exist?

**Weaponization of Aid**

Did aid act as a catalyst for the crises?
  - What outside aid providers and recipients were involved in its availability and facilitation?
  - Did aid strengthen these third parties?
  - Did aid prolong skirmishes?
  - Did recipients suffer further, beyond the difficulties of warfare, because of the presence of aid?

**Us/Them/Otherness**
Does the World of Order and World of Disorder exist in the Armenian, Iraqi, Palestinian, Syrian situations regarding aid?

- Is there evidence of a Western downward/negative view of the area exist?
- Is there dialogue, intelligence gathering on both sides or are thoughts based on assumed and past information?

**Attitudes and Motivations of Aid Workers**

How did workers feel about the job they did and those they assisted?

- What about their impressions towards those they reported to, i.e. sponsors, management, etc.?
- What were the pluses and minuses for them of doing their work?
- What was the working relationship and personal interaction between provider and recipient?

**The Existence of NGOs and Their Influence on the Situation**

How are NGOs present in the Armenian, Iraqi, Palestinian, and Syrian situations?

- Does this include East/West, North/South relationships?
- What is the relationship between NGOs and governments involved?
- Is it an equal partnership or is it uneven-handed?
- How can the relationship between global and national NGOs be described?
- Does neoliberalism exist in the way of NGOs taking roles once held by the state?
- Is there evidence of the privatization of assets and services that were once under the direction of the state?
CHAPTER 2

AID IN THE MIDDLE EAST IN TIMES OF WAR:
A HISTORICAL SURVEY

Humanitarian aid in 20th-century greater Levant is contextualized in its ever-mutating political and demographic map. From empires falling per World War I, to the Sykes-Picot Treaty, Israel’s formation in Palestine, and Iraq’s Kuwait invasion, nation-state borders were a continual issue. Demographics, ethnicity, nationality, religion, and region of origin also shaped aid’s delivery, particularly when forced migration existed. Whether one was an Armenian in the 1920s, a Jewish settler in Palestine after the Balfour Declaration, an Iraqi Shiite in the 1990s, or a Palestinian throughout the 20th century, demographics affected aid. For the 20th century greater-Levant aid included employment, education, housing, electricity, clean water, sanitation, finance, and medical care. Ironically, even sanctions were a component. Finally, those needing aid often existed in the middle of struggles not of their making. This chapter provides an overview of humanitarian aid among Armenians, Palestinians, and Iraqis including Kurds and Shiites. This includes three specific aid-related initiatives for each. Thus, this chapter provides an understanding of humanitarian aid’s response to war in the 20th-century greater Levant which provides footing to understand the Syrian struggle and assistance provided for those caught in it.
2.1 THE ARME N IANS AND WORLD WAR I

World War I and early 20th-century related events birthed modern humanitarianism. Called the Great War, it is considered the most significant event after the fall of the Roman Empire. The Austro-Hungarian, German, Ottoman, and Russian Empires collapsed. Across Europe and the Middle East, hundreds of thousands of people suffered displacement, epidemics, famine, and violence producing unprecedented levels of need and transforming humanitarianism. New national borders made humanitarianism a transnational effort involving many countries and organizations. Past assistance represented religious interests. New participants included physicians, social workers, and engineers. This phenomenon marked unique relief form changes. The League of Nations dealt intricately with the war’s results. Its ostensible purpose included helping those in need, but its core function was enabling European power over the non-West to legitimize and perpetuate Middle East colonialism.

Genocide was central to the harm Ottomans inflicted on Armenians during the war and into the 1920s. Two fears of an Armenian threat fueled this. The first was possible British and Russian invasions. The Young Turks’ Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) saw such incursions empowering Armenians against them. This led to the CUP dismissing Armenians from their civil servant positions during the 1914-1915

145 Ibid, 163.  
winter. The second fear resulted from Allied forces attacking Gallipoli in April 1915. Because Armenians were without an independent country, Ottomans saw this incursion as fueling an Armenian revolt for independent statehood. While favored by the West, the Ottomans, who would be geographically affected, were not. Thus, they reduced Armenian density in parts of the Empire and eliminated them in others. Armenian elites were arrested. Approximately 270 Armenian clergy, editors, journalists, lawyers, physicians, politicians, and teachers were apprehended in Istanbul alone, most being killed. Believing this changed little, Ottomans began murdering some Armenian men and deporting the remainder. If successful, the perceived threat would disappear.

Western interests also affected the situation. The recent Bolshevik Revolution gave rise to the Soviet Union. During World War I and its aftermath, the West viewed Russia as a threat. Thus, the Ottoman Empire, subsequently the Republic of Turkey, was an East-West barrier. Russia’s revolution was seen catalyzing international insurrections threatening Western Europe. Accordingly, Turkey was an ally in need of appeasement. Hence, the US did not declare war on the Ottomans during the war while cognizant of the atrocities being committed against Armenians. This suggests the Cold War’s roots are connected to World War I leading to the 20th century’s East-West conflict, contributing to innocent people like the Armenians being caught in the middle.

Humanitarian assistance suggests food and medicine but assistance for the Armenians was much more expansive. Three particular projects are noteworthy: the Rescue Movement, the Nansen Passport, and the Final Settlement. This chapter section

147 Carbanes, 2.
148 Carbanes, 2.
presents them as incipient forms of modern humanitarianism that began by assisting Armenians.

2.1.1 RESCUE MOVEMENT

Ottoman atrocities toward Armenians were strategic. Thousands of “bloodthirsty murderers” were released from prisons to perform “massacre duty” against Armenians.149 Killings, including babies, involved organized burning, burying them alive, drowning, poisoning, and suffocation. Approximately 600,000 Armenians were killed with 1,400,000 more suffering.150 Most survivors were children and young women, many of whom suffered rape and name change as well as forced religious conversion that included circumcision for boys.151 Girls and young women became wives, concubines, or domestic help.152 The Ottoman government legalized adoption to assimilate Armenian children.153 Turkification of Armenian children was not simply altering their identities but also included converting them into enemies of their nation and people.154 Remolding young Armenians into Turkish Muslims meant ending the danger to Ottoman population homogeneity.155

152 Ekmekioğlu, 528.
154 Gzoyan, Galuistryan, Khachatryan, 405.
155 Ekmekioğlu, 526.
Middle East World War I hostilities ended with the Mudros Armistice on October 18, 1918.\textsuperscript{156} The agreement’s Article Four stipulated the Allies be presented interned persons and prisoners. Returning survivors to their people became its humanitarian mission. Thus, the Rescue Movement was established to recover young Armenians.\textsuperscript{157} This was managed by Armenians, the American Near East Relief, and the League, who positioned themselves as change agents bringing regional security.\textsuperscript{158}

The vorpahavak program, meaning “the gathering of orphans” established Neutral Houses in the Empire to identify whether they were Armenian or Turkish.\textsuperscript{159} These houses provided non-intimidating settings to remember their past.\textsuperscript{160} Younger children found recalling their history difficult. Many had internalized anti-Armenian and anti-Christian indoctrination while stating they were Turkish.\textsuperscript{161} Approximately 75 percent entering the initiative reunited with relatives.\textsuperscript{162} Still, thousands never left Turkey.

Reconnecting young Armenians with families was humanitarian assistance, but the Allies’ drive included anti-Ottoman-Muslim beliefs. Because Armenians were Christians in a Muslim state, the West believed it must restore them and stop “white”

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\textsuperscript{156} Gzoyan, Galuistryan, Khachatryan, 396.
\textsuperscript{159} Gzoyan, 398, and Ekmekioğlu, 534 and 541.
\textsuperscript{160} Gzoyan, 399.
\textsuperscript{161} Gzoyan, 399 and 402.
\textsuperscript{162} Watenpaugh, \textit{Bread from Stones: The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism}, 153.
\end{flushleft}
Armenians and “ Asiatic” Turks from mixing.163 They were righting Turkish evils that US Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire Henry Morgenthau called “psychologically primitive” and “coward.”164 Ottomans were barbaric, uncivilized, and outside “Europeanness.”165 Thus, the League had to alleviate Ottoman wrongs and return Armenians to “human beings.”166 Western countries saw this as part of their “White Man’s Burden” mission to civilize the world, West was exporting its version of modern social reform to Armenians. Humanitarianism had replaced politics and became entangled with Western colonialism.167 What post-war Armenians wanted did not match the West’s goal to create a “New Near East.”168 Instead, the West saw this humanitarian work as integral to ordering the world in a Western image.169 In short, Western humanitarianism had a colonialist agenda. It is hard not to see the West conveniently using the Rescue Movement as a vehicle to cloak its intention to expand Christianity in the region.

A full understanding of the Rescue Movement requires recognition that Armenians had ulterior motives just as significant, if not more so, as humanitarianism.

164 Daniel, 160.
165 Watenpaugh, Bread from Stones: The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism, 7.
169 Watenpaugh, Bread from Stones: The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism, 5 and 6.
After the war, the Paris Peace Conference redrew the map of former empires and countries. Armenians and Turks were interested in an area the former called “Western Armenia” and the latter called “Eastern Provinces.” Gaining it meant Armenians retaking their historical homeland that Ottomans had controlled since the 16th century. The Conference determined to award the larger population. Lacking numbers, because of Ottoman eradication efforts, the solution was to return Islamized Armenians home. The Turks understood they also needed to boost their demographic numbers and disable Armenian plans. Collecting young Armenians became an Armenians versus Turks battleground making vorpahavak abduction, not redemption. Children were forcibly extracted, to increase Ottoman numbers, and “Armenianize” the other. Vorpahavak’s forced confession directive was: if a suspect did not protest nor another party claimed them, they were considered Armenian regardless of memory of their previous language, family or location. Anyone reclaimed by the Armenians and attempting escape was imprisoned.

Per vorpahavak, Armenian women pregnant from rape could not have abortions. This strengthened Armenian numbers and their chance to gain territory. Many feared their families would reject them because their children were mixed Turkish-Armenian. Others had no families to return to, and those who had married Turkish men found staying in Turkey better. Pregnant Armenian women were forcibly incarcerated in maternity wards due to fears they would attempt suicide. Because of this, many women were relieved when their newborns died.

170 Ekmekioglu, 542.
171 Gzoyan, Galustyan, Khachatryan, 396, and Ekmekioglu, 538 and 541.
172 Ekmekioglu, 536.
173 Ibid, 546-547.
In sum, the Rescue Movement had two purposes. One, as an example of humanitarianism, was its goal of liberating young Armenians forcibly taken and indoctrinated into Ottoman culture. The second reveals that these individuals were proxy tokens in a tug-of-war between Ottomans and Armenians over land control.

2.1.2 Nansen Passport

Again, the war took cartography to a higher level. For centuries, there had been little reason to define the term refugee.174 Refugee groups were small with most migrating to America. This meant European powers permitted uncontrolled immigration. With the war over, new national borders were created, notably in Europe. The war changed European country boundaries from 8,000 total miles to 10,000, creating independent states operating under nationalist ideals of self-determination.

The League’s covenant did not specifically address aid or refugee protection.175 Armenians who previously lived under the Ottomans were now stateless, complicating this.176 An estimated 320,000 Armenians were scattered across eastern Mediterranean and European countries.177 No law recognized them, and they were without the rights states provide their citizens.178 They were involuntary migrants seeking foreign sanctuary.179

The League approached them through three lenses: juridical, social, and individualist. Juridically they were outside their original country without state protection. Socially, they were war casualties needing assistance. Individually, they were escaping injustice in their home state. Most lacked travel documents, limiting their mobility. They needed international infrastructure with rules of assistance including travel credentials.

The absence of a legal system was not their only problem. New countries embraced nationalist self-defense against foreigners. “Naturalization of nativism” combined the beginning of welfare states, rising labor movements, and social benefits to promote immigration control. Armenian refugees were perceived as health, economic, and security threats. At the war’s end, most receiving countries faced fiscal, reconstruction, and political problems, leaving them unprepared for an inflow of refugees. This sharpened “us” and “them” formulations.

Refugees’ primary needs were asylum and employment in a receiving country. In response, in August 1921, the League appointed Norwegian diplomat Fridtjof Nansen as

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and


Hathaway, 348.

Ibid, 349.


**Holborn, “The League of Nations and the Refugee Problem,” 124.**
High Commissioner for Refugees. His original charge to handle refugees from Russia’s Bolshevik Revolution was expanded to World War I refugees including Armenians. Nansen’s assignment was threefold: help refugees survive, give them legal status, and assist them in acquiring employment. This was a “humanitarian duty” and an “obligation for international peace.” The result was the “Nansen Passport.” It provided documentation that stateless people needed to travel legally. Approximately 320,000 Armenians were in need of this documentation. Qualifying Armenians were: of Armenian origin, former Ottoman subjects without Turkish Republic protection, and lacking nationality. Refugees could now legally cross borders and settle in passport-accepting countries, and gain work, social insurance, and a transit permit. The passport certified Armenian refugee personage without a state bureaucracy.

Five limitations existed. First, countries had to accept the passport for holders to cross their borders. Fifty-four countries originally approved it for Russian refugees while only 38 extended it to Armenians. Second, re-entry to issuing countries was initially not required. Countries delivering passports could facilitate refugee departure

187 Hieronymi, 41.
188 Marrus, 94.
189 Hathaway, 379.
190 Hathaway, 352.
191 Culcasi, 473, Hieronymi, 37 and 38, and Holborn, The Legal Status of Refugees, 683.
192 Hieronymi, 42.
194 Hathaway, 353.
and not take them back. It took two years for this to change and for passport holders to be able to obtain a return visa stamp on their document. Third, the Passport denied Armenians the right to political activity. It gave countries controllable labor while depriving legal rights and protection. Employers could fire refugee laborers and not provide them with unemployment relief. A country’s level of economic stability encouraged ethno-nationalist policies fueling fiscal and legal oppression. Fourth, the Passport relieved Turkey of responsibility for former residents. Ironically, the passport allowed Armenians to travel anywhere but Turkey where many originated. For them, the Nansen Passport made Armenian exile permanent. Last, some finessed its imbalance by obtaining false papers or secretly entering countries they believed had better opportunities. If caught, they could be tried, imprisoned, and expelled. Some found options in vagrancy and suicide.

In the end, the Nansen Passport provided a legal structure and assistance in working through the unprecedented post-war refugee problem. Before Nansen’s work, such efforts were described as “using bedroom sheets to block a hurricane.” Thus, the passport eased the Armenian’s stateless situation, but it did not solve everything. Work,

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201 Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century*, 52.
with limitations, allowed the betterment of lives that otherwise would have suffered more.

2.1.3 FINAL SETTLEMENT

With the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement, Britain and France divided the greater Levant into spheres of control and influence. Britain’s Mandate encompassed what now is Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine. France’s covered what became Lebanon and Syria. Legitimizing their presence, the League had them assist residents in resolving post-war problems, including local governments and dealing with refugees. During World War I and its aftermath, 80,000 Armenians entered Syria, and the majority located in Aleppo. Those entering Lebanon settled in Beirut. While France’s Mandate was to facilitate peaceful organization, a massive Armenian inflow was not anticipated. As the area’s temporary guardian, France was to prepare it for self-determination, mirroring Wilson’s self-government model. Claiming colonial ambivalence, “Mother France” was healing wounds and nurturing her children until they were self-supportive.

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The solution was to transform Armenian encampments, outside Aleppo and Beirut, into modern neighborhoods. Per the “Final Settlement,” Armenians would become a “respectable urban middle class.” This entailed obtaining land for refugee-owned homes. New residents were placed in professional jobs and given small-business and agricultural loans. Armenian script dominated street signage. Basically, France took the unexpected refugee arrival and created Armenian-oriented communities in Arab-Muslim countries.

France’s need for Armenian support lay inside and outside its mandate. While France’s official purpose appeared humanitarian, it had ulterior motives. Internally, France’s economy needed improvement. Agriculture was important to make this happen. The mandate could produce French textile industry, but they needed cotton. Syria and Lebanon enhanced France’s geographic power. France viewed its relationships in the area as historical, dating to the Crusades when it protected Christians of the Orient, making a pro-French-Armenian relationship vital. Externally, motives lay in French and British competition for the Levant and North Africa domination. The mandate was

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211 Lust-Okar, 58 and 59.
strategic to France. Syrian and Lebanese support of France was critical, and as Arab nationalism rose throughout the Levant, France needed allies there. This made Christian Armenians potential friends, so France aided Armenians to gain their support. For France, they were Christian, non-Muslim, non-Arab allies countering pan-Arab/Islam.

This created a three-party scenario: French-Mandated Arab-Muslims seeking independence, France who saw the area as vital to its interests, and Armenians who needed a home. Arab Muslims needed the French out and their Christian-Armenian allies’ strength diminished. France had to neutralize Arab nationalism and appease their Christian-Armenian allies. For this, France gave Armenians citizenship and voting rights in return for support while limiting Muslims politically. The mandate prohibited religious discrimination. The French used this to weaken the Arab-Muslim majority, arguing that all religious sects, including Christian Armenians, needed community equality, and diluting Islam’s status would achieve this France combined non-Sunni Druze and Alawite communities into voting districts creating “compact minorities.” Hence, using the Final Settlement, France aligned with the Armenians while dividing and conquering native residents.

Armenians realized they must be proactive to continue receiving their special attention. For this, they lobbied France, conveying the French-Armenian regional pact’s importance. Stressing religious ties, they emphasized their shared Christian faith and that

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213 Thompson, 150.
Armenians were there before the 7th-century Islamic conquest. This showed they understood France’s efforts. Using words like “others” for Arab-Muslims, Armenians proved they believed in France’s superiority. Accordingly, Armenians presented themselves as “West and non-West” mediators.

Ultimately, French hopes collapsed. According to Lust-Okar, colonial system collaboration is a short-term fix, not long-term stability. France’s Armenian favoritism became counter-productive. First, fiscal costs of maintaining the relationship increased. Secondly, while gaining Armenian support improved its mandate standing, the wedge between France and Arab nationalists deepened. Syrian and Lebanese dislike for France heightened. With constant religious division, Arab Muslims saw France as God’s enemy wanting to “take your wives, daughters, and children.” Armenians were caught between France and the mandate’s original residents. They recognized their French dependence fueled Arab-Muslim concerns about Armenians. Syrian and Lebanese post-war economies suffered. Prices and unemployment dangerously increased. Arab Muslims blamed French-supported Armenians. They had entered their countries, and received housing, citizenship, voting rights, and jobs, making them unwelcomed usurpers.

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216 Kaplan, 400 and 402.
217 Lust-Okar, 64.
218 Thompson, 153.
219 Lust-Okar, 58.
Resistance rose with Muslim-Armenian fighting in Aleppo and Beirut. Cheap Armenian labor, competition for new labor skills, and an enlarged Christian element in the Syro-Lebanese political system combined to cause Syrian and Lebanese backlash. France’s charge to bring about peace and independence failed. Ironically, the Syrians and Lebanese the Final Settlement was intended to suppress eventually replaced France as their countries’ leaders. Had the mandate not existed and the area’s residents been given sovereign authority at the war’s close, one can argue that Armenian humanitarian work would have been different.

2.2 THE PALESTINIANS FROM WORLD WAR I TO THE OSLO ACCORDS

Humanitarian aid for Palestinians has a long history with no end in sight. Beginning in World War I, it is the longest duration of need for one community and is linked to several wars of attrition and continuing colonialism. Three separate war-related scenarios support this. First, Britain’s Balfour Declaration and Palestinian Mandate strove for geographic, strategic, and demographic changes in support of the Zionist project. Second, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) formed to aid Palestinians displaced by Israel’s creation. Finally, the 1994 Oslo Accords’ affected Gaza Strip Palestinians. These three moments shaped Palestinian aid over the decades.

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222 Longrigg, 139.
2.2.1 THE BALFOUR DECLARATION AND BRITISH MANDATE

Israel was established in 1948, but knowledge of prior actions that give rise to Palestinian displacement is needed to comprehend the history of Palestinian aid. This began with Britain’s November 2, 1917, Balfour Declaration, the first official step toward Israel’s creation and Palestinian displacement. It states:

“I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty’s Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet.

His Majesty’s Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by the Jews in any other country”\textsuperscript{223}

Here, Britain’s goals are to create a Jewish homeland in Palestine and to not harm existing indigenous Palestinians; though no mention is made of their political rights. But this is not their core reasoning. Britain’s true interest was three-fold. First, and timely, Britain believed that global Jewish support was necessary to win World War I\textsuperscript{224} Allied forces’ victory was questionable. Britain believed a Jewish state would kindle global Jewish support for their war efforts. But Germany wanted the same. Over half the world’s Jews lived under German, Austro-Hungarian, and Turkish control (members of the Allies’ opposing Central Powers).\textsuperscript{225} Germany was considering an independent German-Jewish state in Palestine. Thus, Britain feared the world’s Jews favoring

German war efforts over theirs. Secondly, Britain knew Russian Jews opposed Allied efforts. Before the Bolshevik Revolution, Russia mistreated its Jews. So, why would they support its ally, Britain? Russia’s weakened state made its participation in the war difficult. A Russo-German pact, which Russian Jews supported, was possible, thus strengthening the Central Powers. Last, Palestine was near the British-controlled Suez Canal and of strategic interest, making loss of control of Palestine a threat. They feared France increasing beyond the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Accordingly, Zionism provided for Britain’s Palestine interests. Balfour stated once the Jewish state was established, “no crescent and star will ever again fly over Jerusalem.” Britain believed Jewish placement better served its interests than native Palestinians. “Backward” Arabs would welcome the “modernizing” Jews. Britain focused on war and imperial needs, not Palestinians, setting the stage for Palestinian displacement and aid.

The War ended in 1918 with the Allies victorious. British and French Mandates were to prepare the region’s populations for independence and membership in a new

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231 Friedman, 111.

international community. They were to foster autonomous structures leading to independent statehoods.\textsuperscript{234} Britain was to help everyone in need regardless of ethnicity, race, religion, etc., as needed for League approval. In Palestine, this meant Jewish immigrants, Muslims, and Christian natives were to be treated equally but Britain did not do this. Its goals required it to provide Jews with financial, political, medical, and technical assistance.\textsuperscript{235} Britain considered them “nearly white” unlike Palestinians.\textsuperscript{236} Jews helped determine Mandate parameters from its start.\textsuperscript{237} The “childlike” Palestinians lived in “remote antiquity” lacking the “brains” to fulfill mandate goals.\textsuperscript{238} Hence, Jews would better apply Britain’s European-style modernization. Britain used this Jewish-favorable/Palestinian-unfavorable lens to provide Mandate support.

Britain used statutorily restrictive surveys to seize rural Palestinian land.\textsuperscript{239} It believed discontent Palestinians would sell their land, enabling new Jewish communities to absorb Jewish immigrants.\textsuperscript{240} Plus, Jewish rural plans required little British approval.\textsuperscript{241} Acknowledging water’s agricultural significance, Britain saw Palestinian

\textsuperscript{234} Rana Barakat, “Criminals or Martyrs? Let the Courts Decide! – British Colonial Legacy in Palestine and the Criminalization of Resistance,” \textit{Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies}, April 2018, Volume 1, No. 1, 86.


\textsuperscript{236} John Broich, “British Water Policy in Mandate Palestine Environmental Orientalism and Social Transformation” \textit{Environment and History} August 2013, Volume 19, No. 3, 269.


\textsuperscript{238} Broich, 266 and 267.

\textsuperscript{239} Rassem Khamaisi, “Israeli Use of British Mandate Planning, Legacy as a Tool for the Control of Palestinians in the West Bank” \textit{Planning Perspectives} July 1997, Volume 12, No. 3, 328.

\textsuperscript{240} Broich 272 and Mansour 200.

\textsuperscript{241} Khamaisi, 328.
use of it as “inefficient” and “primitive.” Accordingly, groundwater, lakes, marshes, watercourses, and wetlands were shifted away. Britain rejected Palestinian attempts to correct the land wrongs they believed they suffered. Confounding this, Britain dissuaded Palestinian migration to urban areas encouraging Jewish city settlement, believing it an industrial improvement. Thus, at the Mandate’s end, over two-thirds of Palestinians lived rural. Complementing this, while Britain wanted Palestinians kept rural, some lived in cities. Here too, Britain aided Jews over Palestinians. Palestinian businesses were boycotted. The Port of Tel-Aviv, a vital commercial site, employed no Palestinians. Cooperating with Arab workers was seen as descending to their inferiority. Hence, not only did Britain deter Palestinian urban living, but they also left them in limited rural locales.

British policy also discriminated against Palestinians regarding healthcare and education. Jews had over five times the access to medical care than Palestinians. In 1940, Palestine’s doctor-to-population ratio was the world’s best. While notable, numbers show a discrepancy: there were 40 physicians per 10,000 Jews and 2.4 per 10,000 Palestinians. British education aid also perpetuated Palestinian

242 Broich, 276 and 277.
243 Parsons, 18.
246 Mansour, 200 and 203.
247 Mansour, 205.
underdevelopment. Britain envisioned a marginally educated Palestinian generation complying with British rule and backing Zionism. Education was Eurocentric, with little time apportioned to Arab or Palestinian history. Literacy and math were taught rurally for four years with secondary education restricted. English was not taught there, keeping children disadvantaged. Palestinian and Jewish education supervision was unbalanced. Palestinians played a small part in school curriculum while Jewish schools were allowed to teach what they wished.

Britain particularly limited Palestinian public sector participation. In 1920, Palestinians were 90 percent of the population. Still, they could not form a representative assembly while Jews created their own proto-state and paramilitary forces, including an embryonic functioning government, national assembly, and national bank as well as appointing diplomats and collecting taxes. This was done all while Britain restricted the Supreme Muslim Council authority. Britain even blocked Jews and Palestinians from sharing a legislative assembly. Limiting Palestinian political participation came from a fear that it would threaten the Mandate thus challenging Britain’s regional interests.

Closing this section, one must understand over two decades of activities before Israel’s creation negatively influenced Palestinians. The Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate, sandwiched between two World Wars, set groundwork that would affect

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250 Brownson, “Enacting Imperial Control: Midwifery Regulation in Mandate Palestine” 27.
251 Brownson, “Nationalism, and the Politics of Teaching History in Mandate Palestine” 9 and 22.
252 Parsons, 7.
Palestinian aid beyond the 1950s. This garners the question of what good was done by
Britain’s assistance to Palestinians. The League charged Britain with helping the native
population become self-sufficiently active in the post-War world. Britain’s healthcare,
water, labor, education, and government participation initiatives were meant to better the
Palestinians. This was based on the League’s charge, but Britain did the opposite. The
Mandate allowed British colonialism to be masked as aid to control a population,
enhancing Britain’s interests and supporting Jewish colonization.

2.2.2 UNRWA

_Al-Nakba_, the catastrophe, represents the Palestinian disaster of displacement and
dispossession in 1948-49 by Israeli forces. The first catalyst of Al-Nakba was UN
Resolution 181, of November 29, 1947. By the late 1940s, Britain found Zionist
claims troublesome and asked the UN to resolve them. This produced 181 which
partitioned Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem an international city. The Jews accepted the plan while the Palestinians opposed it. When Britain’s Mandate ended on May 15, 1948, the Jewish community declared the state of Israel. Over
700,000 Palestinians were expelled from their homes or fled to Jordan, Lebanon, Syria,

253 Julie Peteet, _Landscape of Hope and Despair_ (Philadelphia: University of
254 Christine M. Cervenak, “Promoting Inequality: Gender-Based Discrimination in
UNRWA’s Approach to Palestine Refugee Status,” _Human Rights Quarterly_ May 1994,
Volume 16, No. 2, 304.
255 Peteet, 1.
256 Cervenak, 304.
257 Peteet, 1 and 3.
258 Cervenak, 304 and Peteet, 3.
Gaza, and the West Bank and were denied return.\textsuperscript{259} The UN’s Economic Survey Mission estimated that 726,000 could not return.\textsuperscript{260} The international community and host countries helped with tent camps, food, and medical services.\textsuperscript{261} Eventually, “compassion fatigue” set in, with hosting counties feeling constrained.\textsuperscript{262}

In response, UNRWA was established on December 8, 1949, per Resolution 302 (IV).\textsuperscript{263} It was, and remains, a unique aid organization for two reasons. One, unlike the UN’s High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNRWA had one clientele and location.\textsuperscript{264} Two, it was created per UN Resolution 194 which provided Palestinians with the option to peacefully return to their homes or accept compensation.\textsuperscript{265} Authorized for a three-year period, it continues to be renewed every three years.\textsuperscript{266} The initial three-year period reflected a belief the situation would come to a positive resolution quickly.

Like League initiatives, UNRWA’s financing and upper-level management were Euro-Americans.\textsuperscript{267} Referred to as an “Anglo-American imperialist scheme,” UNRWA


\textsuperscript{261} Cervenak, 305.

\textsuperscript{262} Marx, 281.


\textsuperscript{267} Forsythe, 38 and Bocco, 236.
demonstrates Western and Israeli ties. The West gradually influenced agency operations to cancel Resolution 194, reflecting the West’s predilection to settle Palestinians in host states, thus, stopping Palestinian independence, while sustaining Israel. Accordingly, the return of Palestinians to their home dimmed, expanding UNRWA aid beyond immediate relief to education, sanitation, social welfare, and water. An initial $293 million “resettlement fund” was to assimilate refugees into host countries.

At this point, it is essential to identify and define the form of aid. Yes, UNWRA initially provided for urgent needs, but resettlement, replacing repatriation, was not what Palestinians wanted. They did not accept UNRWA changes and saw the UN, US, Israel, and, at times Arab states, as obstructionists. They equated acceptance with relinquishing their right to return home and/or to compensation. Viewing this as an “imperialist” scheme, they repeated their demands per Resolution 194.

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268 Forsythe, 34.
269 Ifran, 3.
270 Bocco, 232 and Marx, 281.
271 Rosenfeld, 297.
272 Nitz Nachmias, “UNRWA Betrays Its Mission”, Middle East Quarterly, 19 (4): 31. Nachmias does not provide an exact date for the allocation of $293 million nor is there an immediate reference note given for this information. Nachmias does continue the discussion in the next paragraph by providing information as to how the UNRWA would spend these funds. The reference given for this information is “Report of the Director, UNRWA, July 1, 1951 to June 30, 1952, UNGA A/2171, part IV.”
countries also disliked UNWRA’s new direction. Their welcome waned when the
Palestinian and Israeli presence appeared permanent.\textsuperscript{275} Resettlement equaled accepting
Israel’s statehood. Refugee numbers stretched host state resources and, in the case of
Lebanon, posed a sectarian problem.\textsuperscript{276} Arab governments feared destabilization per
refugee absorption.\textsuperscript{277} Host countries, where aid was supplied, were not benefiting.

Having expropriated Palestinian property, it rebuffed repatriation and
compensation.\textsuperscript{278} This would be problematic per new Jewish arrivals. Palestinian
repatriation would also reduce the Jewish demographic percentile. Israel’s only notable
UNRWA concern was its independence from the UNHCR.\textsuperscript{279} Collapsing UNWRA into
UNHCR would make Palestinians one of many interests for one agency. Still, it was in
Israel’s interest for the UNWRA to continue aiding Palestinians.

Camp life was poor. Refugees waited hours for rations and walked long distances
for water.\textsuperscript{280} Latrines were shared. Shabby permanent structures with little protection
from extreme weather replaced tents. Yet residents improved them over time. UNRWA
installed electricity along with either running water or wells.\textsuperscript{281} Palestinians conditionally
embraced UNRWA educational aid, rekindling the self-worth many felt taken from
them.\textsuperscript{282} Agency schools increased exponentially from 61 in 1950 to 466 in 1969.\textsuperscript{283}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{275} Gottheil, 412.
\textsuperscript{276} Bocco, 239.
\textsuperscript{277} Gottheil, 412.
\textsuperscript{278} Forsythe, 29.
\textsuperscript{279} Israela Oron. “The Palestinian Refugees Facts, Figures and Significance”,
\textit{Institute for National Security Studies} February 18, 2018, (1018),
\textsuperscript{280} Farah, 398.
\textsuperscript{281} Marx, 287.
\textsuperscript{282} Irfan, 17.
\textsuperscript{283} Forsythe, 36 and Rosenfeld, 301.
\end{footnotesize}
Palestinians had concerns about UNRWA curricula because they limited Palestinian history. Over time camps became part of nearby urban areas.

The word quagmire is appropriate to close this discussion. After existing nearly 70 years despite its intended lifespan of three, and with its original purpose long gone, the UNRWA transformed to serve new strategic agendas. Perhaps when operations quashed Resolution 194, it should have ended at its first three-year point. But it is difficult to directly fault UNWRA as it revised as directed. Thus, a closing question to ponder is: Who truly benefited from the UNRWA’s work: the Palestinians or the Israelis?

2.2.3 THE OSLO ACCORDS AND THE GAZA STRIP

The 1993 and 1995 Oslo Accords included two agreements: the PLO recognized Israel’s right to live peacefully, and Israel accepted Palestinian self-government in Gaza and the West Bank. This recognized Palestinian state-building only in the two territories and narrowed humanitarian aid focus to them. Aid donors supported this, so the international community discounted the right of return or displayed limited interest in it. This section discusses this and how it affected Gaza Palestinians.

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284 Irfan, 13.
285 Bocco, 248.
The Accords shifted Palestinian aid. Developing a sovereign Palestinian state would take five years.\textsuperscript{289} The Palestinian Authority (PA) was responsible for this.\textsuperscript{290} All international entities focused aid on assisting the PA for area peace. Oslo and aid facilitators assumed assistance would foster Palestinian improvements and enable regional peace.\textsuperscript{291} Instead, aid donor interests were self-serving. They often competitively geared their support to bolster themselves politically.\textsuperscript{292} Rivalry existed particularly between the EU and the US. The EU, the leading donor, wanted a larger aid program and peace role. Seeing commercial benefits from their support, many funders backed initiatives that rewarded them economically. This often translated into programs implemented that disregarded Gazans.\textsuperscript{293} Further complicating this, donors chose the easiest and most amenable projects.\textsuperscript{294} Forgetting the accords, donors often subverted the Palestinian state-building agenda they assisted.\textsuperscript{295} Instead, much support went to reactive, short-term projects.\textsuperscript{296} Though presenting a rhetorical infrastructure-building façade, emphasis moved to pacifying Palestinian concerns, jeopardizing peace concerns. This, often at Israel’s request, stalled work.\textsuperscript{297} Donors did not stop Israeli destruction of donor-financed initiatives.\textsuperscript{298} Thus the international community supported Israeli

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{289} Shlaim, 33 and 34.
\bibitem{290} Farsakh, 52.
\bibitem{291} Anne Le More, “Killing in Kindness: Funding the Demise of a Palestinian State” International Affairs, Volume 81 No. 5, 982.
\bibitem{293} Farsakh, 48.
\bibitem{294} Brynen, 84.
\bibitem{295} Scott Lasensky, “Paying for Peace: The Oslo Process and the Limits of American Foreign Aid” \textit{Middle East Journal}, Volume 58, No. 2, 212.
\bibitem{296} Le More, 992.
\bibitem{297} Lasensky, 212.
\bibitem{298} Le More, 997.
\end{thebibliography}
interests, not those of Palestinians.²⁹⁹ Aid ensured continued peace as long as Israeli interests held and Palestinian concerns were kept low.

Likewise, for Gazans to receive aid, the original goals for the entire Palestinian diaspora ended. Their nation-state was only for Gaza and West Bank residents. The PLO agreed to Palestinians receiving aid but only by fully supporting Oslo and adhering to donor norms.³⁰⁰ This meant that aid depended on accepting provider directives and desires. Israel took advantage of this. Viewing Gaza as hostile, Israel claimed immunity to its Oslo and Gazan welfare responsibilities.³⁰¹ Still, it remained Gaza’s predominant controller. All aid, supplies, trade, etc. were channeled through Israel per its Gaza siege, causing economic hardships.³⁰² Gaza became a humanitarian problem, with aid dependency increasing from 63 percent in 2006 to 80 percent in 2017.³⁰³ Per this “de-development,” Gazans were not Oslo’s self-reliant, self-governed people.³⁰⁴

Dov Weisglass, assistant to several Israeli Prime Ministers, defended this. He explained the blockade was “like a meeting with a dietitian…we need to make the Palestinians lose weight, but not starve them to death,” adding “we have to make them

²⁹⁹ Le More, 983.
³⁰² Strand, 8.
³⁰⁴ Smith, 338.
thinner, but not enough to die.”\textsuperscript{305} This shows that Israel’s control of Gaza forced them to become consumers of Israeli products. While the siege remained, Gazans were captively dependent on aid, Israel, and international bodies, which stalled self-reliance.\textsuperscript{306} The “diet” was not just barriers and checkpoints. May 31, 2010’s deadly raid on the Mavi Maramara demonstrates this.\textsuperscript{307} Israeli naval forces and helicopters intercepted and raided the Mavi Marmara in international waters thus blocking aid to Gaza.\textsuperscript{308} After investigation, the UN Human Rights Council presented the Report of the International Fact Finding Mission, finding the action illegal and in violation of international maritime law.\textsuperscript{309} It found “serious violations of humanitarian and human rights against” flotilla passengers. Israeli helicopters and forces onboard the flotilla killed and maimed a large number of civilian passengers and was found to be unacceptable and unwarranted. Passenger ill-treatment was declared “cruel, inhuman, and degrading…form[s] of punishment [and] torture,” with over 700 passengers detained. Emphasizing the force-inflicted imbalance, no passengers had or used firearms during the incident, nor did they resist Israeli forces. Also alarming is the report finding the incident an example of Israel punishing Gaza’s Hamas election. This shows humanitarian aid’s weaponization in a carrot-and-stick dichotomy, with the carrot impounded by a third party, per deadly force.

Israel not only benefited from Gaza’s dependence on it, but they also profited from external aid. For the equivalent of each US dollar entering Gaza, an estimated 45

\textsuperscript{305} Qarmout, 36 and 37, and Strand, 10.
\textsuperscript{306} Smith, 332 and 335.
\textsuperscript{307} Barakat, 485.
\textsuperscript{309} Khairallah, 466 and 468.
cents went to Israel.\textsuperscript{310} Per Oslo, Gazans became the highest per-capita aid recipients with no challenge from international donors. Israel benefited from its control over Gazans, and Gazans realized this. They felt they lived in an “open-air prison” with Western imperialism’s spread making them beggars dependent on Israel.\textsuperscript{311} They also saw Western providers as hypocrites pontificating democracy while working with less democratic governments, preying on their people, and collaborating with “corrupt dictatorships.”\textsuperscript{312} Gazans believed the West felt it must support Israel, so they provided Palestinians aid, to offset Israeli transgressions.

In closing, one must ask: Did Oslo help Gazan aid? If the accords meant creating an independent, self-governing Palestinian state, they failed. Instead, Gazans became more aid reliant. They moved toward democracy but were punished for it. Granted Hamas has a checkered history, but Gazans did as they were politically directed, only to suffer more. Apparently, Gazans could have a better life not dependent on aid only by forming a government the world approved of instead of one they choose. Until this is resolved, Gazan’s dire situation would continue.

2.3 THE IRAQIS AND THE GULF CRISIS

This discussion of 20\textsuperscript{th}-century humanitarian aid in the Levant closes with a set of post-Cold War incidents combined into what was labeled the “Gulf Crisis.”\textsuperscript{313} It was composed of three events: the Iraqi-Kuwaiti War, Operation Desert Storm, and aid efforts

\textsuperscript{310} Le More, 994.
\textsuperscript{311} Barakat, 492, and Feldman, 28.
\textsuperscript{312} Paragi, 401.
springing from them. Prior, geopolitical operations were based on East-versus-West strategies centered on nuclear annihilation threats. Gone were global regional precepts based on alliances with two major world powers.\textsuperscript{314} This became the “New World Order.”\textsuperscript{315} A notable initial event is Iraq’s August 1990 Kuwaiti invasion, marking the first post-Cold War occurrence of a UN member trying to seize another’s territory.\textsuperscript{316} Two actions resulted. One was Operation Desert Storm, a US military operation to end the invasion. The second was a series of UNSC resolutions to halt Iraq’s Kuwaiti aggression and assist those needing aid. This section presents three humanitarian endeavors to help Iraqis: sanctions, OFF, and Operation Provide Comfort. They illustrate efforts to hinder aggression while limiting civilian harm. Their end-product combined successes and failures as the New World Order dawned.

2.3.1 \textit{SANCTIONS}

The Iraq-Iran war ended in 1988, costing Iraq nearly ten times its GDP.\textsuperscript{317} This stagnated its economy, forcing external borrowing. By 1990, Iraq’s foreign debt was $42.1 billion. Their belief that Kuwait used the debt owed it to fiscally cripple Iraq triggered its August 2, 1990, Kuwait invasion.\textsuperscript{318} Within days, the UNSC responded with

\textsuperscript{314} Michael Mandelbaum, “The Reluctance to Intervene” \textit{Foreign Policy}, Summer 1994, No. 95, 6.

\textsuperscript{315} Stofford, 501.


\textsuperscript{318} Greenwood, 154.
Resolutions 660 and 661, demanding withdrawal and calling for sanctions on Iraq.\cite{319}

Trade and arms were banned, financial transactions and government assets abroad were frozen, and international flights were suspended. Along with Resolution 661, food imports halted until April 1991.\cite{320} Resolution 665 heightened all of this on August 25, 1990, by authorizing a naval blockade and stronger sanctions.\cite{321} Recognizing potential suffering, Resolution 666 was issued on September 13, 1990, establishing procedures to determine if humanitarian aid was needed.\cite{322} Still, some saw the UNSC employing “famine and starvation” to victimize Iraqis.\cite{323} Iraq ignored 666, leading to Resolution 678 on November 29, 1990, which upheld Resolution 660 and subsequent relative resolutions unless Iraq complied by January 1, 1991.\cite{324} This date passed with no changes, leading to US-led Operation Desert Storm from January 16 to February 28, 1991.\cite{325} With over 700,000 military personnel in air, land, and naval forces from twenty-eight countries against it, Iraq withdrew.

\begin{flushleft}
325 Greenwood, 154.
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The three wars devastated Iraq. Before, Iraq was developed and urbanized.

Seventy-three percent of Iraqis lived in cities, working in an industrialized economy. The wars ended this. Described as “near-apocalyptic results,” infrastructure was either “tenuous” or “destroyed.” Less than four percent of pre-war power plant output was available. By May 1991, it was at 23%. Inoperable power plants made life difficult. Unreliable electricity and generators heightened this. This complicated the ability of medical facilities to treat patients in sanitary environments. Fifty-three percent of Iraq’s health centers were war-damaged or destroyed. Health concerns intensified with improper operation of sewage-treatment plants that discharged raw sewage into communities and waterways. They were often contaminated, causing waterborne diseases. These were just some of the Iraqi hardships from the war.

The terms “sanctions” and “humanitarian aid” appear oxymoronic, but when considering Iraqi needs, they merge. Iraqi hardships continued after the war, and the UNSC began monitoring Iraq’s humanitarian needs. Eight months of sanctions that blocked food imports created food shortages. With 70 to 80 percent of food previously imported, Iraqi needs were unmet. Though foodstuffs were eventually allowed, not everyone ate. Households skipped meals with only 10% maintaining a normal diet.

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327 Greenwood, 174.
329 Harvard Study Team, 979.
331 Harvard Study Team, 980.
Many went days without food. This was not the only difficulty. Items like construction materials and machine parts were blocked, halting rebuilding and causing infrastructure collapse. A shrunken economy, unemployment, and lack of public services endangered Iraq’s future. This again combines sanctions and humanitarian aid. The UNSC believed Iraqis would suffer enough from sanctions to rise and force government change (i.e., withdrawal from Kuwait). But why did the UNSC wait six-plus months to allow Iraqis food? Was aid a weapon and Iraqis’ humanitarian needs not significant?

More perplexing was why sanctions continued after Operation Desert Storm. Resolutions 660, 661, and 678 authorized force and sanctions to compel withdrawal. With the war over, Iraq had complied. Yet, sanctions remained until 2003 because UNSC Resolution 687 (April 3, 1991) continued them. Now, Iraq had to surrender all weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). Moving forward, although Iraq proportionately acquiesced to 687, sanctions remained. Continually moving “political goalposts,” in November 1997, the Clinton administration explained sanctions would remain until either the end of time or Hussein left. While sanction purposes continually shifted to fit instigator interests, Iraqis’ humanitarian needs continued.

Sanctions’ purpose to inflame Iraqis enough to oust Hussein failed and instead empowered him. Iraqis did not rise against him. His food rationing system used government-controlled facilities. Households provided information for food,

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333 Dodge, 84.
335 Cortright and Lopez, The Sanctions Decade: Assessing UN Strategies in the 1990s, 56.
336 Dodge, 88.
strengthening the regime’s power over its public. Movement outside government-designated areas was prohibited. Hussein’s army benefited greatly. Military family members claimed food from the public distribution system in that member’s name, despite already receiving army food.\textsuperscript{337} State agencies were fiscally diminished to fund the government.\textsuperscript{338} A one million person “shadow state” loyal to Hussein became sanction insulated.\textsuperscript{339} The regime supported its loyal base, bypassing sanctions while the public suffered. Hussein used hardships resulting from sanctions to galvanize support and encourage the belief that external forces were exploiting Iraq. Sanctions isolated Iraqis from the world and outside information.\textsuperscript{340} The government stated, “we are not going to allow food supplies to be managed by foreigners and outsiders” and “Iraqis are ready to eat the soil and not bow their heads” to external aggressors.\textsuperscript{341} Young Iraqis grew up with negative attitudes toward the West.\textsuperscript{342}

In sum, sanctions were intended to end Iraq’s Kuwait aggression but were continually altered per changing UNSC interests. In the end, Hussein benefited. The question regarding the UNSC’s priority in establishing Resolution 661 remains. It overlooked food imports for Iraqi survival. It took thirty-plus days to realize this and over six months to allow the entry of foodstuffs. Was the UNSC knowledgeable of the hardships it imposed or ignoring them? In the end, Iraqis did not oust Hussein and became weaker, Hussein stayed in power and became stronger, all while sanctions

\textsuperscript{337} Drèze and Gadzar, 932.
\textsuperscript{338} Dodge, 88.
\textsuperscript{339} Dodge, 88.
\textsuperscript{342} Halliday, 35.
remained. Iraqi humanitarian needs were not served by the official purpose of UNSC resolutions.

2.3.2 OIL FOR FOOD

Again, UNSC 687 represented sanctions to force Iraqi changes. Now Iraq was to compensate for Kuwait’s damages and destroy its WMDs.\textsuperscript{343} Still, the UNSC knew of Iraq’s devastating needs.\textsuperscript{344} Unfortunately, humanitarian relief needed was beyond UN capacity. It was financially overwhelmed with disasters.\textsuperscript{345} The UNSC’s solution was “Oil for Food” (OFF), established August 15, 1991, under Resolution 706, allowing Iraq to export and sell its oil for humanitarian goods.\textsuperscript{346} With considerable reserves, Iraq would not have to compete with other devastating situations for aid funds.\textsuperscript{347}

But OFF had stipulations. Oil sales were allowed for six months, renewable if necessary, with $1.6 billion in estimated revenue.\textsuperscript{348} Proceeds were not only for aid. Thirty percent was for war reparations with additional funds for UN Iraq operations. The remainder was for UN-supervised aid.\textsuperscript{349} But, the plan had critics. Some saw the UN

\textsuperscript{345} Stofford, 499.
\textsuperscript{348} Stofford, 499.
\textsuperscript{349} Drèze and Gazdar, 925.
taking proceeds as external entities forcing Iraq to use its resources for its people’s humanitarian needs.\textsuperscript{350} Iraq agreed, objecting to its oil funding UN activities and war reparations. Thus, Iraq refused 706, leading to UNSC Resolution 712 a month later.\textsuperscript{351} While this resolution attempted to appease Iraq, Baghdad rejected it also, contending both resolutions violated its sovereignty. Stalemate continued nearly four years while Iraqis suffered. By 1995, Iraqi public health was in crisis.\textsuperscript{352} Sanctions became unpopular and caused a rift within the UNSC, particularly between France and Russia.\textsuperscript{353}

The UN and Iraq reached an agreement on April 14, 1995, with Resolution 986.\textsuperscript{354} Relinquishing somewhat, the UNSC had UN members release funds from Iraqi oil sold before the Gulf Crisis. With many of its foreign assets now unfrozen, Iraq may have seen this as the world’s fiscal grip loosening. Knowledge that rejecting 986 would mean the continuation of sanctions and damage to its economy and public likely facilitated Iraq’s acceptance of 986. So, with strings attached, Hussein likely needed to capitulate. He may have also given in because oil sales increased from the original amount of $1.6 billion to $5.2 billion. Lastly, 986 gave Iraq authority to set the oil’s selling price and select companies participating in the process.\textsuperscript{355} Diminishing Iraq’s feelings of sovereignty transgression, the government now controlled its resource.

\textsuperscript{350} Stofford, 500.
\textsuperscript{351} Cortright and Lopez, The Sanctions Decade: Assessing UN Strategies in the 1990s, 48.
\textsuperscript{352} Joy Gordon, “The Accusations Against the Oil for Food Program: Volcker Reports” Arab Studies Quarterly, Summer/Fall 2006 Volume 28, No. 3/4, 19.
\textsuperscript{353} Chitalkar and Malone, 314
\textsuperscript{354} Cortright and Lopez, The Sanctions Decade: Assessing UN Strategies in the 1990s, 48.
OFF was the biggest UN humanitarian operation to date. It had successes, selling over $64 billion of oil products. Accordingly, 3,614 companies sold Iraq over $34 billion in humanitarian aid. Its impact equaled nearly 40% of the Marshall Plan. As a result, OFF averted Iraq’s food shortages, lowered dire health situations, and restored many public services. It remained a six-month renewable program. After 13 phases, it concluded with the 2003 US-led Iraq invasion.

OFF had criticisms and faults. Aid was not delivered until March 1997. Further, it was 1998 before large quantities reached Iraqis. Thus, though the UNSC acknowledged Iraqis possibly needing aid in Fall 1990 per 666, it took nearly 8 years for fulfillment. If OFF was intended to alleviate Iraq’s worsening human conditions, why was the quantity of oil sold limited? One of 986’s points over 687 was that it increased humanitarian funding per Iraq with an average of $73 to each individual. This pales, however, compared to pre-sanction oil sales equaling $109 per Iraqi. Aid was geographically allocated, with eighty percent going to central and southern regions and the balance to the north. The UN used the resulting distribution imbalance per the “food

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358 Hsieh and Moretti, 1211.
360 Heaton, 193.
361 Heaton, 193.
basket” to measure proper calorie intake. While covering minimal requirements, animal proteins, vitamins and minerals required for a well-balanced Iraqi diet were absent.

Also troubling were aid limitations per the UNSC’s Sanctions Committee’s holds on many UN Secretary-General-approved aid contracts. The reason given was that some items could be used for non-aid purposes. But the delayed aid was desperately needed. In March 1999, hold counts were so large that OFF facilitators complained it damaged Iraqis’ humanitarian health and nutrition needs. The solution was to create “green lists” of essentials, which the US blocked and Britain ignored. By October 1999 over 23% of humanitarian item holds remained. The US and Britain continued to place most holds while other countries rarely imposed any. While these delays worsened Iraqi hardships, the situation intensified as reliable suppliers withdrew, making procurers seek unreliable brokers.

OFF’s biggest shortcoming was corruption. A UN independent committee found 148 companies paid illegal surcharges for oil. Additionally, over 2,200 companies paid Iraq kickbacks involving humanitarian goods. Those found guilty included OFF director Benon Sevan, UN Commodity Procurement Section director Sanjay Bahel, UN Secretariat member Alexander Yakolev, and UN Advisory Committee and Budgetary

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365 Halliday, 31.
366 Ibid, 216.
367 Drèze and Gazdar, 925.
368 Herring, 48.
369 Cortright and Lopez, The Sanctions Decade: Assessing UN Strategies in the 1990s, 49.
Questions Chair Vladimir Kuznetsov. Their activities included illegally obtaining UN procurement contracts, hiding fund transfers, and laundering bribes. While countless more participated in this, Iraq’s role is notable. Its illegal OFF activities included selling oil contracts and smuggling humanitarian goods that allowed it to gain over $11 billion. The UN was complicit as its audits did not catch the government. Although the UN itself was not involved, its inability to police the shortcomings of its own program showed it to be fiduciarily ineffective.

Closing this OFF discussion, one must consider its establishment and achievements. Simply stated, the UN created OFF to address a humanitarian problem it created. Yes, its catalyst was Iraq’s Kuwait invasion. There is no denying Hussein’s military incursion brought world condemnation resulting in Operation Desert Storm. But UN retaliating sanctions were broad, including Iraqi survival essentials Iraqis needed. Instead of ending holds, the UN created OFF, but not only for humanitarianism. A portion of funds was paid for the response of OFF’s UN management to negative humanitarian consequences from another UN initiative. Further, it was nearly eight years after sanctions started that OFF’s assistance reached Iraqis. Even then, aid was insufficient because the US and Britain limited items. In addition, parties illegally enhanced themselves per OFF under poor UN management. Again, OFF delivered

“U.S. Criminal Proceedings Involving UN Secretariat Officials and Corruption in Oil-for-Food Program” The American Journal of International Law, Volume 101, No. 4, October 2007, 876.
assistance to those in need for whom it was created. Lives were saved and enhanced, but it was a marred UN initiative created to address the negative results of a UN-created situation. This all occurred while Iraqis were in need and remained pawns in the exchange between their country’s leaders and entities beyond their borders.

2.3.3 OPERATION PROVIDE COMFORT

During Operation Desert Storm preparations, Iraq civil unrest occurred, especially among northern Kurds and southern Shiites. Kurds represented twenty-five percent of Iraq’s population. This was part of 20 million Kurds in the neighboring countries of Iran, Syria, and Turkey. Stateless but unified, they saw Iraq’s weakened government as a chance for autonomy. Iraq’s majority Shiite population, whom the Sunni-based Hussein regime suppressed, also knew of the weakness. Operation Desert Storm assumed Iraq’s political elite would view Hussein as a liability and replace him. With Allied forces victorious in February 1991, uprisings to overthrow Hussein were countrywide and included Kurds and Shiites. Kurds took over eighty percent of the

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376 Murphy, 166.
377 Freedman and Boren, 46.
378 Malanczuk, 114.
north, announcing plans to establish a provisional government there.\textsuperscript{379} Shiites quickly mirrored this by capturing most main southern towns.\textsuperscript{380}

Unrest was short-lived. With the war with Kuwait over, Iraq’s military turned to insurrections, halting them by April.\textsuperscript{381} Kurds and Shiites were victims of alleged genocide.\textsuperscript{382} Their cities destroyed, nearly two million Kurds fled for the mountains along Turkish and Iranian borders.\textsuperscript{383} Complicating things, Iraq’s military halted aid supplies causing 1,000 deaths daily.\textsuperscript{384} Shiites were treated likewise, with homes shelled and entire communities demolished.\textsuperscript{385} Consequently, they fled south for protection in marshes. Their situation worsened when Sunni-majority Kuwait refused them entrance. Kurdish and Shiite hope became hardship. The UNSC responded with Resolution 688 on April 5, 1991.\textsuperscript{386} Condemning Iraqi oppression while emphasizing the Kurds, it insisted the cruelty end and humanitarian organizations be given access to those in need.\textsuperscript{387} Hence, Operation Provide Comfort’s establishment. This US-led effort provided relief from thirty countries and 20,000 troops from thirteen.\textsuperscript{388} Through this, aid-related items reached those in Iraq who were running from Hussein’s forces.\textsuperscript{389}

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\textsuperscript{379} Michael M. Gunter, \textit{The Kurds of Iraq: Tragedy and Hope}, 1992, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 50 and 51, and Murphy, 168.\\
\textsuperscript{380} Bulloch and Morris, 14.\\
\textsuperscript{381} Freedman and Bowen, 48.\\
\textsuperscript{382} Greenwood, 176.\\
\textsuperscript{385} Murphy, 167 and 177.\\
\textsuperscript{386} Silliman, 769.\\
\textsuperscript{387} Silliman, 769.\\
\textsuperscript{388} Cockayne, 128 and Meek, 226.\\
\textsuperscript{389} Murphy, 171 and 182.
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Unfortunately, the northern mountains did not facilitate aid delivery. Rain and mud made roads needed to access them poor and impassable.\textsuperscript{390} Air dropping supplies was also bad as falling crates harmed or killed Kurds. In response, the Kurds were moved to hospitable aid delivery locations protected from Iraqi forces. On April 17, 1991, armed forces, including some from the US, moved into northern Iraq to establish “safe havens” for better aid distribution, enabling Operation Provide Comfort functionality.\textsuperscript{391} Shiites’ conditions were also poor. By June 1991, Iraqi forces surrounded the southern marshlands and shelled Shiite refugee camps.\textsuperscript{392} Like the northern mountain area, the marshlands were inaccessible. Two things stymied fleeing. One, Shiites could not enter Kuwait. And two, Iraqi military attacked their movement. The solution was to create military-secured centers. Unlike Kurd safety zones, the centers were outside the marshlands requiring Shiites to travel for support. These transit centers provided aid materials.\textsuperscript{393} Saudi Arabia gave additional relief, allowing a limited number of Shiites into a refugee camp near the Saudi city Rafha.\textsuperscript{394}

Turkish concerns played a key role in Kurdish aid. Before safe havens, nearly half a million Kurds entered Turkey.\textsuperscript{395} Turkey’s apprehension increased as numbers on its Iraqi border grew.\textsuperscript{396} A set number were allowed relocation to a refugee camp in Turkey.\textsuperscript{397} It then closed its borders and deployed military into Iraq to halt Kurdish

\textsuperscript{390} Freidman, 50.
\textsuperscript{391} Malanzuk, 120, and Cockyane, 127.
\textsuperscript{392} Freidman, 69, 70 and 76.
\textsuperscript{393} Freidman, 68 and Gunter 82.
\textsuperscript{394} Freidman, 69.
\textsuperscript{395} Gunter, 54.
\textsuperscript{396} Murphy, 169.
\textsuperscript{397} Cockayne, 125.
Refugee influx and their mounting border numbers were alarming, but they were more concerned with the possibility of Kurdish separatism. Again, though stateless, Kurds concentrated in an area crossing Iraqi, Iranian, Syrian, and Turkish borders. Their northern Iraqi growing numbers strengthened the chance of an independent state to Turkey’s south. Kurdish uprisings in neighboring countries heightened this. Turkey wanted Kurds off its soil without creating a Kurdish state. Its concern foddered Western interest. A new autonomous Kurdish state could destabilize an area rifted by recent wars. Control over essential oil reserves and threats to neighboring states was also troubling. Thus moving Operation Provide Comfort aid’s delivery away from northern mountains diluted Kurdish border concentration. Eventually, Iraq halted Kurdish assaults. Operation Provide Comfort evolved to return Kurds home, reducing the threat of empowered Kurds.

Turkey’s Kurdish concerns exceeded Iran’s. Imbalance existed between Kurdish and Shiite aid. It is arguable that Operation Provide Comfort granted differing levels of aid for Kurds and Shiites, with favoritism to the former. The West was more concerned with the Kurds while Iran thought more about Shiites. Perhaps this was Western-allied Sunni states differing from majority Shiite-Iran supporting its religious Iraqi brethren. Iran criticized the attention Turkey received related to the Kurds. One

399 Freedman, 44.
400 Freedman, 52.
401 Gunter 54.
402 Lyon, 60.
403 Malanczuk, 117 and 118.
404 Freedman, 66.
405 Freedman, 66.
million Iraqi Kurds fled to Iran. This added to the 2.2 million Afghans Iran accepted during Russia’s 1979 Afghanistan invasion. Iran became one of the world’s largest refugee recipients then, spending $57 million on them by mid-April 1991. Iranians argued their needs were ignored.⁴⁰⁶ They claimed the West may have replied differently if only Iran was involved in the Kurdish situation.⁴⁰⁷

This prompts two questions: (1) What part of Operation Provide Comfort was to assist Kurds? and (2) What amount was to end the empowered Kurdish nation threat? This question suggests another reason the West wanted Iraqi insurrections reduced. Successful Kurdish and Shiite uprisings could dissolve Iraq. The allied powers may not have originally grasped the potential of Iraqi uprisings minus Hussein. Again, Operation Desert Storm participants believed the Iraqi political establishment would replace him. This did not include replacing Iraq with autonomous Kurdish and Iranian-influenced Shiite areas. As uprisings strengthened a new outcome unforeseen, concern grew. Toppling Iraq’s government would benefit Iran.⁴⁰⁸ The US assisted the Kurds but never acknowledged their independence quest. This would offend area allies, particularly Turkey.⁴⁰⁹ Thus, subsequent goals of Operation Desert Storm and Operation Provide Comfort did not support dividing Iraq but securing its territorial integrity after defeat thus preserving its regional existence.

Providing relief was not Operation Provide Comfort’s only goal. Military protection was also vital. Northern and southern aid activities were assisted by the

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⁴⁰⁶ Malanczuk, 120.
⁴⁰⁷ Gunter, 55.
⁴⁰⁸ Silliman, 771.
⁴⁰⁹ Mandelbaum, 9.
military. This included creating allied protected no-fly zones inaccessible to Iraq. The UN established areas within member borders that the latter could not enter. It is reasonable to ask what purpose(s) the no-fly zones served. On the surface, they were safe territory for aid delivery, but a deeper look shows ulterior motives. While Iraqi aircraft could not fly over them, Operation Provide Comfort participating countries could.

Intelligence was gathered on Iraq’s military. This crept beyond the zones, leading to an attack on perceived Iraqi threats outside them. Instead of helping aid delivery, they were strategic tools of outside interests. All was done without Iraqi approval, including Operation Provide Comfort, airdrops, and safe havens. The no-fly zones deprived Iraq of its sovereign airspace. This illustrates military occupation, which is an outside power controlling territory without consent. Iraq’s weakened status per recent wars made this possible.

Closing this section, one must realize that Operation Provide Comfort occurred at the Cold War’s end. This demonstrates aid tied to regional interests minus democracy versus communism. It shows external interests controlling a country. Strategic interests lay beneath what appeared humanitarian on the surface. The Cold War was over, but some of the roots driving humanitarian aid still existed.

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410 Murphy, 182.
411 Malanczuk, 121.
412 Silliman, 771.
414 Grey, 10.
415 Murphy, 184.
2.4 APPLYING AN INTERDISCIPLINARY MODEL

In closing this discussion of 20th-century Levant humanitarian aid, we look at two topics. First is a comparison of individual model results as applied to Armenians, Palestinians, and Iraqis. This provides a view of similarities, differences, and uniqueness amongst the three populations. The other considers how aid resulting from internal and external factors developed in the region.

*Governance and Government*

Governance and government combined is found in all three groups. For the Armenians, it was the League’s role. For the Palestinians, it was the Balfour Declaration. For the Iraqis, it was OFF. All three included independent parties unifying for bettering those in need and the offsetting effects when they acted on their individual interests.

The League’s actions is the three’s broadest example. Its original goal was to bring stability and humanitarian aid to the region. This is notable in the mandates. These directives differed from the Balfour Declaration and OFF which, while monumental purposes, were narrower in focus. The Balfour Declaration fixated on two populations to establish a homeland for one. While land is tangible, OFF dealt with transferable items.

Yet all three had personal motives. Both the mandates and Balfour Declaration served Western Europe’s interests, particularly Britain’s. OFF flipped this. With it, Iraq’s personal gain was sizeable when compared to the mandates and Balfour Declaration, and the benefit to Iraq’s beneficiaries was comparably less. While the Leagues’ Mandates and Britain’s Balfour Declaration benefited Western Europe, Iraq gained greater leverage with OFF.

*Governance (only)*
Selflessness is present in all three providers’ approaches toward populations they came together to help. Recipient nurturing is visible in the League’s care for Armenians and Britain’s charge to help Levant residents. The expansion of the League’s Nansen Passport from a focus on Armenians to other refugees shows this. Displaced people without citizenship, received official documentation. Regardless of one’s origin, the first concern was relieving them. This was also true for those living in the British Mandate, including Palestinians and the transplanted Jews. Britain was instructed to work with everyone whether they were a Muslim native, Jewish immigrant, or another religion, ethnicity, race, etc.

For the Iraq scenario, while scholarship shows Kurds favored over Shiites, Operation Provide Comfort displays separate parts of a world joining to care for people of different demographics and regions. This occurred as East-West differences affecting Armenians and Palestinians disappeared. After Operation Desert Storm, Iraqis, Kurds, and Shiites received international aid.

*Government (only)*

Government only is demonstrated by entities acting in their own interests. France’s desire for a Levant leadership role post-World War I plus the treatment of Kurds and Shiites after the Gulf Crisis by Iraq and its neighbors’ show individual countries acting in their best interests when treating those in need. France favored Armenians over Arab Muslims living in its mandate thinking it strengthened them. Kuwait and Turkey supported humanitarian measures keeping Kurds and Shiites off their Iraqi borders.
Western influence in UNRWA operations shows government collectively. Both Europe and the US held high UNRWA rank and fiscal influence. This meant the UNRWA operated under West considerations.

**Humanitarian Government**

The word “government” in the “Humanitarian Government” context identifies Armenians, Palestinians, and Iraqi aid similarities and differences. The 20th century Levant aid provided was an ever-developing humanitarian government system that evolved while Eastern Europe and Western Asia evolved. World War I saw an imperial-laden region become new independent states. The Palestinian and Israeli situation evolved roughly thirty years later. Scholarship discussed shows roots of East-West differences back to the early 1910s that strengthened after World War II became the Cold War. This world bipolarization faded as Iraqis, Kurds, and Shiites lived desperately with aid needs because of the Gulf Crisis-related wars.

World War I and Palestinian aid need responses show humanitarian government differences. A new group of workers met World War I’s assistance needs as evidenced by the change from religion-inspired helpers to professionals more aligned to specific needs. While unique then, 30 years later the UNRWA became one of many specialized organizations providing help.

Humanitarian government changed to reflect Cold War evolution. This is why the Truman and Clinton administrations’ Middle East aid policies differed. Humanitarian government change in Levant aid reflects shifting dynamics as time progressed.

**Sovereignty**
Like humanitarian government, sovereignty in the Levant reflects map and political evolution. Differing borders and treatment of people within and across them were constant for Armenians and Palestinians. Though imperial boundaries dissolving per World War I and Israel’s creation are separate events, both reflect sovereignty. Armenians and Palestinians saw their survival affected by the sovereignty of countries that did not want them. Though the Nansen Passport gave Armenians legal status, it was diluted by new countries, sovereignty, and those continuing to exist. For the Palestinians, both Israel and recently created neighboring Arab states based their level of acceptance on sovereignty.

Iran, Kuwait, and Turkey’s treatment of various populations in Iraq shares the same sovereignty effect felt by Armenians. Given this, it is striking that OFF curtailed Iraq’s sovereignty which was created to generate Iraqi oil funds to pay for OFF. Armenian and Palestinian aid initiatives, including the Nansen Passport and UNRWA programs, did not require their recipients or respective governments to pay for them. Sovereignty in relation to humanitarian aid can reflect a country and a population, whether it is being asked to help or to pay for the needs of populations inside or outside its borders.

*Shortfalls of Humanitarian Aid*

Oversight is appropriate when discussing humanitarian aid’s shortfalls relative to Armenians and Iraqis. Both the Nansen Passport and Iraqi food basket program underperformed their purposes. Armenians possessing Nansen documentation had to endure poor work conditions. This oversight is mirrored as many Iraqis received food supplies that were short of a well-balanced diet.
The Armenian Rescue Project has similar shortfalls found in the uneven medical care provided to Palestinian and Jewish populations. In both cases, the directive was to better a population. The Rescue Project placed young Armenians (and some former Ottomans) in a tug of war between Turkey and the Armenians seeking statehood. Jewish healthcare was better than the Palestinian’s under the British Mandate. Turkish, Armenian, and British authorities designed aid programs that allowed discrepancies amongst the people they were to help.

Inconsistencies of Aid

This reflects unevenness between aid provider intentions and recipient needs. Seeing the latter as chessboard pawns is appropriate. The assistance all three groups received centered on aid benefactors acting on hidden motives that discounted the beneficiaries. The Rescue Movement was to reunite Armenian families but forced young Armenians to follow nationalists’ whims. This included directives dictating to Armenians.

UNRWA’s shifting purpose to assist Palestinians illustrates the dictating of Armenian aid. Instead of being a short-term humanitarian program providing help to Palestinians who would return to their homes, UNWRA became supportive of counter programs. As with the Armenians, Palestinians had to accept aid without being heard. The Rescue Movement and UNWRA acted outside recipient wants.

This is more evident with the Iraqis and the sanctions placed on them. Here, the population’s humanitarian needs were known and withheld. The UNSC’s perpetrating famine and starvation against Iraqis is telling.417 While this shares the theme of

disengagement between intended and desired aid, to use it against a people is
“unhumanitarian.”

*Weaponization of Aid*

Aid’s subjectivity is present when considering it a weapon. It shows that aid can coerce, if not force, its recipients to be or do something in the provider’s interests. Evidence for the three groups provides for arguing this is something the beneficiary may not control.

This was true for the Armenians and Palestinians. Ottoman adoption of young Armenians saved them from World War I’s harshness and allowed them to survive and continue living. But forcing them to dissociate from their origins equaled mental cleansing. Israel’s reworking of the Oslo Accords had similar repercussions for Gazans. Viewing Hamas as the region’s hostile controller, Israel ended its responsibility there. Doubling down on this, Israel became a clearance officer determining what Gazans received. Thus, both Ottomans and Israelis used aid to increase their control over those in need. Though the UNSC’s use of sanctions as a method of forcing famine and starvation was discussed previously, it is also applicable to aid weaponization. All three of these examples demonstrate aid as a tool negatively forcing a population to succumb to factors not in their interests.

*Us/Them/Otherness*

Whether it was Christian Armenians versus Muslim Ottomans, supporting Jews over Palestinians, or the consideration of what Kurds and Shiites received in contrast to Iraqis, the theme of us/them/otherness exists. Western support of Armenians and Jews illustrates an anti-Middle East/Muslim viewpoint. The West’s view of itself as the
Orient’s Christian protector intensified the focus on ending the mixing of White-Christian-Armenians with Asiatic-Muslim. This played a role in Armenian aid consideration.

Britain’s belief that victory over the Central Powers necessitated global Jewish support is striking and was tantamount to Nazi Germany’s sentiments toward them. In an interesting switch, the British used favoritism of the Jewish community while the Germans later employed it in effect to exterminate them. Regardless of the Jewish community’s treatment in these two instances, Britain molded Palestinian aid in the coming decades.

This separatist consideration existed in Kurd and Shiite care and aid delivery. Some countries wanted them, while others did not. Mobility and assistance delivery were based on ethnicity or religion. Otherness existed in consideration of aid delivery consideration for them like it had for Armenians and Palestinians.

*Attitudes and Motivations of Aid Workers*

When asking why aid workers conducted their work for Armenians, Palestinians, and Iraqis, the focus was: How can we design assistance so we benefit from it? Granted, aid did help people in need, but providers sought to also guarantee they benefitted from it.

Work helping Armenians and Palestinians is broader than that for Iraqis. In both cases, the map was critical. Regarding the US’s Armenian treatment, it approached World War I with hesitancy toward the Ottomans. Looking immediately east, the new Communist-revolutionized Russia was threatening. Yes, Armenians needed aid, but how could the US help them without distancing the much-needed Ottoman bulwark to fend off
Russia? It took an Allied victory for the US to take a stand favoring Armenians over Ottomans. While the US likely wanted to help the Armenians, their actions focused on securing their Ottoman relationship.

Palestinian aid also took a backseat to what Britain wanted. From the Balfour Declaration to the British Mandate and beyond, Britain continually tipped the aid scale in favor of the Jewish community over Palestinians. This was evident when UNRWA programming changed from returning Palestinians to their homes to resettling them. Both the British and Palestinians knew Al Nakba’s meaning, but each saw its follow-up differently.

Iraqi sanctions’ continual goal changes are also applicable to aid provider motivations. The UNSC initially wanted sanctions to harm Iraqis, not help them. When that did not work, OFF was designed to offset the anguish it had created. And, while OFF helped Iraqis, it was implemented years later and some of its facilitators used it for illegal benefit.

Existence of NGOs and Their Influence on the Situation

As mentioned in the Armenian section’s conclusion, NGOs did not exist in World War I related aid. Also, while NGOs were not specifically in literature reviewed for Iraqi aid, third-party aid participants (i.e., entities not including the Hussein government nor the general Iraqi population) were present. Recall that neoliberalism’s relation to aid represents reducing the state’s role in service delivery, increasing non-public entities, and allowing capital to flow to profit-making opportunities whether they are NGOs or not.

Israel’s receipt of 45 percent of Gazan foreign aid provisions’ value demonstrates the replacement of government-regulated programming by profit-making interests.
While NGOs may not directly participate in such revenue generations, their increased role in assistance does coincide with such monetary gathering operations.

Again, NGOs are not specifically part of Iraqi’s aid discussion, but they share a likeness with the non-Iraq OFF parties involved. The fact that many benefited financially from a non-government regulated program (unless one considers what Iraq did to profit the Hussein regime) also demonstrates a sense of neoliberalism as NGOs grew. Thus, neoliberalism affected Palestinian and Iraqi aid as NGOs rose while leveraging hardships for monetary gain existed.

In concluding this chapter, six main observations can be made based on specific contexts analyzed:

1) Aid offerings were the result of war in the greater Levant Armenians were affected by one conflict, World War I. Palestinians suffered as a result of World War I and several Israeli clashes. All Iraqi populations, including Kurds and Shiites, needed assistance per the Iraq/Kuwait and Operation Desert Storm wars. Iraq/Iran war remnants also spilled into this equation.

2) The situations spanned the 20th-century This began with a 19th-century aid approach generally facilitated by religious, predominantly Christian, individuals. Over time, aid was provided by global organizations whose members specialized in the techniques and mechanics of aid’s deliverability. Spirituality was no longer predominant.

3) Redrawing the greater-Levant map occurred regularly, beginning with the fall of empires
An attempt for a new Armenian state occurred after and was replaced by League-imposed mandates. During this period, Israel’s borders were created. These too were altered by Israeli and Palestinian events. The period closed with skirmishes including Iraqi, Iranian, and Kuwaiti borders. All said, shifting borderlines was constant in Levant aid.

4) Religion, ethnicity, nationality, and region of origin were fixtures

Sunnì or Shiite was as predominant as Christian, Muslim, or Jew. Armenian, Ottoman, Palestinian, and Kurdish helped define aid. Jordan’s, Iraq’s, Iran’s, Kuwait’s, and Turkey’s independence directed aid delivery. Finally East versus West, the Cold War, and post-Cold War all led to alliances determining humanitarian aid.

5) Aid recipients were unfortunately caught in wars not of their making

Both Armenians and Kurds were spread over regions during the conflict. Both saw chances to create their own nation-state per the war they endured, but neither created World War I, the Iraq/Kuwait war, or Operation Desert Storm. Palestinians were moved around, and the aid they received was dictated by what Britain then the UN determined was right for them.

6) This chapter demonstrates that aid comes in different forms

It can be documentation like the Nansen Passport that facilitated access and mobility. It can be housing as with the Armenians per France’s Final Settlement or UNWRA’s Palestinian camps. It can be creative financing like the Iraqi OFF program. Aid delivery must be adjustable for circumstances as with the Kurds’ and Shiites’ respective Iraqi regions. While food and medicine are a critical part of aid, their quality and quantity are also meaningful if they are to properly help those in need. This is evident in what Iraqis lacked while living in a war-torn country. Sanctions can also be a form of controlled aid.
Unfortunately, this can be done so aid is not a positive element but rather worsens the
cause of the situation it is meant to lighten.

Greater- Levant humanitarian aid over the course of the 20th century changed and
evolved in many facets. Knowing this information is pertinent to understanding the
Syrian situation. Though the time between the various incidents and Syria is decades if
not 100 years apart, their commonalities tie humanitarian aid in the Levant together.
CHAPTER 3
VIEWS OF SYRIAN AID FROM AID PROVIDERS AND THOSE NEEDING IT

3.1 POSITIONALITY AND ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH PROCESS

Before illustrating the results of the fieldwork I conducted in Jordan, some reflections need to be offered on issues that are central today when approaching countries, cultures, and areas unfamiliar to us. I personally faced the issue of positionality in the process of my work. I refer back to Bhabha’s discussion of the West viewing of the non-Western globe as “Worlds of Disorder” that are disastrous, disordered states.418 Spivak further noted that the West places itself in a superior position to Arab countries like Syria.419 Accordingly, I arrived in Jordan to conduct interviews as a Western/US white male. According to Bhabha and Spivak, I approached my work with a view of myself as exceptionally better than the Syrians I was going to interview. But I testify that my views of world events, political and social issues, and the people they reflect are very accepting and progressive. While I was aware that, as a white American male entering a field of research located in the “Orient”, ingrained superior attitudes were implied, but I did not embark upon my work with this attitude. I do not believe I represented Bhabha and Spivak’s description as I carried out my field research.

419 G. C. Spivak, “Postcoloniality and Value,” 222.
I believe my research is a reverse of anthropological and ethnographic historical methodologies of studying human culture. From its beginning, anthropology has reflected Bhabha and Spivak’s points in that they exposed power structures.\(^{420}\) At the turn of the 20th century, it became prevalent in European imperialism and American expansionism. Postcolonialism’s dawn saw the emergence of methodologies for gathering information for intelligence and counterinsurgency.\(^{421}\) They continued being used as military and economic tools at the end of the 20\(^{\text{th}}\) century and beyond.

I have focused much of my academic and personal time and research on the goal of debunking what I perceive as a Western narrow and negative view of the greater-Middle East and its populations. This dissertation’s purpose is not to uncover information that allows one to gain intelligence of another they view as substandard in order to take advantage of them. Instead, it shines light on how humanitarian aid during the Syrian war, those who provide it, and those who need it relate with each other. The purpose of my research is not to find fault in this Western view of the Middle East, but this reporting of that research also will not reflect a perception that Syrian aid, those providing it, and those needing it create a sub-human situation. In light of the fact that I am a Western-based student advised by Western-based higher education professors, it is worth asking, however, whether research such as mine can completely divorce itself of Bhabha and Spivak’s claims. While this research does not seek to find an answer to this question, it is a point that work like this must concede.


My dissertation will not change the lives of the Syrians I interviewed, but rather it represents scholarship that can act as a catalyst to provide new insight into the methods used to gather, review, formulate, and present information about the Middle East. Objectivity is critical in order to minimize chances of this being a clouded, judgmental presentation of information and discussion about people and events of the Middle East. This provides an example of how scholarly research of any world population can be conducted by someone from a Western upbringing and education without being affected by the grounding theme of Western exceptionalism above other parts of the globe.

The information presented here reflects Syrians living in distress and aid workers trying to reach them reflects one-on-one interviews. Over four-plus months, I conducted twenty-one Syrian and nine aid provider interviews. Most were face-to-face. An Arabic-English interpreter was used when necessary. A mobile phone voice recorder app was employed for most of them. Zoom or Whatsapp was utilized only when necessary. A limited number were conducted per electronic text exchange. All happened live. The names of aid providers and Syrians are not given to ensure their identities are kept private and no specific individual can be tied to the activities discussed here. There are specific aid providers and Syrians discussed whose lives would be in danger should their names be made public. Also, revealing the names of some workers and their organization’s activities in non-Assad government areas could jeopardize their future work. To provide some personal characterization, gender and age range along with a pseudonym will be provided for some respondents.

Seeking a free-flow exchange between me and those I interviewed, I acted as a ship’s rudder floating downstream toward multiple interconnecting waterways leading in
different directions. I knew along the way; respondent answers could take the discussion in directions not considered in my questions. A “semi-structured interview” format was used for this.\textsuperscript{422} By doing this expanded on answers for clarification and the question asked if needed.

My task was to explore how people viewed the situations they faced and existed in. This was structured to discover information I did not have. I remained aware of changes and shifted question directions when needed. This occurred often. While I knew in advance that some aid followed pro-Assad channels, I learned the majority interviewed lived outside these areas and could not comment on aid delivery.

Establishing a good rapport and atmosphere facilitated the person interviewed to feel comfortable. This included my body language, clothing, and mood. Voice tone was also significant as my spoken English was often not known to Syrian interviewees. Responding appropriately also insured the respondent knew I was actively listening to them. I did not act as an editorialist or hold bias. My questions were neutral. I did not direct the interviewee toward supporting any preconceived thoughts I may have had. The question-and-answer dialogue was free-flowing for the potential of learning new information. For this reason, I took an “engaged conversationalist” approach.\textsuperscript{423}

Key to conducting my field research was having an overall concept of the topic explored. For this, I formulated questions relative to uncovering needed information. This occurred before conducting interviews. Questions leaned toward being open-ended, ensuring I heard the interviewee’s full experiences, opinions, and perspectives. For this, I


\textsuperscript{423} Murchinson, 15.
formulated two sets of questions: one for Syrians and the other for Syrian aid facilitators.

The questions asked were:

**Questions for those Providing Aid in Syria**

1) What factors determine(d) what aid is/was provided?
   - Were Syrians part of the deciding process? If so, how?

2) Describe the process of aid being delivered into and distributed throughout Syria.
   - What was the step-by-step/life journey of aid from origin to place distributed to?
   - Describe the chain of command and how decisions were made as to what aid you were to provide and the process in which you were to do so.
   - Was it delivered by plane or land?
   - What about aid crossing borders?
   - What role did you play in the transfer of aid?
   - Are aid providers allowed into the country?

3) Research shows that aid delivery was often based on information provided by the Assad government. This may have meant that aid bypassed some Syrians.
   - What role did information from the Assad government play in your work?
   - Describe the Syrian bureaucracy that you had to maneuver through to do your work.

4) In times of war, sometimes aid can be used as a weapon. It can be controlled by a Group to keep them powerful against others who want or need it.
   - Did you ever experience aid being used as a weapon to provide strength?
   - How did this affect your work?
   - What role did the Syrian government and military play in this process?
   - What about non-government interests/forces?
   - How did you adjust to this?

5) If you assisted in the delivery of aid more than once were the situations similar or different?
   - How?

6) Were there roadblocks/checkpoints that you or aid had to cross to reach from one Location to another?
   - If so, describe the process – was money required to pass?
   - Did it matter how many people were in the vehicle? Whether the passengers were men or women?

7) Overall was the aid provided for short-term/immediate or long-term needs?

8) As with any given project, there is a limited amount of resources and time. With this in mind, in your opinion, how effective do you think the work you did in helping the people of Syria was?
   - How did the work you carried out and its results make you feel emotionally?
   - Was there ever a time when you felt like you could not go on?
   - How did you deal with moments like this?

9) Was your life ever in danger in the operation of your work?
   - What was the situation?
o Explain the balance you felt internally about the risk you were taking and the goal of the work you were carrying out.

Questions for Those in Need of Aid While Living in Syria (in English)

1) Tell me about your life before and during the war.
   o How did it stay the same?
   o How did it change?
   o How did the war affect what you needed to live?
2) What was the name of the area you lived in when you lived in Syria?
   o Would you describe it as a city, village, or something else?
3) Prioritize the following types of aid in the order from most important to least important to you (and your family).
   o Education
   o Food
   o Medical care
4) How did the war affect the delivery of aid? How did you adjust to this?
5) How was it determined who was to receive what kind of aid and how much?
   o How was the aid you received determined?
   o Who decided what you received?
   o Did you play a role in deciding what aid was given to you?
   o How did this process make you feel?
6) In what form was aid provided to you?
   o Was it actual items that you could use immediately or was it initially in some form of currency, document, ATM card, vouchers, etc. that you had to present for the actual aid you received?
7) Was the aid you received for an immediate need that lasted a day/few days/a week, or could you use it for a longer period of time such as several weeks/a month or more?
8) Were there roadblocks/checkpoints that you or aid had to cross to reach from one location to another?
   o If so, describe the process – was money required to pass?
   o Did it matter how many people were in the vehicle? Whether the passengers were men or women?
9) How did you and your community deal with varying levels of quantity and accessibility of aid?
   o What happened when there was not enough?
10) What did you think of the aid workers and the work they did?
11) Did you receive funds from people outside the country to help you survive?
    o Were they from family members/friends?
    o Describe the process of what was done from the person sending funds to you receiving them
    o Was the process easy or hard?
    o Were you in danger because you were receiving funds?
12) Tell me about medical care received by you and your family when someone was injured or sick.
    o Were you or your family ever in need of medical care but had difficulty
receiving it?
  o Tell me about the situation
  o How would you (and your family) deal with this?
    o How would you communicate medical information?
    o How was information gathered?
    o How was it transferred if no immediate medical facility/worker/supplies were available?
  o How was medical advice transferred back and implemented?
13) I understand that women had an increased role in its distribution – is this true?
  o Why did this happen?
  o Describe this increased role.
  o What did they do that was new and different?
  o Did they enjoy this work?
  o How did their families and community think/feel about them carrying out this work?
14) In times of war, sometimes aid can be used as a weapon. It can be controlled by a group to keep them powerful against others who want it or need it.
  o Did you ever experience aid being used as a weapon to provide strength?
  o How did this affect your need for aid?

Questions for Those in Need of Aid While Living in Syria (in Arabic)

1. هل كتبت موقعك على حائطك قبل الثورة؟
   - كيف تغيرت حياتك؟
   - كيف أثرت الحرب على ما تحتاجه للعيش؟
2. ما الذي كنت تحيا فيه في سوريا؟
   - هل كنت مديناً أو قرية أو غير ذلك؟
3. عدد أنواع المعونات المتاحة بالترتيب من الأكثر أهمية إلى الأقل أهمية بالنسبة لك (وبالنسبة إلى عائلتك).
   - التعليم
   - الغذاء
   - العناية الطبية
4. كيف أثرت الحرب على إيصال المعونات؟
   - كيف تكيفت مع ذلك؟
5. كيف تم تحديد من الذي يحصل على نوع وكم عدد المعونات؟
   - كيف تم تحديد المعونات التي تلقىها؟
   - من الذي قرر ما تلقىته؟
   - هل كان ذلك دور في تحديد المعونات التي تلقاها؟
6. كيف تأثرت هذه العملية على مشاعرك؟
   - ما هو شكل المعونات المقدمة لك؟
7. هل كانت المعونات عينية حيث امكننا استخدامها مباشرة أم أنها كانت على شكل نقدي أو وثيقة أو بطاقة
8. هل كانت المعونات التي تلقاها لحاجات فورية وهل دامت لمدة يوم أو عدة أيام أو أسابيع أو لمدة أطول كعدة أسابيع أو أشهر أو أكثر من أشهر؟
9. هل كان هناك حواجز أو نقاط تقييد حيث توجب عليك أو على مقدم المعونة تخطيها من أجل استلام أو تقديم المعونة من مكان آخر؟
10. إذا كان الجواب نعم، هل بإمكانك وصف التحدي وتوجب دفع النقود للعبور من الحاجز أو نقطة
Again, I remained aware of new information that I had not originally considered.

Questions 2 and 7 are examples. Asking where the respondents lived in Syria seems obvious. This did not originally occur to me. But, in early interviews, I began asking this, leading to adding question 2. It gave insight into what occurred in particular Syrian locales. Question 7 was created as I found respondents explaining policed/militarized checkpoints they crossed when traveling in Syria. This was not discussed in my pre-interview readings, thus, not in my initial questions. After hearing it several times, I knew it was critical to aid and Syrians’ mobility.
This research project required two approvals. One was the University of Louisville’s Institutional Review Board’s (IRB) review of my project. The second was gaining access to the Syrians interviewed. A long process of networking, calling, emailing, spontaneous appointments, etc. was necessary to discover interviewees and gain their agreement to be interviewed. This process was often fruitless. The “Snowball Sampling” method was used. This calls for interviewees to suggest other potential respondents familiar with the researched topic. Syrian interviews ended by requesting they suggest someone they knew in Jordan from Syria who would be open to being interviewed. Interviewees were almost always happy to recommend someone. Unfortunately, the process rarely went past this. I followed up multiple times on statuses and either did not receive a response or received a reply that they were trying to make the connection.

One disheartening situation involved a friend I worked with in Saudi Arabia. They were originally from Syria and had moved to Jordan. Upon hearing of my research, they contacted me offering to help me gain access to Syrians they knew. Furthermore, they shared that as a Syrian, they saw my research as important, wanted no payment to help, and would happily serve as my interpreter. We met soon after I arrived in Jordan to confirm everything. Their help stopped there. No interviews were set. I remained cordial but was disappointed with my friend. Another example happened with a relief agency. After two months of trying to contact this organization to access Syrian refugee camps where they worked, I met with involved principals. They told me I could interview Syrians in the camps, but two bureaucratic steps existed. First was the review and approval of my questions. This took nearly three weeks and, I believe, occurred only
because I followed up every four days. Then I had to complete a questionnaire before my supposed interview. Simply said, every time I felt the process was moving forward, there was another person I had to talk to/contact, form to fill out, etc. In the end, I gave up. Therefore, accessing Syrians was a difficult and often disappointing process. For every one Syrian interviewed, there were roughly five other unsuccessful attempts to reach others.

Considering gaining access difficulties, one interview is worth describing. It began fine. The respondent provided detailed and insightful information. When I began asking how aid recipients were determined in their community, they politely stated that they wanted the interview stopped and to watch me erase their interview. I complied and all ended friendly. I did not ask what caused their change. I suppose someone they did not know (me from the West) asking for specifics about their village caused discomfort to not want to continue.

I made personal observations during the interviews. The timing of recording these observances was critical. Handwriting these fieldnotes during interviews was regular. Sometimes a thought relative to the interview crossed my mind after its conclusion. I then wrote my thoughts as quickly as possible. My reporting occurred per audio recordings, but my fieldnotes enhanced the narrative. Transcribing interviews soon after their completion was helpful. This provided documents to be reviewed, analyzed and organized into data sets, allowing multiple interviews to be contrasted and compared. Just as field notes were valuable, reviewing completed transcripts at times brought back an interview memory that was not initially included in field notes. Once completed, transcript information was organized into a linear narrative. Each encounter acted like a
quilt patch standing alone as a nominal piece of information relative to the Syrian aid story. By connecting and weighing each encounter into a whole, a full account of all interviews appeared. Doing this allowed me to identify key themes and gaps. The end product was a revised accounting of the initially recorded interviews.

Single pieces of information standing out to complete the narrative were then sought. Themes and unique bits of information were then labeled per “coding” them.\textsuperscript{424} Code names allowed a differentiation of various parts of the transcripts with each named code highlighting a distinctive point. Once codes were identified, transcripts were read again, and each portion’s applicable code was handwritten onto a hardcopy. This allowed me to “triangulate” and organize various points of information.\textsuperscript{425} From this, a congruent narrative infrastructure emerged into a “coherent…whole” from the vast pieces of typed interviews. In the end, this facilitated a sorting process for an informative ethnographic analysis. It is through this that the organized retelling of the ordeals of Syrians in need of aid and those trying to provide it is told here.

3.2 FINDINGS FROM AID PROVIDERS INTERVIEWS

The aid organizations interviewed not only helped Syrians but also served fellow humans across the globe. The organizations represented were: Action Aid, Adam Smith International, Blumont, CARE, International Medical Corps, International Rescue Committee, Mercy Corps, Mercy USA, Save the Children, and Syrian Arab Red Crescent. Their work changed geographically as the war evolved. To be legally

\textsuperscript{424} Martyn Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, \textit{Ethnography: Principles in Practice} Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2019, 152.

recognized by the Assad administration, an agency had to register with the government and provide aid in approved areas. Of those interviewed, only one worked for agencies connected with the government. The majority worked in non-government areas. The information presented here regarding aid organization programming and their operating practices as dictated by whether they operated in Assad-held and non-Assad-held areas came completely from my interviews with aid providers. The information the aid workers provided was both informing and insightful. Granted they delivered material that expanded some topics I already knew. Still, they opened doors to appreciating avenues I had not considered. This was particularly true, as will be discussed, for grasping the hardships that came from operating outside the approval of the Assad government as well as the affect this work had on the workers personally.

The assistance provided was vast in regards to what was deemed necessary. Blumont, for example, organized community policing. Central to its purpose was safely securing communities, villages, small towns, and the city of Daraa (where Syria’s strife originated) for their residents to exist. Beyond this, citizens were trained and empowered to carry out policing duties that were preventive in nature and did not require firearms and for which they were paid. Thus, Blumont’s aid brought safety to the areas in which it worked, but they trained citizens to fulfill this goal and provided them a livelihood for their further betterment.

The International Rescue Committee aided children by creating safe spaces where they could learn and be helped with psycho-social difficulties caused by the war. The program was called “Social and Emotional Learning” and included math, reading, and basic science instruction along with time dedicated to playing and art. Due to the war, it
was normal for a child to have missed multiple years of formal learning, leaving them
below age-appropriate education levels. The program’s structure also allowed its aid
workers to conduct case management centered on the children. Children with severe
mental and social issues were referred to specific caseworkers for individual help. This
also allowed outreach to help parents with skills that were useful for the unique family
situations created by the war. Often families lived a long distance from the safe spaces,
caus- ing them to incur travel expenses which the Committee reimbursed.

CARE’s aid included the availability of clean water. Through WASH (water,
sanitation, and hygiene), it provided basic water assistance for people who were both
displaced and lived in areas where water availability’s infrastructure had been destroyed
or no longer worked. This often meant entirely rehabilitating water stations including
generators, pumps, and pipes. Due to the war, the cost of fuel to run this equipment was
high, forcing CARE to search for alternative energy resources like installing solar panels
for power. Equipment procurement focused on purchasing from Syrian providers first.
Unfortunately, direct water provision was not always unattainable, so CARE provided
hygiene kits. Given the difficulties created by war, CARE focused on filling gaps
between quality water needed for basic human requirements and the Syrians needing it.

A Mercy Corps aid operative and two individuals who had worked for multiple
assistance organizations related to the Syrian conflict explained how their organizations
provided food baskets. Each basket fed five Syrians. The contents of baskets had to be
versatile to address varying situations of those receiving them. One consideration was
the length of time a basket would provide for, which could be seven, fourteen, or thirty
days. A basket’s contents also had to reflect its recipient’s location and resources. A
“regular” basket contained food requiring some type of kitchen preparation. Thus, a stove, some heat source, and cooking supplies were needed. This would not be appropriate for Syrians constantly on the move or living in locations where basic kitchen equipment did not exist. For them, ready-to-eat meals were supplied.

Adam Smith International provided a broad base of aid geared towards structuring the needs of a community. This began with a skeletal outline composed of five key areas: infrastructure, health services, education, good governance, and food security. The communities served were identified by the EU and UK governments. The goal was to make sure any gaps that existed in a community per the five key areas were not filled with “rogue actors.” Aid activities in each community differed and were based on an assessment of its particular needs. This included rehabilitating hospitals, delivering electricity, and teacher training.

Getting aid from its place of origin to those in need took different routes. Those interviewed explained the aid they dealt with entered Syria from Turkey and Jordan. With the occasional exception of medical supplies arriving by helicopter, aid materials were transported into Syria via truck. Regardless of how it arrived, medical aid for non-Assad controlled areas always came from outside the country. One route was to contract a Jordanian to purchase what was needed in Jordan and transport the materials into Syria where they would be delivered to a predetermined location. This person was not an agency employee. They were from outside the agency and were vetted by the agency and trusted to do the work. They were paid for both goods and transportation costs incurred. Trucks’ ability to enter from Jordan was not freewheeling. Technically the border
between the two countries was closed, meaning truck convoys entered through designated locations.

Delivery from Turkey included contracting directly with suppliers. Supplies arriving from the north were more plentiful than those coming from the south. Like Jordan, truck convoys delivered aid from Turkey, but in this instance, transportation had the advantage of being part of a UN-established caravan system, making aid transfer easier. This meant that non-perishable aid that could be stored before being used was warehoused within Syria. Items ordered/supplied were determined based on assessments made through discussions with local councils and focus groups.

There were opportunities inside Syria to find what was needed. Those interviewed explained that there was a sense among Syrians to help each other and that this was something the public outside Syria was not aware of. This was taken advantage of when possible. Some contractors who were supposed to purchase supplies outside of Syria and transport them across the border would actually purchase them inside the country and incur cheaper expenses. Amounts charged would match those charged when delivering from outside the country, however, and they would pocket the difference. Most were eventually discovered, but only after being paid. Giving currency to Syrians as a form of aid was also an example of purchasing needed supplies within the country. Determination for this was based on the recipient’s access to a market. The ability to make a direct purchase equated to cash as aid. Granted, the Syrian Pounds provided to Syrians originated from a money supply outside the country. Still, the assistance purchased was from within Syria.
Sometimes creativity allowed aid to reach Syrians that would otherwise be blocked by the war’s battlelines. An example is Syrians suffering while living within the Euphrates Shield. This was a cross-border military effort conducted by Turkish and Turkish-aligned Syrian opposition groups in northern Syria. Non-Syrian/Turkish-based aid organizations could not enter the area to help those in need. To bypass this, a creative loophole was often used. An agency would find a Syrian and/or Turkish-based aid group that was supportive of its work and funnel assistance through them. Also, the threat of oncoming war action or long distances between populations being served meant at times that aid had to be portable. This was particularly true for medical care in locations where hospitals had been destroyed. Mobile clinics allowed doctors to go directly to ailing people instead of having them travel long uncertain distances or even forgo medical care completely. Unfortunately, some had health needs beyond a clinic’s ability. Medical staff would direct the ailing person to the closest hospital with printed information about their needed care. The level of remoteness often equated to aid not being able to be personally delivered to a location. This resulted in the creation of distribution centers Syrians would travel to for aid. The aid provider would communicate their location and the available assistance via media channels. This in turn allowed Syrians to receive aid, and suppliers were educated about populations and needs that they would have not known otherwise.

The most creative way of delivering aid was that of Ilma, a 30-year-old female who smuggled money into Syria from Lebanon. She helped a religious organization that had a house of worship as well as a community service center inside Syria by transferring currency into the country from donors outside the country who wanted to support its
work. Unfortunately, carrying large quantities of cash over the border was not allowed and would be easily noticed by security personnel. The solution was to divert the attention of guards by packing suitcases with toys and items that were supposedly for children of friends and relatives inside Syria. Guards were satisfied they had not found anything suspicious and had failed to discover money Ilma had hidden underneath her clothes and inside her socks. The amount per trip ranged between $8,000 to $14,000. Realizing that border officers would not physically touch a woman’s body, using gifts to shift their attention allowed her to secretly transfer money to the Syrian house of worship where people in its community could be supported. Of course, if caught doing this, Ilma risked being labeled as funding terrorism and suffering severe penalties. The faith organization receiving the money would be branded as a terrorist organization as well. Both continued the secret money transfer process regardless.

Aid facilitators in non-Syrian government areas were always mindful of what would happen if Assad’s forces neared their activities. Aid transferring from Jordan into Syria was possible while armed Syrian forces were not present. Assistance work was able to be carried out in rebel-held areas. As Syrian government troops moved toward an area, particularly the southern border with Jordan, aid agencies had to stop their work and pull away. When government forces’ presence either held a portion of the border or was close enough to it, aid transfer from Jordan into Syria stopped there.

As the government’s ground control started to expand to areas that had once been reachable from the south, particularly from Jordan, aid providers turned to Turkish suppliers when possible. This was difficult because the majority of aid for non-Assad areas came from Jordan in the south whereas pro-Assad areas received aid from Turkey
in the north. Thus, this type of aid transfer was conducted much like a don’t-ask-don’t-tell basis. Abir, a man in his late 20s who had worked for several aid organizations helping relieve Syrians’ pain, shared the following from an aid transporter based in Jordan with contacts with Turkish aid resources: “It’s not your problem how I get them…it’s what you asked for.” One function that might have helped this is that some form of commerce and trade continued for Syria during the war. Both Turkey and Jordan had economic interests in Syria with all three countries trying to continue an exchange of goods and currency despite the war. Though aid entering the pro-Assad north and reaching the anti-Assad south might not seem possible, back channels made it workable at times.

Aid agencies monitored the war throughout the country to remain mindful of possible disruption of their work. Contingency plans were in place for such a possibility. This included no direct engagement in either side’s military operations. Emergency steps were communicated to local councils and community leadership. Once it was evident that Assad forces were a threat to a non-government-controlled area, aid operations stopped there. Emergency evacuation plans were executed. Aid operatives destroyed materials that compromised them and their recipients. Locals that were contract workers from the area were wired salaries when possible. They were told to use any headquarter centers as shelters if needed. They were instructed to say nothing about the aid agency as doing so would put the local’s life in danger. Syrians fearing ill treatment from the government military urgently often asked workers to get them out of the area. Workers and their beneficiaries knew from training and protocol procedures that they were limited and would have to cut off relations should such situations arise. Still, this was difficult
for both sides if it became a reality. Any transportation of aid or agency materials was
done so at night with vehicles traveling with their headlights off. Even though this
lessened the possibility of being shot at, it did not eliminate the possibility of driving over
landmines previously set by government forces.

The flip side of this is aid organizations that registered in Damascus with the
Syrian government. OXFAM was supposedly such an organization. Though no one
from that agency was interviewed, it was mentioned by multiple workers. The conditions
organizations like OXFAM agreed to include being under the coordination and
supervision of the Assad regime. They went only where Damascus allowed them. Yet,
this had its advantages like more stable ability to import aid, store it in regional
warehouses, and coordinate its distribution.

Still, being under complete government discretion limited their ability to act. A
Syrian-controlled area, village, town, etc. may desperately need aid but receive only what
the government permitted. Thus, aid agencies directed their assistance where the Assad
regime told them to, often overlooking other Damascus-controlled locations that were
more in need of assistance. The government also coordinated records of what aid was
received, which at times meant it withheld its true inventories of aid from agencies.
Consequently, the Assad regime claimed to have less aid supply on hand than it actually
did, allowing it to receive more than needed. This was not always the case. At the war’s
beginning, truck convoys and aid transfers were able to traverse Syria freely while being
mindful of staying away from direct battle exchange. But as the war increased and the
entire situation became more dire for Assad, the government limited aid’s mobility.
Accordingly, aid facilitation fell under Assad-controlled and non-Assad-controlled area operations.

However, aid agencies working in government-controlled areas at times were able to gather their own intelligence to determine how truthful the regime was being. Reported news and social media resources like Facebook and Twitter provided actual aid need details that the government either did not provide or ignored. Helping this was direct communication with local councils for actual needs verification when possible. The UN also conducted its own research outside Damascus provided information. All of these resources allowed a truer telling of aid than the government was stating in these areas. Hani, a 35-year-old male aid worker, who began as a volunteer aid assistant and then was employed by of several Turkish-based organizations over the course of the war, shared what he did when faced with conflicting information between internal sources and government claims. Having gained a positive rapport with his Syrian counterparts, Hani would explain that he knew of additional needs the government did not tell of. In a practice of give-and-take, Hani shared he wanted to give Assad supporters what they needed and asked what it would take for aid to also be distributed to the unacknowledged areas. In the end, this meant that his Syrian counterparts received more than they originally asked for, but aid also reached those that at first would have been denied such assistance.

Assad and non-Assad favorability were not the only labels that dictated the organization of the Syrian aid map. Religion also played a factor. Salma, a 27-year-old woman aid worker, explained that “extreme Islamists” affected how her organization carried out their work. She shared that her agency conducted work in a northern Syria
area that the Assad forces had yet to take. It was controlled by a rebel faction. While this rebel group believed in the assistance provider’s work, it did not accept men and women working together. Because of this, spot checks regularly occurred to make sure genders were separated. Both sexes regularly worked side-by-side in the same setting. When warned that a patrol was near and an inspection imminent, people would immediately separate with women going to the basement of the building and men remaining on the top floor. The majority of the time, warnings were communicated soon enough for this segregation to happen. When this did not happen, a warning was given and more patrolling occurred. Occasionally, a car would explode near the facility where the aid work concentrated. This was understood not to be a negative comment against the aid work being conducted but a statement about the gender mixing of the population carrying it out.

Aid workers believed the provision, curtailment and redirection of aid in Assad and non-Assad areas had an effect on assistance recipients and the war. The sentiment explained was that adequate aid and services stabilized the public and made them more supportive of whatever side provided it. Consequently, not receiving it made them weak and more likely to surrender to the withholder. Zahra, a 32-year-old female who represented an organization that empowered communities to create their own safety infrastructure, went as far as to suggest that aid has the potential to elongate wars. She contemplated that many wars may end more quickly if people in the conflict areas would surrender because they have no aid for survival. Again, aid organizations operating in government-controlled areas had to follow Assad regime mandates, forcing assistance workers to act as Damascus declared them to. Not doing so could mean an entire aid
effort being shut down and the agency not being allowed to work in Syria. Thus, not only were Syrians being coerced to act in certain ways because of the aid they were or were not receiving, but the providers also were forced to operate according to the Assad government’s best interests and not those of the public that suffers.

Aid often ended up in the possession of someone other than the intended recipients. At times aid designation was determined based minimizing chances of it ending up in the wrong hands. There was always the possibility of aid being first placed in a needy community and it then being taken by invading forces. Knowledge of the location of aid could act as a magnet for the attention of parties other than the providers and recipients. Accordingly, the threat of improper confiscation and control of aid in certain areas gave reason to consider locations with less risk. Also, though citizens living in a community provided aid and given authority over it were vetted, this did not mean that they always acted correctly. Controlling generators that provide electricity for a village equals a lot of command. While agencies checked and monitored the communities they served, improper practices could not be completely eliminated.

The Syrian government also used aid as a control valve to squelch disruptions when they reached a level that threatened to get out of control. Unrest in areas receiving government approval was acceptable to a level. Once a demonstration was perceived to be nearing a point of being out control of Assad’s forces, humanitarian aid was cut off. Though not exactly aid, the government was able to halt existing electricity access to areas it needed to influence. This in turn affected the survivability of residents as well as the deliverability capacity of some forms of aid. Infrastructure like water pumps and wells became inoperable. Buildings and housing needing light and certain temperatures
for various operations to be carried out became useless. This could cause Syrians to become desperate and pressured to surrender.

Bribes were a covert weapon used to facilitate aid. This was true for moving assistance beyond checkpoints on roads as it was transported throughout the country on roads as well as through guarded borders of besieged areas. Without doing this, every form of aid could be held at a standstill, causing those in need to not only suffer further but also to potentially die. Hani, who above detailed how he bartered with Assad officials to deliver aid, explained that the bribe payment was illegal. While he did not explain if this act was illicit according to Syrian or international law, Hani claimed that “we all, with no exceptions, including the UN…are paying bribes.” To avoid being caught, it was explained that bribes were commonly listed as some other kind of expense.

Sexual exploitation of women was present as well. The example of 500 women asking for aid assistance in a community while only 200 could be served was shared. The agency sought to conduct proper due diligence to determine which 200 of the 500 best met the vulnerability criteria, but this did not keep unauthorized agreements for some ineligible women to be approved. The statement “I would do anything to get this assistance” was given as an example of what women would say with the understanding that it meant sexual favors in exchange for aid.

At the war’s beginning, agencies performed aid activities based on where they thought they could be most effective according to their internal resources and Syrians’ needs they knew. This changed over time with the Syrian government playing a determining role. As the war progressed, battle lines changed so these aid organizations were mindful of downscaling, shifting, if not ending and evacuating, operations.
Technically they were within Syria’s sovereign borders assisting entities that were either neutral or in opposition to its government. Thus, they had to act accordingly when Assad-backed threats loomed.

Aid delivery and disbursement hurdles grew as the war progressed. At its beginning, assistance navigated the paths of least resistance. As time progressed, its movement became more difficult and tighter and had to take different paths. Even determining where to begin and continue became complicated. Was the aid needed in an Assad or non-Assad area? Was it amid fighting? Were illegal activities like drug and weapon trafficking present? Were those in need displaced and remote or were they in an area with some livable infrastructure accoutrements? Also significant was assessing the community’s levels of acceptance of aid offered. Although good was intended, providers realized that if the population was not conducive to assistance, it was better to apply their resources elsewhere than to waste them on a zero-sum likelihood.

It is understandable that these aid workers would have personal reflections on their own actions as well as the overall operations in which they were involved. Armand, a 37-year-old American who relocated to Jordan to work in humanitarian aid, shared that he believed his organization’s work was more proactive than reactive. Armand believed that assistance given was not simply an immediate response to the difficulties their Syrian beneficiaries faced at the moment but instead that it would have a lasting positive effect into the future. He embraced a transition in how his work was conducted. He initially entered Syrian aid work as a clerical person dealing with finances, logistics, and procurement, but this shifted over time. Eventually, he had more direct contact with the organization’s beneficiaries which gave him a face-to-face rapport and an appreciation of
them. He came away from the experience with an internal/personal feeling of wanting to have more direct contact and interaction with the beneficiaries he assisted, but admitted creating these personal ties can have emotional downsides.

In particular, Armand recounted beneficiaries fearing for their lives as government forces neared. While an aid worker could evacuate the area and exit the country, this was not an option for the beneficiary. Granted aid work has many uncertainties that must be dealt with, but this incident touched the him deeply. He also questioned aid programming and fund allocation. Armand appreciated that aid facilitation on such a massive scale, calls for planning and organization that requires funding, but he believed the aid they helped deliver was not provided efficiently. This sentiment was strong enough for him to share that it was “not as humanitarian as it claims to be.”

Returning to Salma, who worked under the constraints of being monitored, went into deeper detail about the emotional toll of being in regular direct contact with beneficiaries. She explained how she and her coworkers never felt they were doing enough to help and explained that there was never a happy time. There was a continual worry about the program and the children it helped. She shared the words “burn out” to describe this feeling and explained aid workers burned out a lot quicker than other stressful occupations. There was a constant sense of being overwhelmed. Her group of workers constantly wanted to do more while realizing they had done all they could. She argued that her organization’s work increased exponentially because of players outside Syria. Accordingly, entities such as the US and Russia were guiding the war to a point Syria no longer did. This meant that decisions were not being made in the interests of the
Syrians the worker assisted. Instead, plans were constructed and carried out according to outside interests. Such sentiment led them to share that “maybe war is a very profiting industry.”

Jayden, a 37-year-old male, who like many interviewed had worked for multiple organizations, shared his personal observations of the effects of working in aid on him and his coworkers. He explained that one would become fully engaged and aware of people and their communities after working in them for several years then later witness them either dead or suffering from trauma. It was hard for Jayden not to become emotional over this. Efforts to respond in the best possible way were often not sufficient. This occurred on a 24/7-like basis frequently. Multiple Skype calls in the middle of the night and numerous weeks of work with no time off were the norm. He described a prevalent state of mind for workers in which they had to keep going while in a drowning mode. Needless to say, this could take an emotional toll. He witnessed workers becoming alcoholics and chain smokers as well as ending personal relationships. Jayden explained that although workers are trained and tested for difficult situations, it is different when actually faced with them.

There was a question of what equals success in doing aid work. Returning to Armand, he shared the scenario of having aid resources to help 20 beneficiaries when 30 are in need. Yes, the 20 received the attention and care they needed. This was great for them, and the agency assisted them as was planned, but what about the 10 who received nothing? He pondered the question of whether this situation was a success or not. His answer was that it is in “the eye of the beholder.” Armand shared his organization’s work had him and his coworkers in a physical and mental place where they could not
complain about their emotional state. He acknowledged that being an ex-pat with good benefits and annual leave made this possible. Armand also explained that it is best to not stay too long on a single response project. Instead, he recommended regularly moving from aid project to aid project when possible. With all this said, Armand pointed to stressors he experienced in the field. This included being close to exploding bombs and surrounded by people carrying AK-47s who questioned the legitimacy of him being where he was at the moment. Still, the Armand said these situations were nothing like what the people his organization helped experienced. Being an ex-pat who was being paid well while knowing that others who were not ex-pats did more work than he did and got paid less for it made him feel guilty.

Zahir, a 29-year-old male, shared that seeing a baby smile back at him after having treated it made his work worthwhile. Then having its parent or grandparent say words like “God bless you” and “thank you so much because you are helping us” brought his heart positive emotions. Zahir explained that he did not view his task as working for his organization. Instead, what he did was for the people and the community he was assisting. This made “a lot of things good.” Knowing the baby he treated could now grow up to be an adult brought promise. Still, he always encountered new people and communities with needs. Zahir shared one incident when bombs were dropped on a community in his presence. While horrified by the incident, he saw the residents and their needs and realized he had to help them. For Zahir, the residents “deserve…the work that you do.”

Dangers of being caught doing aid work was often a fear for workers. At times this meant those being assisted were not Assad-approved. Mahmud, a 24-year-old male
shared that he had been arrested five times in the course of his work. The majority were when he was on a bus or in a taxi and the government police or military demonstrated its presence by randomly stopping and indiscriminately detaining people for a few days. Another time Mahmud was with a crew transporting medicine and equipment through an ISIS-controlled territory. Everyone was jailed for three days, and all the materials were confiscated. While troubling, Mahmud always realized others he knew when were detained as well. When asked what kept him going, Mahmud said that “I just believe in helping people…so for that, I am still working.”

Ilma, the young woman discussed earlier who transferred money into Syria from Lebanon, explained she always lived in a state of paranoia. She publishes and uses social media to not only tell the world about the atrocities occurring in Syria but also to raise money for the aid organization she works with. Ilma admitted that she was both brave and “slightly insane” to do her work. She keeps in regular communication with associates not connected with her aid work. These outside entities tell her that she is crazy for doing her work and the risks she takes. Her response is that she is very passionate about the work she does. Ilma’s reasoning is, “why is my life worth more than several thousand people?”

Closing out this section will continue workers’ personal reflections but gear it toward the effect and influence they believe donors and agency directors have on work being done directly in the field. Of note was their explanation of how funding, agendas, and NGOs relate to each other. While funding does have its limits in the broadest sense, some argued that there are always entities who will fund an aid agenda if it fits their interests. Thus, when an NGO and funder come to terms on the agenda, an aid initiative
is created. As long as the funder has faith in the NGO adhering to the agenda, the funder takes a hands-off approach. This leaves the NGO in charge. Yes, there is accountability and focused direction in the assistance work being carried out but, for the worker, this begged the suggestion of aid being determined by what the funders and NGOs wanted and not what those in need required. This approach also brings about a silo-like relationship between aid organizations. Because of this, many assistance facilitators worked on situations independently with little understanding of what their counterparts were doing. The end result was several entities with individual agendas and separate funding sources not collaborating, which wasted time, labor, planning, and financial resources.

It was also expressed that some workers felt what they believed needed to be done on the ground where they were working was not pertinent to what their superiors removed from the situation believed. Zahra, who was earlier presented as helping to provide community infrastructure, described this as “strings that were sometimes pulled and affected our ultimate decision-making process.” At times she believed portions of procedural methods needed to be finetuned if not overhauled, but they were ultimately not allowed to do so because the funder wanted things done in a specific way. Again, this reflected a theme shared by some workers that ultimately the aid organization and workers were bound by what the donors wanted and were willing to give money for. This may or may not meet what was occurring in the field.

One example of this was when local Syrians were receiving stipends from the agency for assisting in its work. This allowed aid to be provided for this community, and Syrians were trained and paid to learn some of the aid that was being delivered. In the
end, a community was better because of the aid plus the livelihood training and financial injection it received. This happened in a non-Assad area, so once intelligence demonstrated the likelihood of the area being taken by the Assad military, the stipends and training stopped. Workers in the field believed they could both get stipends to the Syrians they were helping and evacuate the area before Assad forces arrived, but funders feared pro-Assad entities would somehow get the funds before the locals did. Zahar thought that this was premature and believed that the funds would have been transferred correctly.

Hani, the aid worker previously discussed who compromised giving more aid to Assad supporters so he could reach Syrians the government ignored, believed the vast international presence in Syria was driven by political interests. He specifically pointed to the US, UK, Germany, Denmark, and Sweden as examples. Hani believed that there was general care and concern for the Syrian people, but real alarm existed in the fear of the lack of stability in non-Assad areas. The possibility of what could be birthed in this vacuum is what drove aid. Though not mentioned specifically, the rise of ISIS is likely an example of this fear coming to fruition. Not only was aid to bring funder-approved steadiness to these uncertain areas but it also needed to be placed in the correct hands for this to happen. For this reason, aid that arrived was rigid and came with stipulations.

Salma, the woman who worked under the eye of religious patrols, explained that she had a combination of restricted and unrestricted funds to work with. The restricted funds amount was always more than the unrestricted. In this situation, ISIS was specifically mentioned. The case in point dealt with trying to reach children in need within an ISIS-controlled region. While aid could be delivered to the children, funders
placed many restrictions on the operation, allowing no flexibility and causing complications. Salma saw this as a top-down approach to delivering aid. The donor and top organization management would tell staff in the field what aid to deliver and how. An exception to this was the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO). It was explained that it and some Scandinavian donors were flexible with their funds when the lives of aid beneficiaries came under immediate harm. An example was a time when funding was supplied for an assistance project dealing with economic development. Syrians fell under deadly threats as the project began. Field operatives shared with donors that the funds could be better spent on saving the lives of people fleeing for their lives. The funders gave a green light to do what was necessary by stating “go ahead, emergency response, go.”

Interviews of aid providers supplied a wide range of insight into assistance delivery in Syria. This included the distinction between aid arriving from Turkey or Jordan. Which of these two countries aid originated from also affected who purchased and delivered it. Whether it was to serve people in government controlled or non-government-controlled areas was uncovered as a factor as well. Aid workers also gave personal insight as to how they felt about the work they did and the people they helped. Finally, opinions were stated reflecting thoughts on the effectiveness of the donors and management who directly influenced their work. So, thanks to the information assistance workers gave, both broad and distinct data is available about aid delivery in Syria during the country’s internal war.

3.3 FINDINGS FROM AID RECIPIENT INTERVIEWS
The results from interviews with Syrians living in the midst of their country’s war are best presented in first-person narrative. Interviews led to a reconfiguration of the premises on which I originally built the project. I also discovered the dynamics of the give-and-take of the interview process when interviewing people who have encountered war-related trauma.

After conducting a few interviews, I discovered dynamics I had not considered. The first was the phenomenon of my role as catalyst for information. I had witnessed investigative information-gathering interviews, both live and broadcast. The network magazine 60 Minutes is an example. It is easy for me to watch television interviews because I am far removed from the interrogation. I can pause the telecast, leave and return to the room I am watching it in, or cancel it by turning the television off. In simple terms, I am a third-party, non-participating observer, removed from the interview.

My Syrian interviews were completely different. I realized I was the catalyst for shared information to be divulged. Instead of me watching a distant interview on a television, my presence and activities caused it to happen. The interviewees provided information and their expressionless facial and body language revealed that I was creating unique situations. Whether they told of going a day or more without food, having family members seriously wounded and no medical care, living in homes surrounded by active gunfire, or fleeing Syria while leaving behind their incarcerated adult child without even knowing if they were alive, they did so with no expression. As if displaying disassociation, these Syrians gave me detailed accounts of terrible experiences as if simply sharing facts and without showing any emotional or mental anguish.
The flip side of this occurred as I was interviewing Akram and Hayda, a married couple, with their daughter present. My interpreter and I sat on the floor of the family’s small apartment. As with any interview facilitated by a language interpreter, there was a step-by-step process. I would ask questions in English, the interpreter would ask them in Arabic, the couple would answer in Arabic, and the interpreter would give me their answers in English. Again, while much of what was shared was sadly severe and disturbing, they spoke with stoic facial expressions and voice intonations. After some time, I noticed that their daughter began the interview happily sitting between her parents but became sullen and slunk backward away from them as the interview continued. As Akram and Hayda shared a tragic story, the child withdrew further. I recognized that even though I did not know what the parents said in Arabic, the child’s further physical and emotionless retraction from her parents indicated that she found what the parent was telling me disturbing. A key example of this was when the parents spoke about occasionally walking outside their home after a heavy military encounter and finding dead and mutilated bodies lying about. They explained their daughter created her own explanation for this by saying that the dead people were only sleeping and would wake up soon. By the end of the interview, the parents were in the same location on the floor as when we started, but the girl had moved to a corner behind her parents, sitting with a sad look on their face, arms crossed to hold her folded legs close to her chest. This dichotomy of self-expressions between parent and child says much about the effect of the war on individuals and their survival attempts and about children and war.

Moving on to information discovered during interviews, it must be noted that all but one participant came from a city, town, or village located in Syria’s western half.
They are Al Hrak, Aleppo, Bosra Al Sham (also referred to as Borsa or Bursa) Damascus, Daraa, East Ghoutta, Homs, and Palmyra. The exception is one person from Al Hasakah in northeastern Syria. This concentration of western Syrians relocating to Jordan is likely due to their proximity to each other.

A collective narrative reflects positive thoughts of life before the Syrian war. It was described by many with upbeat words such as “excellent, simple, decent,” and “comfortable.” Respondents shared that they could live in their homes, have a job, and travel between them without fear. A sense of security existed with no concern for problems like crime. Worry for employment or working for oneself did not exist. Responders described feeling comfortable while financially providing for their families. Types of work showed a diverse Syrian workforce with a variety of skill sets. Some had attended trade schools allowing them to create their own businesses. Others represented being part of a tradition of carrying on a family business. Employed teachers taught classes including Arabic, art, and sports. One was a clothing broker who traveled between garment suppliers and sellers. Even rural farmers felt safe and able to feed their families and sell livestock and crops to gain income. There was a cumulative feeling that everyone could work.

This reflected overall confidence in the pre-war economy. The words “cheap” and “not expensive” described thoughts of the ability to purchase what one needed. This included a large sampling of items. Housing was affordable in urban and rural settings. Food was inexpensive, easily accessible, and available at all times. A household with multiple cars was not out of the ordinary. Even non-immediate needs like education and medical care were exceptionally good and available. Such assuredness allowed
participation and enjoyment for hobbies and other pastimes. There was a peaceful sense of community and livelihood in pre-war Syria.

There was an exception to this positive narrative. Mehmed a 25-year-old male, shared that before the war “the political side [was] very bad.” One could not “ask for your right,” “complain to [a] police officer,” or “express your emotions against the state.” One’s employment centered on “wasta,” or clout, and who you knew. One could not speak negatively about the state, Assad, or the military. Traveling outside one’s area was becoming difficult. Beyond this negative commentary, however, Mehmed shared his living conditions were “excellent.” Food, healthcare, and education were good and inexpensive. It was as if one could lead a happy life if they stayed within government-imposed norms. The events in Daraa, on March 6, 2011, were evidently an act of the Syrian public stepping outside such norms, ending this positive sense among the population.

As a result of these demonstrations, the Assad regime curtailed civilian protests. Those protesting retaliated further, and actions between the two escalated, leading to the war. As this intensified, the lives of Syrians interviewed became contrary to what they had been. Returning to my earlier comment, a desire to survive persisted. Lives were totally the opposite of what they had been. The common concern was safety and continued existence. Everything good about living in Syria before the war vanished. The absence of safety and tranquility meant nothing existed for them. It was not that they had just lost their jobs, homes, or money. They were truly terrified that their and their families’ lives were in danger.
Depending on where one lived and the conflict’s level, some could not leave their homes for long periods of time. Depending on the situation this could mean not being able to leave their home for at least a few weeks if not a month. A simple visit to a neighbor carried the threat of being shot per gunfire. Safety and comfort were often found in numbers, with some living together when possible. Hayda shared that her family found refuge at her parents’ home in a village outside their town. A total of 35 people (not all from Hayda’s family) lived there. While every encounter shared was unique, there was a sense that the ability to survive was easier in rural and village settings versus urban ones. Still, this did not ward off dangers. Families moved from village to village when it was safer than where they lived. This often meant one abandoning all they owned to save their lives.

Even Assad supporters who lived in pro-government cities were unable to escape the war’s difficulties. Kumar, a 20-year-old male who lived alone in a Damascus area subject to rebel attacks was grazed by gunfire outside his home. Though not life-threatening, it needed to be tended to, which a neighbor did. He could not leave even to go to the market store across the street but eventually secretly fled to his grandparents’ home closer to Damascus’s center when food supplies became low and electricity irregular.

The war affected everything negatively. People lost their means of living and property, making basic necessities difficult if not impossible to find for everyone. Some starved due to lack of food. Resources like fuel were not accessible because of government control. Unemployment meant no money, and some had to borrow to survive. Some were still repaying their debt after relocating to Jordan. Such desperation
led some to steal while still in Syria. High prices, cut-off communications, and closed roads caused by war added to this desperation, and life was negatively shaken.

While Syrians suffered in some way due to the war, those in besieged cities and villages lived in agony. The Freedom Army or some other rebel group frequently controlled a city or village internally while Syrian army forces surrounded it externally. Hussan, a middle-aged male, noted that had the rebels not come to his village, “things wouldn’t have been so bad.” He described the situation as going from one extreme to another in regards to the besiegement. “Before the rebels arrived [I] could walk [around] the outskirts of [my] village and go into Aleppo” with no problem. But, once they arrived, “because of the snipers and the bombing [I] could not move” inside or outside my home or village. It was as if two warring factions were located on opposite sides of an imaginary wall they created. This tit-for-tat relationship existed under the auspices that Assad’s army held the rebels inside and the rebels made sure Assad’s army remained outside. If one chanced to step outside their home, going near any location close to military operations likely meant death. Unfortunately, citizens in these communities were in the middle of these skirmishes.

Bombing directed at rebels was normal. There was a sense that they were used as human shields, causing residents to stay in their communities. Some rebel groups capitalized on this by organizing citizens to send propaganda letters to the external Syrian army. The communication stated they would be killed if they entered the city or village. Such communiqué usually turned out to be false as government army forces who entered a besieged community found the residents would not oppose them. Some respondents explained that they were so concerned about survival that they did not know who was
causing their community’s besiegement. It did not matter if battles were between the Syrian army and rebel forces or were between the differing rebel forces. Survival was all that mattered.

Trying to survive bombs and sniper bullets was not their only concern. The besiegement caused blockades surrounding the communities, so nothing got in or out. In simple terms, if something was not in the city, residents went without. Attempts by the Red Cross-Red Crescent to enter villages failed. Other items essential to survival were not available. Ahmet, a 33-year-old male, explained his family lived their city for five years under such conditions explaining, “We live in Duma around five years in the besiege…no food, no water…nothing, it was very hard life.” He further explained, “There wasn’t any kind of fuel, no electricity.” When asked for specifics of anything entering his city, he answered in one word, “nothing.” Neighbors in close proximity to each other shared as best they could, but besiegement created three obstacles: the inability to leave one’s home for fear of being killed, possibly sharing this abode with multiple people who may not be family, and surviving on whatever resources existed in a resident’s city or village.

A limited number of open food stores existed. Instead of selling goods at fair prices, they were part of a black-market system. Moshin, a 29-year-old male shared that “merchants have their sneaky ways.” He explained that merchants “would have hidden contracts [with the regime] to bring them food” to sell. A merchant would actually “go behind the backs of rebels and sneak food in.” Moshin described a monopoly-like scenario which found “one merchant in one village.” Thus, “this merchant, he’s probably controlling everything.” Though they operated within rebel-held areas surrounded by
government forces, they secured goods per the Assad army who purchased them from Turkey. Using secret agreements, food was brought into the community to be sold. Merchants sold merchandise at higher prices to pay the regime off. Ironically, this meant residents were gouged to financially support forces who were trying to take the communities in which they lived.

Simple staples like flour were hard to access. Omar, a 28-year-old male, believed that the government was keeping needed relief from entering a particular area of Damascus because it was a rebel-held. This meant that many were forced to focus on daily survival. Instead of thinking forward to the following week or month, Omar’s concern centered on that day “because [he] didn’t know what will happen” after today. A day or more without food was common. Proactive thought existed only in the form of self-imposed rationing. Most families stored food and ate small amounts of food each day so there would be more later. Stored and preserved food allowed some to survive. The possibility of a new person finding refuge in one’s home also made this a necessity. Omar was thankful that “he was [only] with his wife” while in Jordan as his “kids were born here in Jordan.” For Omar, this meant that while he and spouse had to endure hardship in Syria, his yet to be born children escaped the sad experience.

Personal finances for survival changed per the war. The ability to find or keep a job dwindled. Some were able to create a business because of advantages the war created. Those interviewed were not part of this group. Without a salary, personal savings were quickly exhausted. With no work, many spent all their money. Household appliances, like a refrigerator, or fixtures, like a door, were sold to have money. Sadly, transaction prices were below the items’ worth. Moshin, referred to previously,
explained he “didn’t care about the lower price [they] were getting” as they were “concerned about having money to provide the basic needs.” For farmers, livestock available to sell dwindled to nothing, exhausting their fiscal wherewithal.

Little or no money eventually led to an absence of food at home. One risked their life by leaving home and exorbitant prices were charged at existing markets. Parents explained that in situations like this, feeding their children was the priority, often meaning they did not eat for a day or two. Yet, even this food was not a full meal. Instead, it was small portions of dry, stale bread, or expired canned food. Eating grass happened often. Rashid, Moshin’s 50-year-old father, explained there were “a few grasses that grows that they [could] eat.” But they acknowledged this was not by choice and they were “forced to eat it” if they wanted to live. Unfortunately, grass grew only during the warm seasons, and dry periods limited its growth and supply.

Some did find food supplies outside their homes without turning to the markets. Depending on a neighbor’s friendliness, resources were shared. Still, this was not a full meal. Minimum quantities from their family’s cupboard could be sacrificed for a friend. A few were bold enough to not only venture out of their home but also to travel to other villages where they knew someone who could provide their family sustenance. This came with the risk of being shot, but desperation forced some to take the risk. Unfortunately, some successfully made the journey only to find the food did not exist. And, as was the situation in their own home and village, what food could be found was not the healthiest, and a limited supply was exhausted in a matter of days.

A few interviewees representing Syrians living in Assad-controlled and rebel-controlled areas received aid. Basic needs such as water and meals were received. Aid
intended for Assad-controlled areas required government approval for it to move. Aid entered as long as there was an agreement with the government. Receiving aid in a government-controlled area was “very complex.” Hussain, a 40-year-old male, shared that the aid process was full of “many paper[s], many question[s].” Providers and recipients could not interact, and there was always a regime-appointed person between them. He explained “don’t anyone ask me what [I] want. Thus, aid providers did not ask recipients what they needed. To receive anything, Hussain and others had to “fill out many forms and present many documents to prove [they] were internally displaced.” This did not guarantee receiving anything, however. Government-appointed workers went to homes asking for aid to determine if “we really deserve such aid or not.” If the agent deemed the applicants lived “in a decent house” they “won’t give us.” Such treatment was “humiliating.” This was totally at the agents’ discretion. If the villager was friends with the agent, their family would receive more than another family.

In government-controlled areas, home ownership also played a role. Renters were invisible in the process, so only homeowners received aid. Aisha, a 46-year-old woman, explained how the government controlled the movements of homeowners once they received aid. She explained that once records were verified and aid was distributed, a homeowning recipient could not move because doing so would result in incorrect records and the loss of government assistance.

She also told of how the war and lack of survival necessities took their emotional and mental toll on many. Aisha, shared she, her spouse, and children had “felt for some time that death is better than this life.” Being a parent took on complexities she had not fathomed. She and the rest of her family unusually felt “angry all the time” and would
“argue with each other for a silly reason.” To balance this out, she had to “pretend that I’m relaxed” in order to bring peace of mind to her children. She had to suppress her feelings in front of her family by faking she was “courageous.” She lost her appetite and became ill with anemia. She saw her “daughters cry all the time” while telling them “things will be alright soon, though [they knew] it will not.”

Being continually bombarded with such scenarios was difficult for many interviewees. Aisha further shared that “fear is more difficult than anything…even more difficult than hunger.” She explained that her family could accept going days without food but they “need security…I want to be safe.” Repeated attacks conditioned her family to automatically react to certain situations. In particular, there was one time during Ramadan that an Apache helicopter came close to her house. The family automatically “fell to the earth because of fear.” Weapons were sometimes used in such situations. Non-weapon times were used “just to scare people.” In the end, the Aisha said, in situations like this, “I don’t want food or medicine, I just want to be safe with my children.”

For many, this sense of not being able to deal with the situation did not exist at the start of the war but instead grew as the conflict escalated over time. Some expressed that when the struggle began, they could handle it. But as it got worse and their lives became threatened per lack of resources to live as well as the war activities themselves, thus it reached a point when they were unable to handle it. Taking sides did not make a difference because regardless of who someone supported, one’s life would never be safe.

With all of this said, there was a sentiment of wishing the uprising had never started. Antar, a 42-year-old male, explained that from the very origins of the struggle,
Syrians against Assad wanted “to remove the president” with the thought they would have a “free election and a new president.” Antar claimed that “80 percent of Syrians wish the revolution had not happened…if they could go back in time, they would not have started the revolution because it destroyed everything.” He saw the turning point for this sentiment as being when “bad guys and bad persons started to lead the revolution and the people followed them.” Sadly, Antar shared that, while were in Syria during the war, discontent had grown so strong for many that they thought it would be “better to just die and leave the world than have to go through that pain and live it.”

Uncertainties experienced by the Syrians interviewed led to differing thoughts on how to prioritize what was necessary to survive. Everyone was asked to rank the importance of food, medicine, and education. While answers varied, Antar summed up people’s overall thoughts by sharing, “It depends on your aim in life.” Food was essential to most. Akram and Hayda shared they thought of “food and drink as much as they think about their lives.” But if one became sick, food was no longer top priority. Medicine availability was the first interest for many because illness or injury without it meant that an individual or family member would die right away because of the inability to do anything. Kashif, a 36-year-old male, labeled education as his first priority, not for the simple sake of enriching their child with scholastic knowledge but because they saw a school facility as a respite for children from the mental dangers of witnessing the hazards of the war and threatening soldier activities. He had watched children witness “30 to 35 soldiers…having the guns and everything around” remove people and their possessions from houses. He believed this was bad for them mentally by stating, “this affects their psychology.” Being at school meant that “they will not have this kind of bad
experience.” Ridwan, a 45-year-old male, felt guilt for being able to prioritize things in their life. He felt guilty after being released from a government prison for having access (as little as it was) to resources like food and medicine while people he met in prison remained there with nothing. Ridwan explained that was a “point when you stop thinking about food and think about people” like those he had left behind.

I began this project with an open mind while presuming Syrian aid followed a formulaic equation that had four suppositions. One, Syria was suffering an internal war that was influenced by external countries. Two, the war was causing Syria’s population to suffer in numerous ways. Three, aid organizations were in Syria to help these people. Four, while bureaucracy and warring sides affected aid delivery, assistance providers and afflicted Syrians could not interact sufficiently to facilitate provision of ample supplies.

Through the interviews, I uncovered a realm I had not considered. First, most interviewees lived in scenarios that did not allow aid. For multiple reasons, though they existed in conditions requiring assistance, help did not penetrate battle-related situations. And while some did receive aid, they did not consider it key to their difficult existence. Their central focus was survival. A combination of living amid war, feeling your and your family’s lives were in danger, shelter and food insecurity, questionable medical availability, and missing or imprisoned loved ones made external aid a passing thought in the minds of people just wanting to survive. Their survival was not made possible by available external humanitarian aid. Instead, they acquired their own aid from what was immediately available.

The dynamics of warring parties controlling survivability and aid access went beyond the simple labels of government/regime forces versus rebel ones. The conflict
that began with Assad’s army attempting to curtail demonstrations escalated to a revolution that included military engagement between pro and anti-Syrian government forces. Eventually entities external to this dichotomy, saw the war as an opportunity to further their own interests. In other words, factions and groups who originally supported neither the regime nor rebels, entered the war to advance their own concerns. These groups did not participate in the revolution’s origin.

They included Hezbollah, Kurds, and ISIS. The Kurds were noted as not being part of the regime or opposition armies. Accordingly, surviving and receiving aid grew beyond being controlled by the civil war’s reasons of origin. Because of this, assistance organizations like the UN were handcuffed on what they could do. Information that was foundational to their work was based on what different factions told them. Consequently, as Rashid shared, only “five percent of what the people need[ed]” reached them because controlling forces held onto provision surpluses for their own benefit. He knew of a neighbor who sold his car for one kilo of rice.

ISIS controlled all of Palmyra. House keys were confiscated, forcing people out of their homes. Access to electricity, telephone lines, and water was cut off. Once ISIS appeared, agriculture was forbidden, and working one’s farm risked their safety. ISIS eliminated any roles for women by requiring that they wear all black clothing that covered their entire bodies and forbidding them from publicly showing their faces and hands.

Some respondents recognized the effect of interests outside Syria on their situation. Russia was often viewed as directly involved in Alawite’s maintaining prominence in Damascus. It was explained that Alawite followers had sided with the
government and thus gained its backing and support as well as weapons. Early in the war, Damascus was heavily populated by Sunni Muslims posing a disadvantage to the government.

The challenges of survival extended to one’s ability to live and remain mentally stable while living in the presence of armed forces. Syrian law required all males to enter the military at age 18. Parents feared losing their adult sons’ lives to war. There was also the concern, as with many civil wars, that their children would be forced to attack or kill other family members in opposition territories. Factions regularly kidnapped people from an opposing side and held them for ransom. Some were returned and others were killed even though the ransom was paid. Some were forced to fight for their kidnappers for fear of themselves or their family members being killed. Sometimes, government soldiers appeared under the pretense of seeking information. Kashif shared that up to ten soldiers entered homes unannounced. They brought entire families outside and shot or hacked the children to death with swords in front of their parents. While the soldiers claimed they were looking for people or information, Kashif explained that the reason was to scare the residents. He also knew of a situation of soldiers burning down a family’s home then rolling their brother-in-law in a rug to be set on fire. Fortunately, one of the soldiers convinced their accomplices to stop. This was a type of war suffering that aid could not resolve.

The war took a toll on the survivability of Syrians’ thoughts, feelings, and mental states. Some were heart-struck by the disconnection the conflict brought between them and extended family members and friends. People who were once sociable and affable with each other now turned against one another. The war created chasms in Syrian
society that found factions split into groups with labels like pro-government, anti-government, Free Army, Sunni, ISIS, and various rebel groups. Longtime friends could become an enemy quickly. People also took advantage of each other. Moshin told of loaning a friend their car because the friend claimed to need it for important transportation. Instead of using it for this, the friend sold it without Moshin’s knowledge.

In some situations, the government selected local village councils to facilitate aid distribution. They too showed favoritism and were viewed as being like thieves. Council members had their own personal lists of who they preferred that were not based on information applicants supplied. For example, if a council member had a brother or sister, that council member would give them more. Council members also charged bribes to gain preferred status.

Some accepted the possible hazards of moving beyond their city or village in an effort to survive in settings with little to no resources and/or aid. For some, leaving meant more than not having supplies needed to survive. It also meant facing the threat, or actual increase, of military activity against civilians. Government and rebel forces were both reported to randomly select homes and take away anyone they wanted to. Often the government would put these people in prison. Both sides would take people who would disappear forever. Thus, in such situations, people did not leave for food only. Safety was a factor as well.

Inconvenience and peril did not end once someone escaped. In government-controlled areas, checkpoints were strategically created to make a type of blockade between centers of density. Aisha said that the 20 checkpoints between Daraa and Damascus made a pre-war trip that would have taken under an hour take over two hours.
Traversing roads in rebel-held areas was just as bad with opposition checkpoints often wrongfully accusing a traveler of supporting the regime. A valid ID allowed passage through a checkpoint but also allowed both sides to gain information about the traveler.

A checkpoint guard’s attitude and strictness often differed from day to day. A guard who let individuals pass one day might kidnap or kill others the next day for no reason. The risk of this happening was greater if the guard consumed alcohol. In these cases, they were unable to completely discipline their actions meaning one could be arrested because intoxication placed the guard in a bad mood. Bribes also played a role at checkpoints. Electronic devices such as mobile phones and laptops were not allowed in traveling cars, but officers took them to allow cars to continue.

Certain strategies were used, when possible, to circumvent checkpoints. While traveling in numbers made mobility safer, small groups garnered less unfavorable attention than large ones. Some respondents from rebel-held regions who chose to travel outside their city or village used alternate roads to evade the checkpoints. But these were uneven, often unpaved, roads that did not provide smooth driving conditions. Travel time on these roads took longer than checkpoint roads and using these thoroughfares often required a guide. Sometimes a guide could take the travelers from the place of departure to the destination location. At other times, a guide could take them only so far, leaving travelers on their own and hoping that another guide would meet them and direct them further.

Some had limited exposure to aid providers, and opinions they shared about them were negative. Abbas, a 55-year-old male, spoke of the “Red Cross and Red Moon” as
“propaganda” operatives. He explained that, while people in his area received aid from the agency, it was very little and poor quality. Regardless of the family’s size, everyone received the same amount. Food was described as “bad things.” He was not alone in this sentiment by stating “people do not use it.” Abbas shared that aid workers claimed that “we help people” but the fact that they did not receive a salary for their work gave them personal reasons to take items that were intended for residents. These workers had “no experience” in their work and the respondent questioned if the process used to select them was legitimate. Interviewees also explained that though a limited number of medical necessities was provided, the workers did not care even if a lot of death existed because medical supplies and surgeries were lacking. It was as if the workers viewed the public they were serving as a faceless mob. Instead of seeing them as unique individuals as no one received special attention.

One way to survive occurred for those who received money from sources outside Syria. It was estimated that the equivalent of around 3 to 4 million US dollars was transferred into Syria every month. In government-controlled areas, money could be transferred into the country and picked up at a Western Union-like facility. It was essential that the value of transferred money was small, because the larger the amount, the more attention received. Transporting money via air received less attention. One was not asked, how much money they had at the airport. Currency folded in one’s wallet garnered less attention than a bag of money. Transferring money from outside Syria into

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426 While I did not ask for clarification on who was the “Red Cross and Red Moon,” I am confident that this person was referring to the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

427 The status of Western Union existing in anywhere in Syria was inconsistent from responders. Some said that Western Union branches existed while others said that they were illegal.
rebel-controlled areas was easier but called for more steps and people. It required three participants, one outside Syria and two inside. Person one was located outside Syria and had a certain amount of money. They called person two, who was inside Syria and had the same amount. Person two gave that amount to person three. Person one then transferred their money plus a fee to person two. There was no explanation about how the money made it into the country, so funds could be moved from outside Syria to people needing it inside the country. But it was not a simple process and differed depending on if the recipient lived in government-controlled or rebel-controlled areas.

Organizations in Qatar and Saudi Arabia wanted to provide aid but were not allowed to by the government. Damascus viewed them as opposing the regime. To bypass this, Qatari- and Saudi-based interests funneled their support through Turkish-based entities they associated with. The government would then allow this cloaked aid into Syria. Qatar in particular had intelligence gathering sources inside Syria who relayed specific needs.

Access to medical care was particularly questionable. Someone with a cold or body ache could endure with resources available in their home or simply tough it out. Chronic and severe ailments such as cancer and diabetes went medically unattended. Life-threatening events like a heart attack often resulted in death. Most hospitals were strategically bombed, and pharmacies were often closed.

Little healthcare was provided for injuries, and many died from lack of treatment. Suiliman, a 42-year-old male told of his wife’s leg being injured by a bomb landing close to their house. There was no hospital or emergency care. Though there was a known doctor near, the war’s military exchange made going outside risky. They waited until
they reached Jordan a month later to get treatment for the leg, which was saved. Not everyone was so lucky. Akram and Hayda told of a family member being permanently paralyzed due to injuries sustained from a bombing. In another situation, Antar knew of a pregnant woman who could not deliver naturally, and her village did not have the medical care she needed. She and her husband successfully navigated to a hospital in a nearby city where she and her baby received the care they needed and returned home. Alas, while staying with her parents, their home was bombed. Running from the destruction resulted in further tearing of her incision and bleeding.

Innocently being shot by warring gunfire meant potential death because medical treatment was often denied. Faisal, a 60-year-old male, told of being shot by a sniper bullet while trying to leave his village by car. It entered his chest and exited his back, causing wounds needing medical attention. His village had a small medical center but not a hospital providing the care needed. Though he successfully made it to a hospital in a nearby city, he found that the hospital and the city it was in were government-controlled. Entering the hospital risked the regime thinking the wound was sustained while fighting against it which would result in the government killing the patient on the spot. Luckily, Faisal found a doctor willing to care for him with the understanding that neither party would tell anyone of the treatment. A doctor discovered by the government while treating a gunshot wound also put their life in danger due to government monitoring of doctors’ movements. A doctor who simply stepped “outside their house or [stood] on the balcony, they would be shot.”

Another incident dealt with Hamza, a 21-year-old male, knew of a neighbor’s leg being “destroyed” because of a bomb. This person found a doctor who did the best they
could with a lack of medical supplies. Large cuts were sewn with “regular needle and thread.” The leg was treated in a hospital 20 days later, but due to improper care during that time, it could not heal as well as it would have if sufficient treatment had been provided when the incident occurred.

There was consensus among respondents that government-controlled areas had hospitals in them whereas hospitals had been destroyed in non-government and/or rebel regions. In the latter situation, a secret hospital was sometimes established and was staffed by doctors and nurses who provided free healthcare. The regime surrounding the city or village paid residents to spy and seek out these hospitals. If discovered, government forces would shoot them down.

Women did not exist in the eyes of those determining aid recipients in government-controlled areas. A home had to have a house head who was a father to receive aid. Ironically, often a home was without an adult male figure because they had been killed in the war. Thus, a widow did not receive aid, even if she had children. One woman lost her husband to the war but not her home which was in her deceased husband’s name. This meant she could not receive government-approved aid. To solve this problem, she moved into her son’s home.

There was a consensus among respondents that accessibility of resources needed to survive was weaponized. The Syrian government used it to gain allegiance and population numbers to support its cause. If a city or village did not support Assad, the government cut off everything. This was not only to gain loyalty and adherence to what the Syrian state postulated. Government-enforced military conscription played a role. If
an individual was an adult male or a family had one as a member, gaining access to 
resources needed for them to survive equaled enlisting in the Assad army.

This did not, however, keep opposition forces from being viewed as doing the 
same. They were using food and medicine as a weapon as well. When “someone reaches 
the hunger status…he is actually forced because he is a feared for his children and his 
family.” Those who had access to the rebels and not the government were forced to join 
the opposition so that there was salary and food. Some shared that some people were 
convinced that the opposition was working for them and thus they should fight with 
them.

For Muhammad, a 40-year-old male, such aid weaponization as the “silent war.” 
In many ways, it was worse than the visible armed conflict. He suggested that when aid 
and resources needed for survival became weapons employed to manipulate civilians 
living in the middle of the struggle, the silent war occurred. Muhammad also pointed out 
that weaponization of survival was not limited to items such as food and medicine but 
rather extended to “fuel for cars and fuel for heating.” The inability to drive a car or have 
heat “in January and February [when] it is very, very cold, not only in Damascus but the 
whole of Syria” was used to control people’s thinking and support.

He was not blind to rebels misusing aid to manipulate Syrian citizens and selling 
it to those they controlled at highly inflated prices. In this situation, the rebels’ and 
Syrian citizens’ disadvantage was doubled. Rebels strengthened their power over people 
living in the areas they controlled while gaining financially. In turn, these Syrians 
became more submissive because they lacked survival basics and faced a fiscally stronger 
restraining body. Increasing this exponentially in favor of the regime and rebels is that
they both pointed at the other as the cause and communicated this to Syrians as the reason for the lack of survival necessities.

Finally, Muhammad reflected that desperation from lack of survival basics required life and death decisions. Staying inside one’s dwelling provided a level of safety from things like bombs from planes, military ground exchange between the regime and rebels, and sniper fire that specifically sought any moving person. But staying inside risked starvation, dehydration, and medical concerns. For many, deciding to stay inside or venture outside was no easy choice. This was intensified by the absence of many resources normally provided at the local market and healthcare facility. Thus, being forced to surrender to and/or support one of the battling factions not only weakened their ability to make a non-threatened decision but also strengthened whatever side of the war they joined.

The Syrians interviewed described a people who simply wanted to survive. The majority did this without access to external humanitarian aid. Their ability to exist relied on resources available to them and their close neighbors. Venturing outside these confines risked severe injury, death, or imprisonment. Sustained wounds might go unattended causing further health worries. Those who successfully traversed beyond their home found stores with black market inflated prices or limited resources being shared by others. Simply said, these individuals survived the ordeals of Syria’s war by creating their own aid because external support was not available to them.

3.4 APPLYING THE INTERDISCIPLINARY MODEL TO FIELD WORK FINDINGS
To conclude this conversation of Syrian war humanitarian aid, we examine two matters. First is a comparison of the interview model for interviews conducted with providers of aid for Syrians to the one used with resident Syrians seeking relief from the war. This affords an understanding of parallels, variances, and distinctiveness between the two. The other is an appreciation of the phenomenon of striving to survive while living amid war when aid exists but battle and besiegement do not allow its penetration. In this type of situation, people suffering create their own aid program based on available resources.

_Governance and Government_

Governance and government united in both cases. For aid provision, it was the coordination between external aid providers and Turkish suppliers, each with their own agenda and operations. Aid workers in the south operated in anti-Assad areas and thus were not aligned with government interests. Those in Turkey had an agreement with Assad’s government that allowed them into Syrian areas that those in the south could not reach. Thus, government is demonstrated by different agendas. But, when southern aid providers lost their ability to reach those in need once the government controlled them, they needed a solution. Both southern and Turkish interests found a governance common ground when Turkish entities sympathetic to the work once carried out across the Syrian-Jordanian border became conduits and covertly continued the work. Two entities overlooked their different motivations to collaborate on the central goal of getting as much aid as possible to Syrians in need.

For Syrians living in besieged areas, the first thought was ensuring their family’s survival under difficult situations with no end in sight. Government is shown through
some becoming not only selfish without thought of those suffering around them but also becoming thieves. This was demonstrated by the person who asked to borrow a neighbor’s car for a supposed personal need but sold the car instead. Trying to survive in blockaded settings drove some to think only of themselves and steal from others, but governance was present as well. Some shared what little food resources and home space they had with their fellow sufferers. Some people who thought of the risks they faced found enough to sacrifice so they could provide for others.

Governance (only)

Governance only was demonstrated by the aid workers who shared their drive to continue working while facing obstacles. Some had to maneuver through the constant threat of indiscriminate government detainment. Others had been incarcerated and all their belongings taken. At times such difficulties took a mental toll to a level that they had to receive medical attention. Still, with all these stumbling blocks, everyone interviewed continued to work to bring aid to Syrians. This personal sacrifice and acceptance of the included risks show a group of individuals coming together for the betterment of others.

Finding governance only in what Syrians shared was difficult. I don’t think this was because they lacked genuine care for their neighbors and communities but rather because the war’s harshness caused little opportunity for it to exist. No in-depth details were given regarding the operation of secret hospitals resulting from bombed medical facilities. Still, these could not have been easy to establish and had to have multiple secretive elements to them. This had to be dangerous not only for medical practitioners but also for citizens who helped the operation outside the facilities. Accepting the risks
this involved while wanting the best healthcare possible for the Syrians in need, illustrates governance.

*Government (only)*

The aid workers’ comments about war becoming a profitable industry are examples of government. Here an entity carries out its operations based on its own interests while overlooking those of others. Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and Russia are provided as examples. They made decisions guiding the war that were not in the interests of Syrians. Complementing this were comments of concern for what a non-Assad-led Syria would mean. Various rebel groups filling this vacuum created instability. Outside interests were more comfortable with Assad in control of Syria than numerous unknown scenarios with countless uncertain outcomes if others replaced him.

Government is demonstrated by city and village merchants profiting from the black-market system. These were not members of the Assad military or rebel forces. Proprietors who operated stores with food and supplies within their communities were stealing from their neighbors. They were also reinforcing the village or city’s besiegement situation by receiving goods from exterior government forces while existing in the midst of the rebels. In this way, store owners selfishly took advantage of the government, rebels, and the innocent Syrians in their communities for personal gain.

*Humanitarian Government*

Two unique ways of delivering aid were presented in aid provider interviews. One was creating mobile medical clinics. These were used to take health care to Syrians who needed it, so they didn’t have to travel long uncertain distances. Sometimes a clinic could not care for a particular patient’s need, but they did provide them with
documentation about their condition and direct them to the correct health facility. The war made certain areas of Syria impossible for this program to be carried out, but it does show humanitarian government in that aid delivery had to be manufactured in a unique way for the Syrian situation.

Relief workers physically smuggling money to different entities inside Syria is another example of humanitarian government. Concealing actual currency across a country’s borders is likely not unique to the Syrian war, but its success depended on its ability to take situations specific to Syria into account. Elements such as the number of checkpoints, the attitudes of security guards, and the benefit of women transporting the funds instead of men were particular for Syria. Without this creative method of humanitarian government, funds would not have been transferred into the country.

For Syrian residents interviewed, those who explained the ways they adapted their lives to survive in the midst of besiegement demonstrate humanitarian government. Rationing, storing food, and skipping meals allowed them to live from one day to the next. For parents, these adjustments often meant they sacrificed themselves for their children. While a sad account to share, it does show humanitarian government in that changes had to be made to survive.

**Sovereignty**

Sovereignty was constantly present in the activities of aid providers. All operations related to delivering assistance were carried out with the approval of the Assad government. If Damascus permitted their work, they could operate anywhere within the country under the government’s control. This was not a greenlight to import what you wanted and give it to whom you wished. The Syrian government dictated what was
allowed into the country, who got it, and how much, so this aid strengthened areas and
people the regime determined strategically vital to its interests. The opposite of this was
aid entering rebel-held/non-Assad regions. Technically, this assistance was not approved
by the government and supported interests the regime found not in its best interests. This
was reflected in aid worker accounts of aid organizations in non-Assad areas moving
when government forces neared them. Thus, even though assistance was being delivered
into non-Assad areas, acknowledgement of the nearness of government forces dictated its
ability to operate. The model element of sovereignty in attempts to survive with or
without aid does not exist. Whether they lived in pro- or anti-government areas, their
ability to receive and retain sustenance was dictated by forces beyond their control.

*Shortfalls of Humanitarian Aid*

There were several examples of shortfalls of aid as some received it and others
did not. Most of these are defined by whether or not the government recognized them,
with shortfalls existing within Assad-controlled areas and within rebel-controlled areas.
In Assad-controlled areas, gender played a role in determining who did and did not
receive aid. Males received aid, women did not. Even if proven that a household did not
include a male figurehead due to war-related death, a female-led home did not receive
aid.

Syrians themselves were the epitome of aid shortfalls. Some received it, and
some did not. It was not that aid did not exist for them. Instead, factors out of their
control influenced what, if anything, they received. This disparity sometimes existed
among Syrians living within the same village or city. Respondents described the triage
system used to single out who in a particular community was in the most need of care as
one example of this. Needing and having access to assistance did not guarantee receipt of that assistance.

**Inconsistencies of Aid**

The two key participants in aid delivery are the provider and the recipients. Without these, the assistance process does not occur. Yet, the inconsistencies of aid model part explains that there are factors external to the provider and recipient relationship that negatively affect aid’s availability and consumption. It was explained that “extreme Islamists” made their attempts at working with Syrians difficult. The assistance organization had its own methodology for successfully conducting its work. It believed men and women could work together in the same space and that it was necessary to reach Syrians in need. But while the Islamist group believed in the agency’s work and goal, it held that this effort would succeed only if men and women worked separately. At the risk of their project ending and posing a threat to workers’ lives, the organization had to halt its operations and reconfigure its workforce structure when the Islamist group was known to be in the area. Thus, an entity outside the organization and the Syrian relationship hindered the ability of aid to be delivered.

**Weaponization of Aid**

Using aid and resources as weapons to control Syrians was a constant theme found in interviews. This is a conclusion that is easy to reach. Many direct quotes reflect this. One described this practice as a “silent war” in which aid and resources were weapons used by both sides. Instead of bombs and gunfire, the ability to receive aid and survive was used to entice, and even force, civilians to concede allegiance to one of the warring groups. Opposition forces were singled out as using “salary and food” to force Syrians to
join. Weaponization of aid was not obvious in provider interviews. The instances in which it was alluded to were relevant to other parts of the model. An example is the Assad government’s determination of what aid was allowed into the country and its dictation of where it was delivered.

Us/Them/Otherness

The best example of otherness uncovered in this set of interviews was discovered in my own activities. I entered this entire process with no experience in this type of one-on-one/in-person endeavor. Individuals I saw while watching televised interviews of people attempting to live through human and natural caused disasters were an example of “them.” I, representing “us,” was far removed from the situation geographically and could literally turn it off by clicking a remote control. In the presence of the sufferer, what they shared as a result of my questions broke down the “us” and “them” silos and created a community of “we.”

Beyond my own encounter, the Syrian government’s work to set Alawite and Sunni Muslims against each other created a sense of otherness within the national Syrian community. With Shiite Muslims supporting Assad early in the war, the government was at a disadvantage because of Damascus’s majority Sunni population. Placing Sunnis in a negative light, the regime, with Russia’s assistance, was able to limit their numbers thus quantitatively strengthening its supportive Alawite population.

Attitudes and Motivations of Aid Providers and Recipients

Many aid workers shared the difficulties they faced in their work despite a desire to continue because they believed they were bringing good to lives. One worker began their Syrian aid work as a back-office clerical person. They were originally placed in
finance, logistics, and purchasing due to their professional background and skillset. They slowly transitioned, however, to working directly with Syrians. By the time their work was complete, they wanted their future work to have a more direct connection with the people their work was intended to help. Stress was always present. Happy times were rare because of the desire to do more than limited resources and time allowed. Accepting they had done all they could was hard and receiving good pay and benefits to help people who were in difficult situations was humbling. All of this is best summed up by the worker who pondered why was their life more important than those of thousands.

In the true sense of irony, one of the best examples of Syrian thoughts about the circumstances they found themselves in is wishing the war had never happened. Protesting perceived injustices of the Assad government against the Syrian people escalated into war. This conflict was acceptable at its beginning because there was hope that Assad would leave office. Syrians could not fathom the future reality of escalation into a national struggle that included foreign countries not only directing the war but also causing horrendous turmoil for them. Thus, for many, if the clock could be turned back to 2011, it would possibly include a time when the protests did not happen.

Existence of NGOs and Their Influence on the Situation

Workers expressed their belief that there was a disconnect between the reality of the work they were doing and what their superiors removed from the situation wanted. Often this reach from an organization’s upper echelons was not limited to paid staff. If a funder wanted something done a certain way, this directive was typically carried out at the risk of losing fiscal support. At times this did not reflect what was happening on the front lines of the organization. This was demonstrated with field workers in a rebel-held
area believing they could get stipends to Syrians although information showed the Syrian army would soon overtake the area. Regardless of how much the workers tried to prove that the Syrians in need could get support before government forces arrived, the project’s funder had the effort canceled.

Among the Syrian interviewees who were trying to survive, very few received aid and thus could comment on NGO assistance organizations. One who received assistance and interacted with a provider had negative comments about it. For them, the “Red Cross and Red Moon” was nothing more than a publicity stunt. The aid provided was poor both quantitively and qualitatively. The field workers assigned to carry out the work played favorites, and not everyone got what they deserved. They believed that NGOs caused more difficulties in the situation they were there to help fix.

Closing this chapter involves recalling five points. One is the use of anthropology and ethnography to uncover personal information. In the simplest of terms, these two disciplines allow an appreciation of one’s fellow human beings across the globe. Yet, from their earliest use, they have been employed to uncover limitations within populations in order to control them. This dissertation does not seek to use uncovered information to dominate aid workers or Syrians. It does discuss the effects of otherness, which anthropology and ethnography have also done.

Many headlines about the Syrian war and those affected by it were broad brush strokes with few individual representations. Because of this, the second point of this chapter was to give a voice to the voiceless. Aid workers were interviewed, and the information they provided is critical to understanding the uniqueness of Syria the narrative of aid in war time. But information gleaned from Syrians came from first-
person accounts that allowed for the sharing of individual insight. To do this, one-on-one live interviews were conducted. Surveys with enclosed return envelopes were not mailed out. Instead, questions were posed in real time. The majority occurred in person. Without this, a presentation of information about those providing aid and those trying to survive with or without it would not be available.

Third, a process of gathering, organizing, and textualizing gathered information was necessary. This included drafting questions and having them approved, conducting and recording interviews, keeping reflective fieldnotes, transcribing recordings, coding information from the transcripts, and, finally, organizing this labeled data into a coherent, linear presentation. While this seems a straightforward process, there were stumbling blocks. The most difficult one was not being able to employ the snowball sampling method to uncover Syrians to be interviewed. Unfortunately, while most interviewees claimed they would provide additional participants, few did. Thus, the actual interview process was a very straightforward step-by-step procedure, but finding people to interview was difficult.

Fourth, the types of provided aid uncovered were broad, each helpful in their own way. They included policing, mobile healthcare, clean water, food, community organization, cash transfers, and smuggling funds. They can be divided into aid that was for immediate vs prolonged care. Food, clean water, and mobile healthcare helped solve problems of the moment while policing, community organization, and both visible and covert provision of money looked beyond immediate concerns. Aid was both reactive and proactive.
Fifth is the information presented. This is divided into two parts. On one hand, aid workers overall explained how the war affected the delivery of assistance. Most workers delivered aid in non-government-controlled areas. Unfortunately, this entailed working in areas controlled by various factions. The threat of the government’s military presence had workers constantly looking over their shoulders. The more real the threat was, the more likely it was that the aid operation would need to be halted. Delivering aid in Assad-controlled areas might have been operationally simpler than in rebel-held areas, but it came with overreaching controls. Basically, aid reached Syrians in government-controlled regions only with Damascus’s approval. Receipt of assistance was determined by the state instead of being based on need.

Aid evaded most of the Syrians interviewed. Because they came from besieged cities and villages, nothing came in. They had only what existed within the municipalities’ boundaries. Whatever did make it in was provided at inflated prices by store owners who colluded with government forces outside the area (who, ironically were trying to conquer the same area) to strengthen both parties. In many ways, besiegement represented a type of incarceration for residents within it. Stepping out of their homes made them sniper targets. While fighting hunger and starvation, a major illness could easily result in death. These Syrians struggled to survive the best they could without aid. In their own unique way, they created aid from whatever resources they had.

Being able to personally gather, organize, and provide the information in this chapter was a humbling experience. While it appeared to be a straightforward process, I had to forgo the snowball method I intended to use. Through all this, insightful information was gathered so people could share their stories for others to read. They
shared that aid existed for Syrians during war, but the ability of workers to distribute it and Syrians’ chances of receiving it was largely determined by whether an area was in a government-controlled or rebel-controlled area. This did not mean though that every community within each of these settings was the same. In the end, both workers and Syrians maneuvered the through the turmoil the best they could to try to reach each other. Unfortunately, the war minimized this.
CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation focused on analyzing humanitarian aid in the greater Levant over the last 100 years. While the largest portion was dedicated to the ongoing struggle in Syria, a review of the Armenians, Palestinians, and Iraqis was necessary for a full appreciation of the topic. Their telling shows that the needs of those suffering vary based on the situation in which they find themselves and the circumstances surrounding each country’s need. Aid for Armenians came in the form of family reunification through the Rescue Movement, official nationality documentation per the Nassen Passport, and housing via the Final Settlement. Aid for Palestinians was given not to improve their living situation and provide sustenance to better their lives, but to enhance control over them. The Balfour Declaration and British Mandate segregated and controlled Palestinians geographically. The UNRWA furthered this by supporting resettlement. Finally, the Oslo Accords limited care to those living in the Gaza Strip and West Bank. For the Iraqis, aid came in response to three situations related to the Gulf Crisis of the early 1990s. Sanctions worsened their situation and increased their need for aid, and the Iraqi government, who was expected to suffer per sanctions, was strengthened by it. Oil For Food (OFF) was created to fix the need for aid problem the UN had created through sanctions. Lastly, Operation Provide Comfort was created to help the Kurds and Shia populations who suffered at the hands of Iraqi forces. Thus, this dissertation shows that aid differs based on the circumstances and needs of those involved.
This dissertation showed Syrian narrative as being unique from that of the Armenians, Palestinians, and Iraqis as it resulted from information gathered from primary research I conducted. This allowed a telling of two sides of aid facilitation, that of the provider and that of the recipient. Unlike the 20th century events discussed, the Syrian aid discussion provided upfront and personal insight that secondary sources did not. In particular, it provided in-depth insight into what happens when one does not receive desperately needed aid. This is particularly notable given the fact that the aid they needed was available but was denied by external powers. The Assad government’s reach and control of aid was a common theme for both workers and Syrians. The predominant information came from those working and living in non-Assad areas. While it seems that this would provide an open arena for the free flow of aid, the opposite was true. The absence of the Syrian government created areas rife with instability. Besiegement was a norm that kept aid from getting in or out of the area. Relief that did penetrate into cities and villages came with inflated, black-market prices. Venturing out of one’s home risked death. Besiegement created neighborhoods that combined strengthened friendships and encroachments. From the provider’s perspective, operating in non-Assad areas meant they were always looking over their shoulder to see how far away government troops were. The closer they were, the more likely aid providers would have to move, which likely meant that funders would tell them end or alter operations. Those inside Assad areas also felt the government’s grip. Aid went only where the regime allowed it. The amount permitted was dictated by Damascus as well. My Syrian research also provided insight into life spent trying to survive in the absence of aid. Uncovering this provided notable and unforeseen information.
In reflecting on my role in the interview process for this dissertation, I recognize that this was not simply a research project for me. I wanted to explore the challenges of delivering humanitarian aid to Syrians in a wartime and felt the need to share what I learned. I wanted to break down the walls that contribute to the sense of otherness described in this project. Unfortunately, I feel that I was not able to break down all feelings of separation or lack of trust that Syrian interviewees may have felt towards me. This uncertainty may have contributed to interviewees not following through on introducing me to other potential interviewees and may have been the reason one person ended the interview before its completion. If this is true, my feelings are not hurt. I respect that this is something that a Western student conducting ethnographic research via interviews may face. Overcoming this will not be possible for the foreseeable future. The solution lies in more mutually friendly dialogue, and interaction that includes projects that strive for Balboa and Deloffre’s concept of governance. Though pragmatism makes this a utopian hope, always striving towards it should be foremost. While doing this will not completely do away with non-Western distrust of Western ethnographers who conducting interview-based research like mine, it does create the possibility of limiting it more and more over time.

This dissertation also found two common themes across the four groups discussed. One is that everyone’s need for aid originated from war. There were times when they were living in the middle of war battles. And there were moments after the war when aid was needed. The second is that they did not instigate the war that created their need for aid. They were innocently caught in the middle of events that they did not create. The Kurds and Shia countering Hussein’s government differs from this to a point
but knowing that they were coaxed by external non-Iraqi government interests shows that they did not do so of their own volition.

Many topics touched on this dissertation deserve expansion. How wartime sanctions create a need for aid for innocent populations is one. As this conclusion is being typed, sanctions have been placed on Russia in response to its invasion of Ukraine. This is just one example of the use of sanctions in such a situation. The UNSC’s ability to control aid and its creation of the need for that aid in relation to war deserve review. Since its creation in 1946, permanent Council members have had autonomous interests and motivations to be involved in countless wars. Another is the light that the besiegement of Syrians shines on survival not being determined by aid but happening without it. A deeper exploration of living during besiegement would give an ulterior view of the discussion of aid in times of war. Last, comparing the availability of aid in times of war between geographic regions would be enlightening. The cliché of “no shoe fits all sizes” is noteworthy for this. Many populations have needed assistance due to war over the last 100 years. The Spanish Civil War of the 1930s, the Korean War of the 1950s, the Vietnam War from the 1950s through the 1970s, the Bosnian War of the 1990s, and the multiple skirmishes in Afghanistan since the beginning of the 21st century would all produce insights into the conditions of people living amid battle and needing sustenance to survive it. All of this should make us mindful of how wars combined with independent political motives, economic interests, and neoliberalism affect the type, amount, and accessibility of aid.

To conclude this dissertation, the experiences it discusses represent how war has affected aid’s availability over the last 100 years in the Levant. In all cases, the need was
created by factors and entities outside of their populations. They were commonly used as pawns in the conflict at hand and the consideration of aid provision often did not take into account the risk to their lives. Instead, their treatment and the provision of assistance were based on larger strategic factors. From the fall of the Ottoman Empire to the Balfour Declaration and British mandate followed by the Gulf Crisis and eventually the Syrian Civil War, innocent people in the Levant fell victim to circumstances that were out of their hands. When aid was a possibility, it was based more on what was better for the catalysts of the conflicts than on any consideration of residents at risk. Thus, aid to the people discussed in the Levant during the 20th century and early 21st century has been subjective for the providers and not in the best interest of those in need. Until these incentives change, people trying to survive in the midst of the world, including those in the Levant, will involuntary participants in global migration, internal displacement, poverty, hunger, refugees, and resource allocation.
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