



Influence of Non-Governmental Organizations on Legislative Processes: A Case Study of the Civil Society Law in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Rebaz Ali Smail^{1*}, Arazoo Rasool Ahmed², Handren Ahmad Eahya³

¹ Department of International Relations, Faculty of Law, Soran University, Soran 44008, Kurdistan Region, IRAQ

² Department of English, Faculty of Education and Languages, Lebanese French University, Erbil 44001, IRAQ

³ Department of Politics and International Relations, faculty of law, political science and management, Soran University, Soran 44008, Kurdistan Region, IRAQ

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the factor that has remained relatively unstudied in the literature, namely the influence of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in informing legislative developments in the Kurdistan region of Iraq (KRI) with emphasis on the Civil Society Law of 2011. Ultimately, filling an important gap in the literature, the study sought to explore the tactics that NGOs use towards the influencing of legislation especially within inter politic systems. Still, more work is required in clarifying the exact ways and tactics through which NGOs influenced this body of legislation, which has, certainly, affected civil society organizations. To collect desired data, this paper adopts a qualitative case study method with both interviews and documentary analysis to capture the strategies and experiences of the NGOs as well as the effects of the NGO engagements on policy making process from the perspective of the target beneficiaries from the Kurdistan parliamentary and non-governmental organizations. The paper is found that NGOs used lobbying, advocacy and alliances in the management of the civil society and the shaping of the Civil Society law. By thus applying the Interest Group Theory to the semi-autonomous regions of a developing country, this study enriches the approaches to analyzing civil society and governance. Thus, it has serious policy implications for countries with opaque governance structures for the need-to-know policymakers, NGOs, and international donors in the pursuit of more effective civil society participation in legal change.

Keywords: Non-Governmental Organizations; Legislative Process; Civil Society Law; Kurdistan Region of Iraq; Governance; Legal Reform; Interest Group Theory.



1 INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary world, the contribution of non-governmental organizations to the elaboration of public policy and legislative processes has become increasingly important worldwide, especially in countries with political transitions or where civil society means a lot for governance. The passing of the Civil Society law in 2011 marked one of the affected moments in the history of civil society development and how it relates to the legislature in the KRI. Despite this, the role of NGOs has not been thoroughly researched, and there is a lack of literature that clearly illustrates how they participate in the KRI legislative process. The paper intends to fill this gap by examining the role played by NGOs in influencing the legislative framework of KRI, as evidenced in the enacted law, the Civil Society Law. The main objective of this study is to examine the strategies NGO's in KRI use to influence the direction taken by the legislative process; it specifically focuses on the formulation and passage of the Civil Society law of 2011. This study investigates how NGOs work towards law reform and to what extent they are effective in influencing legislation. This study adds to a body of literature on how civil society becomes involved in good governance, and particularly in semi-autonomous entities like the KRI.

This study is important for a number of reasons. First, this study systematically investigates the literature gap in the involvement of NGOs in the legislative process in KRI. Even though NGOs are commonly recognized to be an influential

force in civil society, their actual influence concerning shaping legislation within the KRI has not been explored with enough detail as such. The practical implications of this research are manifold for politicians, civil society organizations, and international donors. It is through the understanding of strategies and challenges faced by NGOs in influencing legislation that useful insight into future advocacy effort can be gained, thereby contributing to the development of more effective legal frameworks in the region. This thus extends, at a theoretical level, the application of the Interest Group Theory to a non-Western context and allows new insights into its adaptability and relevance to political dynamics that might be varying different from that at which the theory was targeted [1][2].

As a result of its political and governance structure, the KRI in northern Iraq allows for a great deal of legislative freedom. For example, the 2011 Law on Civil Society was a landmark piece of legislation to formalize, within this legislative framework, the role of NGOs and other civil society organizations. It was a law created with substantial contributions from many stakeholders, local NGOs, international organizations, and members of the Kurdistan Parliament. How such influence was possible on the part of NGOs in this legislation remains inadequately examined to date in the details of processes and strategies. Given the centrality of this law in constituting the legal environment for civil society in the KRI, it is a very good case study of NGO involvement in the legislative process in semi-autonomous regions.

Among the research questions guiding this study are: What strategies did NGOs in KRI employ in influencing the legislative process of the Civil Society law of 2011? What challenges have the NGOs faced in their advocacy efforts for such law, and how did they surmount them? This study will attempt to take a closer look at the role of NGOs in the KRI's legislative process and provide recommendations that may help further develop this study into the dynamics of civil society engagement in governance. The results from this research would add not only to the academic literature on the involvement of NGOs in the legislative process but also serve as a practical guideline to civil society organizations and policy makers in the KRI and other regions with similar governance structures. Through the research, we have tried to add knowledge on how NGOs can effectively influence legal reforms to enhance the contribution of civil society within the legislative landscape in semi-autonomous regions.

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Employing a qualitative case study design, this paper aimed at assessing NGOs' participation in the legislative process in the KRI, particularly, the Civil Society law of 2011. The case study method is immensely suitable where there is a need for understanding complex social occurrences in their real-world setting hence avails the effective strategies, problems and effects of involvement of NGOs in legislative processes [3]. The Civil Society law was picked as a specific case owing to its importance in the certain region of the KRI regarding the already-existing legal framework for civil societies, and this law also offered a good subject of study to other semi-autonomous regions [4]. A qualitative research approach was adopted that included conducting semi-structured interviews and analyzing documents in order to produce thick data [5]. Semi-structured interviews were the instrument of choice due to the need to delve into the perceptions of the respondents while at the same time ensuring that important areas of the discussion concerning the role of NGOs in the law-making process are fully addressed [6] [7]. The interviews were directed to representatives from two different groups: a small number of NGO representatives who worked on the advocacy for the Civil Society Law and the Kurdistan Parliament members who were instrumental in the law-making processes.

The method that is used in purposive sampling techniques selected respondents who participated, and had some knowledge about the legislative process. The sample included fifteen respondents, while the determination of the ultimate sample size was at the point of data saturation when no additional themes were identified during analysis. The sample size was explained by a number that needed a depth of understanding and range of views from the key informants. The selection criteria included NGO representatives who were directly involved in the processes of lobbying and advocacy, and members of parliament in leading positions during the drafting process and the enactment of the law. Where possible, interviews were conducted face-to-face; for those not able to meet in person, alternatives such as video calls or phone interviews were offered. Each interview lasted between 60 to 90 minutes and followed a semi-structured format with open-ended questions designed to explore participants' experiences, strategies, challenges, and perceptions of NGO roles within the legislative process.

The document analysis supplemented interview data by adding context and detail to the history of legislation. For tracing the history of the legislation and verification of information obtained from the interviews, different drafts of the Civil Society law, parliamentary records, reports from NGOs, and relevant legal documents were examined. These various sources of information would have a triangulating effect: to enhance the validity of findings and to enhance credibility [8]. This paper uses thematic analysis to analyze interview data because this approach is particularly suitable for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data. This process of analysis involves a number of stages: becoming familiar with the data, coding, developing themes, reviewing, and interpreting information [9]. Initial codes were developed both inductively from the data itself and deductively according to the literature and research questions. Themes were then identified, refined, and verified to accurately reflect the data and are relevant to the study objectives. Assistance in organizing and managing data through qualitative analysis software, such as NVivo, has facilitated a systematic approach to coding and theme development.

Triangulation was used by utilizing multiple data sources to enhance the credibility and reliability of the findings. The interviews and documents are used. Member checking was done to validate findings, where the summaries of themes related to key participant contributions allowed participants to confirm whether the interpretations were correct. This was through the reflexive journal that the researcher maintained during the research process, where he recorded and reflected on possible biases, decisions taken, and how they might have impacted the research findings. Reflexivity formed an important component of qualitative research transparency and rigor. Ethical issues were an important concern in this study. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and their rights as respondents by both oral and written means. This includes their right to withdraw at any time from the study. Informed consent from the participants was obtained in writing prior to interviews [10]. The names of the interview participants were not disclosed, and interview transcripts were stored on secured password-protected computers to ensure data privacy.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 THE ROLE OF NGOS IN CIVIL SOCIETY AND GOVERNANCE

According to different studies, NGOs perform different and often complicated functions as change agents, advocates, and service providers in any part of the globe. One essential activity of an organization is advocacy, where such entity engages in promoting the rights and well-being of the oppressed and marginalized groups. In this context, NGOs are said to bring about changes in the policies, educate the general population, and organize warning appeal programs concerning the existing social injustices, politics, and management of the environment [11]. In a democratic setting, this was widely important as this encouraged the need for answers from the governments with regards to their policies and actions [12]. Thus, there are acknowledged efforts to promote citizen participation through NGOs which serve as the bridge between governments and the citizens.

Additionally, NGOs are also key to the advancement of good governance and accountability [13]. They surveil the conduct of companies and the government in protecting human rights, upholding transparency, and adherence to the law [14]. Non-governmental organizations make the society active and proactive by enabling the citizens to fight for the answerability of the government and its organ and encouraging active discourse on issues such as corruption and human rights abuse. This role is especially important in countries with no effective means of checks and balances in place. Locally, and sometimes even globally, non-governmental organizations lobby on behalf of issues such as human rights, environmental issues such as global warming, and global humanitarian issues [15]. They influence the elaboration of international policies through global campaigns and networks, which necessitate collaboration, alliance, or coalitions for sharing resources, information, and boosting their voices. It is these global networks that make non-governmental organizations more effective in combating issues that have a transnational dimension. Nevertheless, the role of NGOs is not without its difficulties and critiques. Some critics have expressed concerns about the absence of internal democracy and transparency in some NGOs, which may compromise their credibility [16]. Moreover, the danger of being compromised by government or donor interests threatens the autonomy and the purpose of NGOs [17]. In spite of these impediments, it is beyond doubt that the contribution of NGOs towards governance and social change is profound.

3.2 THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS IN THE KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ

Within the KRI, the system and the operational dynamics of the legislative process are both unique and transformative indicating the degree of self-rule as well as the incorporation into the wider governance structure of Iraq. The first stage of legislative development in the KRI proceeds, as a rule, from law drafting, which may be performed by a number of actors such as the government, the members of parliament (MP) in person, or special parliamentary committees, or CSOs [18]. The analysis and examination of such laws is performed by the technical parliamentary committees who evaluate the laws in terms of content, cost-benefit analysis, and regional objectives [19]. The final stage in the series after deliberations and minor amendments by the committee is presented to different sittings of the Kurdistan Parliament during which the Members of Parliament (MPs) discuss, propose amendments and vote for or against the motion. After this stage, the bill is only waiting for the signature of the KRI President in order to become effective [13].

After its adoption, the law is enforced by the respective bodies of government and agencies but in some cases may also be subject to certain processes with respect to compliance and impact assessment. In the KRI, the laws are subject to revisions and alterations based on the prevailing situations or the need that arises. The importance of the public during the legislative process is emphasized in this regard as NGOs and CSOs and even ordinary citizens are allowed to voice their concerns, attend public meetings and campaigns for or against the laws [20]. The KRI can formulate internally, appropriate laws and policies as per its legislative autonomy, however, this freedom calls for a compromise with the appropriate national legislative system of Iraq, which at times creates conflicts or problems [15].

3.3 EXISTING STUDIES ON NGO PARTICIPATION IN LAW-MAKING

The existing literature focuses on the role of NGOs in the art of law making in a manner that captures thoroughly the different roles played by such organizations in the law-making process and its contexts. [21] is also very significant as

they focus on transnational advocacy networks and introduce the concept of a 'boomerang pattern', which explains how domestic NGOs seeking policy changes pressure their governments by reaching out to other countries' NGOs instead. Such advances speak volumes about the influence that global networks of NGOs can have.

On the other hand, the study conducted by [13] delves into the role of civil society in processes of democratization in the Arab world with some emphasis placed on specific examples of the roles of NGOs in political change and law making. Moreover, it highlights the need to understand the regional aspects of NGO activity. In a similar manner, [19], focusing on KRI localized the issues by examining how local NGOs get involved in governance and the law-making process of a given area, emphasizing the political context in which their activities are situated. In addition, Pisani and Campbell (2010) [22] extend the research by assessing the role of HR NGOs on shaping military policies and human rights policies in times of war. Their study conveys the importance why this group of organizations is involved in human rights protection and law-making proceedings concerning conflicts. Together, these works contribute to a more comprehensive picture of the place of NGOs in the law-making process and the different challenges, strategies, and impacts that are experienced in relations to different contexts and policy areas within civil society and governance research. Nonetheless, there is a gap in empirical works that address how these differing approaches complement each other and what this means for policy-issues in different countries.

3.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: MODELS OF NGO INFLUENCE ON POLICY

Interest Group Theory is a useful concept in appreciating the effects of NGOs on policy processes. While this theory comes from American political history, it has been used to explain the advocacy activities crafted by many individuals or groups like Congress such as the NGOs [23]. The theory further classifies the approaches these groups use in to tactics as either 'insider' or 'outsider' [24]. Insider tactics include working with government agencies, usually in the form of negotiations and partnerships, while outsider tactics do not involve direct influence and include protests, campaigns and lobbying among others. Interest Group Theory is such a Western theory, until recently, it has been relevant even in Asia where it has taken a different shape to fit in several contexts [2]. KRI has seen the use of policy influence through both insider and outsider tactics by local NGOs especially in the areas of women's rights and anti-corruption. Such theories can be applied to the KRI considering the different approaches that were adopted by the NGOs in relation to the political environment which guided the legislative process [25]. Gender politics within Interest Group Theory, depends on levels of democracy and government transparency. These factors are considered important in the achievement of goals for interest groups [2].

Some scholars contend that Interest Group Theory is not always applicable for less developed countries as their democracies are still less matured and the regimes are less favorable. However, the theory's elasticity and the alignment of its strategies with those found in developing countries such as Tanzania makes it more generalizable [1]. Thus, this paper considers Interest Group Theory as an appropriate lens through which to study the engagement of NGOs in the formulation and implementation of anticorruption strategies in the KRI. Interest group theory also fits within the aims of the study and helps to understand the strategies adopted by NGOs to lobby for particular policies, and the reasons for their success or failure.

4 DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 NGO INVOLVEMENT IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

Collaborative Legislation

These NGOs, in the course of legislation within the KRI, as manifested in the passage of the Civil Society Law in 2011, were not imposed unilaterally but were a piece of legislation made through active, consultative processes. This points to the importance of partnerships and collaborative decision-making. According to Respondent 1, the very law was an end product of heavy engagement and coordination at the levels of NGOs, parliamentary representatives, and government officials. The hallmarks of this collaboration in the legislation process were the creation of a committee comprised of representatives from the KRI Presidential Office, parliament, government, NGOs, the UN, and ICNL. It created a forum for broad consultations to ensure that the different points of view found representation in the legislation. Scholarship supports a focus on inclusive decision-making as it shows that policies created in cooperation are more valid and efficient [26]. This collaborative mindset in the KRI represents a global trend toward good governance, a premium on participatory decision-making represented by such networks as the Open Government Partnership. Evidence from research has shown that policies designed in a participatory manner are more effective in their implementation [27]. In embracing this model, NGOs in the KRI have given much credibility and efficiency to the legislation produced, providing a nice example of how participatory governance can be promoted in various contexts.

Drafting and Enactment Process

This NGO multi-phase effort towards the creation of legislation in keeping with international standards is mirrored by the engagement of NGOs themselves in the drafting and enactment process of the Civil Society Law within the Kurdistan Region. Indeed, as Respondent 5 stated, NGO engagement in the drafting process began with an initial drafting process

whereby NGOs took seven years to craft a law that would meet global benchmarks to replace existing legislation. Their active participation in the various meetings of the parliamentary committee helped align the law with the heterogeneous needs and views of civil society. In the last stages of drafting of the bill and during its passage, NGOs continued their role and were able to advocate strategically to influence the parliamentary committees, thus significantly contributing to its passage. This, therefore, further affirms the need for the involvement of NGOs in the legislative process so that the developed laws align with the values carried by civil society and international standards. How deep the involvement was by the NGOs throughout the long process speaks to a broader literature on the role of civil society in legislative processes: indeed, sustained effort is oftentimes needed for grasping contextual intricacies involved in developing good legislation [28]. The case of the Civil Society Law in the KRI underlines the critical role NGOs may play, not only to fill in the gaps left by outdated legislation, but also with respect to setting new standards for legal frameworks.

Commitment to International Standards

A commitment to international standards was a guiding principle of NGOs in the drafting phase of the Civil Society Law. The need to substitute the existing laws with a framework meeting international standards was echoed by respondents 1, 4, and 9. NGOs sent parliamentary representatives on study tours to places such as Denmark, Estonia, and Lebanon. These tours were accordingly conducted not only to appreciate international best practices but also to ensure the Civil Society Law met and even outperformed the standards set forth by similar laws in other countries. Such an active attitude toward legislative development hardly reflects anything other than a forward-looking, globally conscious way of thinking aimed at positioning the KRI as a leader in civil society legislation within Iraq and beyond. This commitment stands in a line with the established literature on the need for setting national legislation in line with international standards, especially in the domain of civil society and governance. Carothers & de Gramont, 2013 [26] Conducting extensive comparative research and study tours, NGOs of the KRI far exceeded the commitment to just adhering to global best practices and demonstrated their commitment to excellence in lawmaking. It is this kind of approach that has created a robust structural legal framework that can easily be paralleled in other regions.

4.2 STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY NGOS

Lobbying and Advocacy

The strategic approaches within lobbying and advocacy activities started to take center stage in an effort to influence parliamentary decisions with respect to NGOs in the Kurdistan Region. In fact, according to Respondent 7, the direct influence of this targeted lobbying expressed the MPs' support for the Civil Society Law. This view also agrees with the research pointing to the strong influence of interest groups in general and lobbying in policy processing. Advocacy extended beyond direct lobbying to include broader campaigns that were supportive of the NGOs and the interests of the Civil Society Law. The NGOs positioned themselves as champions for the cause, helping to create an enabling environment for the proposed legislation. Carpenter, 2007 [29], stresses the need for direct contact with policy actors as one of the things necessary in influencing the attempts to impact policy outcomes. This case, therefore, creates a real scenario where NGOs operating in the KRI utilized both the lobbying and advocacy methods as powerful instruments in the attempt to drive changes through legislative processes. Adoption of both lobbying and advocacy strategies, would, in turn, insinuate a multi-faceted approach, as well as a balanced one, to influence policy interest group strategies, as contended by Berry, 2014 [30]. In applying these tools, NGOs active in the KRI proved flexible and capable of wielding favorable legislative outcomes.

Meetings with Lawmakers

Other dynamic activities included the facilitation of meetings between NGOs and lawmakers in the Kurdistan Region, which is quite an active attitude toward engaging decision-makers. These kinds of personal meetings enable substantial discussions in which the NGOs can show their concerns, sort out positions, and build ties with the parliamentary representatives. This also corresponds to the literature, which mentions that direct communication influences policy decisions [29]. What was peculiar and critical about these meetings was that they were personalized, which more than any other factor contributed to shaping the understanding of the Civil Society Law by lawmakers. This is because NGOs were meeting decision-makers directly and could explain the nuances of their proposals and build rapport to help create an enabling environment to make decisions together. This approach squares with the wider advocacy literature, in which it has been asserted that relationship-building and direct engagement are crucial to the successful influence of policy [31].

Study Tours and Comparative Analysis

Also, the NGOs in the KRI tackled the Belarusian issue by organizing, apart from everything else, study tours to countries like Denmark, Estonia, and Lebanon, seeing them as important elements of their advocacy. The aim was to demonstrate what other countries have achieved when it comes to civil society legislation so that some evidence would be available on how well the law in question would be enforced. This is consistent with the literature on policy transfer through the use of selective international examples that those links keep [32]. The role of such tours consisted first, in exposing those responsible for change to success stories of the civil society laws and second, in enhancing the compliance of the

envisaged law with the existing norms. In the spirit of such comparisons, the KRG's NGOs put forward a vigorous case for the Civil Society Law, one that embraced its universality and effective potential as well. In this relation, the strategy can be seen as a course of action that draws support from comparative analysis of policies and practices, and most significantly – international commerce – in informing policies such as this one [33]. It was during the last campaign that this new 'policy making' tool was put into practice by the NGOs in KRI aimed at the extensive involvement in the processes. Informal norms on actively engaging with the state were also observed.

4.3 TACTICAL APPROACHES: INSIDER AND OUTSIDER TACTICS

NGOs in the KRI used a variety of dynamic insider and outsider tactics in order to navigate the complexities of the legislative process. As indicated by Respondent 4, this was one of the key combinations that allowed them to address such complexities in the legislative landscape. By using active engagement in law drafting, meetings with lawmakers, collaboration with parliamentary committees, and insider tactics along formal channels, the NGOs could work directly with decision-makers. This shows strategic engagement that articulates an understanding of the detail of the legislative process and direct involvement in policymaking content [34]. Simultaneously, NGOs used outsider strategies of utilizing UN influence and lobbying to make up for obstacles and deficiencies of the system. Such strategic adaptability, therefore, points out the ability of NGOs to operate through both internal and external routes of influence towards increased influences on policymaking [35].

4.4 CHALLENGES LEADING TO OUTSIDER TACTICS

The challenges that NGOs faced in the Kurdistan Region, especially resistance on the part of government authorities, spurred a shift in strategy toward outsider tactics. According to respondent 9, government preferences for control over the legislative framework often generated resistance against alignment with international standards. In response, NGOs have strategically shifted to outsider tactics-developing remarkable resilience and adaptability. This strategic move also serves to align with wider discourses on the role of international actors in civil society support, especially in restrictive and challenging contexts [36]. The levers of influence utilized by NGOs regarding UN influence in the KRI are indeed emblematic of how local and international dynamics may come together to inform legislative results. In short, the NGOs of the KRI have strategically used insider and outsider tactics in this case to overcome the challenges presented by the legislature process. Insider tactics complement outsider tactics, such as direct engagement in law drafting, lobbying, and doing advocacy, to address obstacles and influence legislative outcomes with effectiveness.

4.5 COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Impact of Collaborative Efforts

Collaborative partnerships were a key determinant in the successes of NGOs in the Kurdistan Region, which helped to shape legislative outcomes in a way that contributed to a strategic approach to law development. Respondent 10 commented that "the coordination and cooperation of all types of entities—for example, NGOs, parliamentary representatives, government bodies, the UN, and the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL) were very instrumental in the successes of passing the Civil Society Law". In light of these collaborative efforts, it is manifest that the principles of collaborative governance, whereby it is stated that the making and shaping of effective policies are to be highly inclusive [37], are positively reflected. This successful application of collaborative approach in KRI is an evidence of how multi-stakeholder engagement can lead to well-crafted and broadly accepted policies.

Role of the United Nations and ICNL

Also, the contributions of Other Organizations like the United Nations (UN) and the ICNL were considerable for the coordination of these partnerships as well. Respondents 3, 6 and 9 stated that their involvement was significant to the legislative process of the Civil Society Law. With regard to the legislation process, the UN and ICNL, besides providing coordination, in fact were able to bring in the know-how and the resources that were necessary to carry out the whole process successfully [38]. Such collective efforts demonstrate what a multi-stakeholder approach can accomplish in practical terms – how such efforts can facilitate the enactment of laws. Therefore, the participation of such international organizations as UN and ICNL also indicates that the legislation process comprises both global and local, interacting factors.

4.6 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Comparing with Existing Laws

A strategic analysis of the new Civil Society Law and the existing one in comparison with other laws, especially those in Iraq, demonstrates the sophistication of the local NGOs in KRI. These findings corroborate the claim made in the policy diffusion literature which states that for a foreign policy to be embraced and put into practice by the people, there has to be some level of modification of the policy to fit the local contexts [39]. Such discussions about advantage/nature/ethics allowed NGOs to identify and also tackle local issues, which in turn made the proposals and their purposes more

acceptable. This level of strategic articulation with the existing laws prepared a Civil Society Law that was very specific to the particular characteristics presented by the KRI.

Showcasing Better Examples from Other Countries

The strategy adopted in the presentation by the national and regional NGOs in KRI of civil society laws from other countries was to create standards of success. This practice is consistent with the idea of policy benchmarking, whereby exemplary policies from other jurisdictions are used as guides to mimic [40]. It was easy, then, for the NGOs to weave such a belief into the narrative of the proposed Civil Society Law: that it is a progressive happy law since it adopts the best practices in the world. This indeed justifies the reference of policy benchmarking when it is concerned with the formulation of effective internal laws which is influenced by the existence of policies in other states which have been found to be the best.

4.7 INFLUENCE ON POLICY-MAKING

Impact on Legislation

NGOs in the KRI have emerged as influential actors in shaping policy-making, predominantly in the legislative domain. Their influence is evident in both the quality of enacted laws and the considerable role they played in shaping law provisions. The case in point is the enactment of the Civil Society Law (no.1, 2011). Described by Respondent 1 as an exemplar law, this underlines the positive outcome of NGO engagement in the legislative process. The concept of "good laws" is in line with scholarly views that underline the critical role of civil society in promoting and contributing to the creation of effective legislation [41].

Cooperation and Coordination

The successful passing of the Civil Society Law was held out as a consequence of a most commendable level of cooperation and coordination that involved diverse entities. As Respondent 5 noted, the collaboration involved NGOs, parliamentary representatives, government bodies, the UN, and the ICNL in a clear manifestation of principles for collaborative governance [37]. Such an inclusive approach served to make a thorough investigation into the perspectives, ensuring that the resulting law was well-informed and reflective of the diverse considerations brought forth by the involved entities. The collaboration among multi-stakeholders impacts the legislative process in a very positive way, which is very important in forming effective policies.

Effective Legislative Process

The influence of NGOs was not restricted to legislation but rather went further to improve fundamentally the effectiveness of the legislative process in the Kurdistan Region. Respondent 6 picked out a period when the legislative process was very strong and effective while passing the Civil Society Law. This is evidence of the deep positive impact of NGO engagement in improving legislative processes. A sound legislative procedure makes laws well drafted with great attention to detail concerning the needs and challenges of society. NGO participation aided the legislative system in its transparency and proper functioning. This is very essential for the acceptance and effective implementation of the laws by the public [42].

4.8 NGO ROLE

Shaping Law Provisions

NGOs have actively contributed to the text of certain provisions within laws in the Kurdistan Region, particularly at some very crucial times during the law-making process. Respondent 1 pointed out, for instance, that NGOs succeeded in pushing for an article of crucial importance to be included in the final version of the Civil Society Law, determining the budget allocation for NGOs. This case thus demonstrates the tangible impact of NGO engagement on the content and substance of legislation. Through effective communication and strategic advocacy measures, these NGOs managed to translate their concern into specific provisions within the law. This involvement is in line with a broader literature on the role of civil society in shaping legislation [43].

Influencing Parliamentary Decisions

It is the more strategic and proactive approaches to engagement that some NGOs also used to influence parliamentary decisions directly. Respondent 2 recalled that during the voting on the Civil Society Law, NGOs would directly send messages to parliament members by SMS for the purpose of highlighting the importance of an article. This real-time communication resulted in a formal request by parliament for an official letter from the NGOs, which shows that it was able to influence the decision-makers at crucial times of legislation making. This example evidences how NGO involvement in influencing legislation is dynamic and interactive.

4.9 STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

Organizing NGO Work

The reason why NGOs are keenly interested in the legislative process in KRI lies within the desire to be effectively organized. As stressed by Respondent 3, there is a dire need for a specific law that will regulate and guide the activities of the many NGOs operating in the region. This motivation is in line with wider trends within civil society, where legal frameworks are increasingly viewed as a requirement that provides structure and legitimation to NGOs' activities [44]. The very regulatory framework provided by the Civil Society Law is, therefore, seen as a tool that can bring order and coherence to NGOs' operations and ensure they are accountable and compliant with norms.

Guaranteeing Independence

A fundamental motivation driving NGO participation in pushing for the Civil Society Law is the guarantee of independence that the law offers. As indicated by Respondent 8, the law helps to ensure that NGOs are 'guaranteed to be independent'. A motivation oft-stated in line with global discourses on the need for the protection of the independence and autonomy of civil society organizations. The Civil Society Law is seen as a protective mechanism, one that would enable NGOs to run their missions without inappropriate outside interference.

Promoting Democracy

According to the NGOs in the Kurdistan Region, their role in advocating for legislation in the Civil Society Law is the greatest move towards giving birth to democracy in the region. It is justifiable by the fact that a well-regulated civil society is key to the democratic health of any country as mentioned by Diamond, 1999 [45]. Therefore, the NGOs are trying to call for a legal framework that should support and regulate their activities in an effort to contribute to the democratic fabric of the Kurdistan Region. This view is parallel to the broader commitment to strengthening democratic values, stepping up civic engagement, and bolstering the building of an encompassing democratic system.

Parliament Members' Views

The positive view of members of parliament about NGO involvement in the legislative process depicts a mutual recognition of the essential role that NGOs play in shaping effective policymaking. According to Respondent 1, members of the Civil Society committee not only recognized but also appreciated the input by NGOs in their respective work. With this positive perception, there will be a shift toward a more collaborative and inclusive decision-making process, where NGOs will not be hindered but seen as partners in the legislative journey. This sort of recognition maybe a step forward in continued cooperation and is a precedence to future legislative processes to adopt the diverse perspectives of civil society organizations.

Collaboration and Appreciation for Collaborative Work

The respect for the ability to work together as a team in the parliament speaks to the level of participation that is required from several players in the law-making process. The statement by Respondent 2 on the existence of groups in the parliament that are pro-collaboration and those who do not care about the society reveals the range of inner feelings that exist among the lawmakers. This group that is willing to work together is a welcome development in the provision of policies that are tolerant to the multiple dimensions that exist in the features and the work of the policy makers. This appreciation finds its place in the literature that promotes multi-actor aspects in policies achievements [46].

To summarize, this section highlights the active contribution of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) during the period of law making in the Kurdistan Region. In other words, thanks to the combined efforts of collaborative work, strategic action and ability to adapt to circumstances, these NGOs were in a position to contribute dramatically to the enactment of the Civil Society Law, as well as to the actual content of this law. Their participation indicates on concern with professional and civil society standards and ideals, as well as with the democracy and governance in the country. This part of the research also explains why it is useful to consider the interests and positions of stakeholders whereby using such information can be beneficial for NGOs in future legislative activities.

CONCLUSION

The involvement of NGOs in the development of laws in KRG forcing the grounds on which Law of Civil Society was enacted in 2011 has been quite eventful. From the above factual perspective, it is apparent that NGOs within this territory have made numerous attempts in one way or another to supranationalism the region and convinced. These patterns suggest that such organizations have been able to operate in this well-discussed sphere of politics by combining both pragmatic and principled approaches as they have devoted efforts both towards decision-making authorities as well as outside themselves where the need has arisen. Such strategic preparedness has been quite important in overcoming a number of challenges like defiance from the state apparatus, but also importantly, this is for the purpose of making sure the law developed is realistic to the situation but at the same time interrelated to the international standards.

Additionally, the study pointed out the necessity of joint governance which included NGOs, government agencies, and international bodies such as the United Nations and the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law who all contributed to the establishment of a legal framework that will encourage the growth of civil society. The Parliament and the Government worked efficiently and effectively in the process of formulating and passing the Civil Society Law, which has not only been an integral part of the KRI but has also provided a useful learning experience in other regions with similar governance issues. In this respect, this work also reaffirms the importance that indices have in the functioning of democracy, the accountability of governments, and the participatory nature of legislation. Further emphasizing the benefit of this approach in creating workable policies is the willingness by the Members of Parliament to embrace the participation of the NGOs in the process. Because of that, some spheres of activity of NGOs in the Kurdistan Region legislative process stand to illustrate how this institution of civil society may restrict or influence government effectively. The case of such activism devoted to the enactment of the Civil Society Law as a way to understand the role of NGOs in enhancing democracy and developing the legal order in extreme politics is extensive and quite impressive.

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