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On the Issues

Iraq in Books: Part II

By Michael Rubin

The following article is the second of two installments by Michael Rubin in AEI's On the Issues *series. The two articles originally appeared as a review essay in the Spring 2007 edition of* Middle Eastern Quarterly.

Those journalists who emphasize U.S. policymaker and Beltway intrigue exhibit subtle disdain for Iraqis and a condescending attitude toward their contributions. Thomas Ricks allows almost no Iraqi voice to permeate his narrative, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, while George Packer, author of *The Assassins' Gate*, ignores the role of the hundred-member Iraq Reconstruction and Development Council (IRDC). These Iraqi-American and Iraqi-European technicians worked alongside U.S. diplomats. They remained politically independent as they implanted reconstructed ministries, guided U.S. diplomats and other officials around Iraq, and facilitated outreach to local officials. They did their work without guards. Some IRDC members paid with their lives. Majeed Hanoun, for example, lost his while investigating smuggling in Basra.

While Packer can plead ignorance because he parachuted into Iraq only for brief trips, *Washington Post* Baghdad bureau chief Rajiv Chandrasekaran has no excuse. In his book *Imperial Life in the Emerald City*, he seeks to describe life in the Green Zone, the high-security enclave in which were based both the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and the interim Iraqi government. Chandrasekaran appears ignorant of the IRDC's existence.

He depicts the Green Zone as Oz, often detached from reality. This is true, but his thesis that CPA partisanship doomed reconstruction falls flat. To support the allegation that the CPA selected staff on the basis of politics rather than their competence, he offers a few unsubstantiated anecdotes and cites as examples a handful of allegedly unqualified staffers. But his methodology and fact-checking are poor. He provides no numbers to prove his thesis: was the CPA 90 percent, 19 percent, or 9 percent political? Chandrasekaran's narrative suggests 90 percent, but reality is closer to 9 percent.

Rather than seek hard data, Chandrasekaran appears to have culled blogs. He repeats—but does not credit to their source—allegations first aired on partisan websites.[1] For example, he writes that the CPA hired Simone Ledeen, the twenty-eight-year-old daughter of "neoconservative" Michael Ledeen, to manage Iraq's $13 billion budget, even though, he says, she had no background in accounting. But Simone Ledeen *did* have a background in accounting and a master's in business administration. She did not, however, manage the budget, but rather executed it, handling issues such as payroll. Ironically, Ledeen was one of the few CPA employees to leave the Green Zone regularly; many diplomats and other government employees preferred to remain inside the safe-zone. On several occasions she braved hostile fire. Questions about Chandrasekaran's reporting forced the *Washington Post* to issue corrections[2] after it had published excerpts.[3]

Chandrasekaran twists other evidence to fit his thesis as well. In a *Washington Post* op-ed, former

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CPA spokesman Dan Senor lists several examples of places where Chandrasekaran cherry-picked data and omitted that which undercut his thesis.[4] Chandrasekaran mentioned Ryan Crocker, a career diplomat and talented Arabist, only in passing, even though Chandrasekaran had once described him as CPA administrator L. Paul Bremer's "top political aide."[5] It was Crocker—not George W. Bush administration political appointees—who handpicked the CPA's political team. Nor, as Senor points out, does Chandrasekaran acknowledge that most CPA senior officials were career diplomats or military officers with long service under both Republican and Democratic administrations.

Chandrasekaran is not only careless with facts, but also imprecise with terms. He labels as neoconservatives not only Under Secretary of Defense Douglas Feith and Paul Wolfowitz, but also Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld. But neoconservatism prioritizes the importance of democracy within foreign policy. While analysts argue over Cheney's willingness to prioritize democracy—Ricks recalls how Cheney opposed Wolfowitz after the 1991 Iraq uprising—for Rumsfeld it was never a priority.

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The inaccuracies permeating *Imperial Life in the Emerald City* may result more from Chandrasekaran's ambition than his ignorance. With public disillusionment with the Iraq war high and the media searching for scapegoats, Chandrasekaran sought to capitalize on the public mood and deliver some. Politicized books sell. Integrity can take a back seat. In his essay in Timothy Carlson's *Embedded*, *New York Times* Baghdad correspondent John Burns alludes to an incident in which a correspondent from a competing paper sought favor with Saddam Hussein's Information Ministry by suggesting his own reporting more favorable to the Iraqi regime;[6] several journalists finger Chandrasekaran.[7]

The Iraqi Voice

Missing in many of accounts of the war in Iraq is an accurate representation of the Iraqi voice. Packer addresses this a bit, at least outside the palace walls. His chapter "Occupied Iraqis" introduces readers to the experiences of a young, female computer programmer at the University of Baghdad; a forensic specialist at the Baghdad morgue; an aide to young Shiite firebrand Muqtada al-Sadr; and a pseudonymous Kurdish translator. While well-written, Packer's sketches read as little more than random encounters. He did not invest the time in Iraq to explore the layers of complexity in the society. Freelance writer Steven Vincent, though, did. His book, *In the Red Zone: A Journey into the Soul of Iraq*, is a richer account, better identifying themes that continue to permeate Iraqi society. Vincent was murdered in Basra on August 2, 2005,[8] after breaking the story of Shiite death squads.[9] State Department refusal to grant his translator a visa has impeded publication of his unfinished manuscript about life in Basra.

Another rich reflection of the Iraqi voice is *Washington Post* correspondent Anthony Shadid's *Night Draws Near*. Time spent in Iraq before the war and fluency in Arabic allow Shadid to give context to his treatment of Iraqis. More modest than Packer about his ability to transmit Iraq's complexity, Shadid's cynicism about U.S. motivations distracts the reader. He describes the "folly" of trying to create a democracy in America's "brash, confident image," and by failing to challenge his own biases, conflates hypothesis with fact. This prevents him from asking tough questions and challenging his sources. For example, while his prewar Iraqi interlocutors disparaged U.S. motivations with one former Baathist saying, "I won't hide my feelings—the American invasion has nothing to do with democracy and human rights"—he never returns to examine whether the Iraqis celebrating Saddam's downfall included those cheerleading the regime just weeks before. *In the Red Zone* does a better job of exploring Iraqi survival strategies and how Iraqi opinions shift with time and circumstance. Still, Shadid does a far better job than Nir Rosen does in *In the Belly of the Green Bird: The Triumph of the Martyrs in Iraq*. An Arabic-speaking freelance journalist, Rosen's access to Iraqi jihadists seems to result most from his willingness to amplify uncritically their message.

Where Shadid does question, his analysis can be incisive. Shadid is almost alone in recognizing the importance of the U.S. decision to label itself an occupying power. "When the U.S. government shifted the legal jurisdiction of its presence in Iraq, it inadvertently answered a question that had long dominated Iraqi conversations before and during the war: Would it be an occupation or liberation? Even by American admission, it was now an occupation. And in an *ihtilal*, ambitions of

a common destiny, promises of collaboration, pledges of shared aims and goals are rendered impossible."[10]

While Shadid provides framing commentary elsewhere, here he does not question the U.S. debate surrounding acquiescence to UN demands to accept occupying power status, something the U.S. government had not done with regard to its missions in Somalia, Bosnia, or Kosovo. Despite such flaws, though, the sheer quantity of Shadid's anecdotes and interviews—meeting farmers, judges, and even firebrand cleric Sadr—makes *Night Draws Near* worthwhile.

With *The Foreigner's Gift*, Fouad Ajami, the marquee Middle East historian at Johns Hopkins University's School for Advanced International Studies, also contributes an incisive, less cynical account. Ajami, like Shadid, a Lebanese-American fluent in Arabic, traveled repeatedly to Iraq in the wake of its liberation. He brings the insight and depth of an academic and the smooth, eloquent prose of an accomplished writer.

Ajami summarizes the intellectual path for war in a straightforward, less tendentious manner than Packer. Ajami is more self-confident and less interested in winning the praise of peers than he is in providing an open, honest account. He contextualizes the Iraq campaign within the broader Middle East struggle among autocrats, theocrats, and democrats, and defends Iraqi National Congress leader Ahmad Chalabi against the often-spurious charges accepted blindly by other writers. When analyzing the Shiites, Ajami provides historical depth lacking in other accounts. He describes the resurgent Sunni-Shiite divide in observations subsequently popularized by Vali Nasr, a historian at the Naval Postgraduate School.[11]

The trust Ajami garnered among Iraqis is impressive. His access is unparalleled. He accompanies Iraqi politicians, observing interactions with constituents. He interviews the overseer of the shrine of Imam Ali in Najaf, the holiest shrine in Shiite Islam, and even receives an audience with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the most influential religious leader in Iraq.

"It's All about Me"

Many coalition officials returned from Iraq to write books about their experiences. These vary in quality but are often disappointing. Many authors assume authority not matched by experience, and others self-promote or promote narrow agendas. In *The End of Iraq,* Peter Galbraith, a former U.S. ambassador long active in Kurdish causes, falls into all of these traps: he uses his narrative to argue for Kurdish independence but does not reveal his affiliation with the Kurdish Regional Government.[12] He self-promotes, mentioning himself on eighty-nine different pages while ignoring the role of colleagues. He also takes often-dishonest partisan shots. He suggests, for example, that President Bush did not understand the difference between Sunnis and Shiites. Not only is this assertion undermined by the many briefings the president receives, but it is also not credible because Galbraith never had access to the president to substantiate such a charge. Other assertions appear untrue. While Galbraith writes that Wolfowitz refused him a meeting, Galbraith had many such meetings. The Pentagon has no record of Galbraith's unanswered requests. Neither could Galbraith, when asked by office staff members, substantiate his charge.

Despite their flaws, coalition-experience books, like those of embedded journalists, can both clarify and add color to events. The reality of Iraq and the challenges of reconstruction permeate throughout. The value of such books is often proportional to their author's rank and time spent in Iraq. Bremer's *My Year in Iraq* is more important than Larry Diamond's *Squandered Victory*, for example. Bremer spent thirteen months in Iraq, while Diamond, a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and founding co-editor of the *Journal of Democracy*, stayed only three months.

Diamond capitalized on public unease about the Iraq mission to pen *Squandered Victory*. It is, at best, a deeply flawed account, and, at worst, dishonest. Diamond's description of prewar planning is derivative and error-prone. Like Packer, he gets names, offices, and positions confused. That he spent only three months with the coalition, during which time he attended conferences outside Iraq, is apparent in his lack of insight into Iraqi politics and society.

Ego permeates. He came to Iraq as an academician with a theory and spent his time there lecturing Iraqis about it. "Since I had the greatest expertise in this area [of democratization], my recommendations were generally accepted," he explains. But they were not. Iraqis accustomed to a parade of U.S. officials often promised agreement, then, maintained their own course. On Iraq's constitutional debate, he appears unaware how Iraqi lawyers Salem Chalabi and Faisal Istrabadi ran circles around him.[13]

Few Iraqis would agree with Diamond's desire for greater UN involvement. Not only had UN officials

defrauded Iraq during the Oil-for-Food scandal, but many Iraqis also resented UN secretary general Kofi Annan's statement, aired repeatedly on state television: "Can I trust Saddam Hussein? I think I can do business with him."[14] Iraqi Kurds and Shiites also distrusted prominent UN officials such as Special Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi, who in his previous position as deputy Arab League secretary general had remained silent during Saddam's attacks on the Iraqi civilian population.

Diamond's belief that Iraqis heeded his wisdom reflects a larger problem that afflicted both U.S. civilian and military officials arriving in Iraq for limited tours. Iraqi society is complex. Coalition officials often inflated the importance or trustworthiness of contacts, perhaps believing them both to have greater insight and fewer ulterior motives than other Iraqis. While most of Diamond's interactions occurred within the Green Zone, he describes a meeting with Sayyid Farqad al-Qazwini, a cleric at the University of Hilla whom Diamond describes as an influential, pro-U.S. cleric. Diamond was unaware that Qazwini's collaboration with Saddam's regime kept him from membership on the Iraqi Governing Council. While Diamond praised Qazwini's democracy centers, these amounted to little. Qazwini contested Iraq's first election, draining the centers' budgets but managing only a few thousand votes, far fewer than needed to win a seat. Following the assassination of Fern Holland, a U.S. Agency for International Development contractor working with women in Iraq, the CPA transferred the women's centers she established to Qazwini, who proceeded to sell them and pocket the money, according to Iraqis living in Hilla.

The danger of drawing broad conclusions from short periods of time is also apparent in Diamond's description of the CPA operation in Hilla. "Because of [regional CPA director Michael] Gfoeller's extraordinary energy, vision, and organizational skills," he writes, "South Central . . . was the region under CPA administration that was furthest along in promotion of democracy." Subsequent audits found corruption among U.S. personnel in CPA–South Central to be rampant. According to Stuart W. Bowen Jr., the special inspector general for Iraq, "The reconstruction efforts during the CPA, in the South Central Region, around Hilla, failed."[15]

Still, there is value in *Squandered Victory*. Diamond highlights CPA dysfunction between provisional teams and Bremer's Baghdad operation. He raises alarm about the militias—and complains that Bremer ignored his warnings—but appears unaware that, for all his praise of CPA's Hilla operation, it was Gfoeller who, in defiance of CPA efforts to marginalize militias, first empowered them.

The View from the Provinces

Upon his return from Iraq, where he headed the CPA office in Al-Kut, British political officer Mark Etherington penned *Revolt on the Tigris*. Like *Squandered Victory*, it is deeply flawed, more an exercise in navel-gazing than illumination. Rather than shed much light on Al-Kut, its political figures, or the complexity of the local society, Etherington describes meetings with Bremer, senior British representative Sir Jeremy Greenstock, and other diplomats. Local color is limited to a few short paragraphs as Etherington hops from base to base. Overshadowing a one-paragraph overview of Al-Kut's demographics are thirty pages describing his compound, equipment, staff, e-mails he received, and his thoughts on the local Ukrainian detachment and military contractors. There is little insight into local politics.

Still, *Revolt on the Tigris* reflects the issues dominating CPA attention in late 2003 and early 2004. Etherington describes, albeit briefly, elections for municipal councilmen, highlighting the local governments so often ignored in broader, Baghdad-centered accounts. He also touches on gas-rationing and the rioting it sparked. His narrative culminates in the April 2004 revolt by Shiite populist Sadr. Here, though, Etherington disappoints. He offers no analysis of Sadr's flirtation with the political process nor the motivations and planning that underpinned Sadr's strategy. Like Phillips and Diamond, Etherington sacrifices accuracy for legacy. An official after-battle report from Al-Kut singles Etherington out for blame and incompetence.[16]

Etherington's compatriot Rory Stewart penned *The Prince of the Marshes*, a parallel, though far better, account of his time as "deputy governor" in both Al-Amara and Nasiriyah. Like Shadid, Stewart acknowledges the limits of personal experiences. But also like Shadid, Stewart's bias and sarcasm can at times detract from his narrative. He rails against "chino-wearing U.S. Republican appointees, fresh from the West Wing," but this stereotype appears lifted more from the editorial pages of British broadsheets than from reality.

He is more self-aware, however, than other writers. He addresses the struggle against the temptation to abuse power or drag adversaries through the mud. He considers Abu Hatim—a tribal leader who led local resistance against Saddam and whose English nickname Stewart

borrows for his book title, for example—to be a warlord, but bends over backward not to let their mutual antagonism interfere in policy decisions.

The Prince of the Marshes reflects coalition confusion and lack of preparation for the duties of governance. The British military had little interest in supporting the CPA or reconstruction. The desire of British troops to leave is a recurrent theme. Stewart acknowledges that, while in theory, he had near-absolute authority over more than 850,000 people, in reality, he was powerless should they ignore him.

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The problems he faced were serious. During his first formal audience, residents complained of political parties appropriating school property, farmers lacking seeds for the planting season, and a shortage of baby formula.

Stewart, perhaps because of linguistic ability or regional experience, is more attuned to nuance than Diamond or Etherington. He describes the tension between anti-Iranian tribal leaders such as Abu Hatim and pro-Iranian political leaders from the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq and Al-Dawa. While journalists such as David Rieff, Packer, and Ricks say that de-Baathification went too far, Stewart illustrates the complexity of the issue: many people in southern Iraq complained that it had not gone far enough.

Stewart's discussion of local governance is deeper than either Diamond's or Etherington's. He describes the difficulties of balancing local notables like Abu Hatim with pro-Iranian militias and followers of Sadr. Stewart describes Abu Hatim's anger at learning his desire to incorporate Islamists and Sadrists into local governance. The episode raises many important questions: Did British officials in southern Iraq, as Maj. Gen. David Petraeus did in northern Iraq, empower recalcitrant and antidemocratic forces? Did they have a choice? To what extent were U.S. and British officials in Baghdad to blame? "I wrote to Baghdad promoting my new plan for the council," Stewart recounts. "I did not say that the councils were dominated by unpopular mafia gangsters. . . . Instead I wrote a draft in bureaucratic prose talking about a 'more inclusive approach.'" He received no immediate response but later complains of interference by democracy experts whose experience was in Bosnia. While Stewart was unhappy with their interference, his comment counters the conventional wisdom spun by Rieff, Packer, and Chandrasekaran about the CPA's prioritization of political connections over expertise.

Stewart's subsequent narrative describes the province's descent into chaos. Sadrists murder the police chief and tension grows over the selection of his replacement. Violence forces fence sitters to declare loyalties. Aid projects flounder. Demonstrations grow shrill and corrupt clerics incite mobs to attack. Tensions erupt between Stewart, who seeks economic development, and Iraqi officials more interested in security. Less than six months after his arrival in Al-Amara, Stewart transfers to Nasiriyah. Here, his tenure does not last long. On June 28, 2004, the CPA transfers authority to an interim government. Stewart would not return for almost a year, at which time he found little record or memory of the development projects he initiated, a depressing end to his narrative, and one which forces questions about the worth not only of Stewart's efforts, but also of those of other coalition personnel and Iraqis.

Bremer's Take

Bremer's *My Year in Iraq* is perhaps the biggest disappointment in the autobiographical genre. While Bremer does not self-promote to the extent of Diamond or Galbraith, his chronicle provides little insight into his decision-making or vision during his thirteen-month tenure as the CPA's chief administrator. Bremer is gracious. He does not use his text to revenge animosities, instead ignoring those with whom he sparred. He neither acknowledges his rocky relationship with his military counterpart, Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, nor does Bremer discuss his interactions with other prominent generals.

Discussion of civilian advisors is no more incisive. Savvy subordinates realized that the key to success was to remain quiet in the face of problems. Governance team member Meghan O'Sullivan, who has since risen to become Bush's deputy national security advisor for Iraq and Afghanistan, would remove items that contradicted what Bremer wanted to hear from memos before forwarding them to his office. Bremer describes her and others who seconded his opinions as "personable," "cheerful," and "brilliant." Those, such as Jeremy Greenstock—a British special representative who worked alongside Bremer in Iraq—who challenged his

positions, barely appear in the narrative. His ego is apparent. He details media appearances, unaware of the antagonism they caused outside the Green Zone's cement blast walls.

Bremer addresses those analysts who charge that his decisions to dissolve the Iraqi army and pursue de-Baathification backfired. He is correct to note that the Iraqi army had disbanded itself weeks before his arrival. The trouble lay in their pension payments. Nor was de-Baathification as wide-ranging as some journalist assumed: it affected only 20,000 top officials and not most ministry technocrats.

Readers seeking reflection will be disappointed. Like Etherington, Bremer addresses Sadr's uprising, but does not reflect upon how Sadr's Jaysh al-Mahdi militia infiltrated so deep and wide beyond the notice of both provincial CPA teams and the Central Intelligence Agency. He derides the Governing Council as ineffective on eighteen different pages, yet their squabbling mirrored real political debate and was little different from that which occurred within the CPA. He describes events as they unfold but fails to posit either why they occurred or how policymakers might avoid their replication. Juxtaposing *The Prince of the Marshes* with *My Year in Iraq* illustrates perhaps more than any other combination of books the dysfunction of the CPA period as well as the gap between coalition policy and Iraqi reality.

Archaeology, Heritage, and Identity

Nothing dampened optimism about post-Saddam Iraq faster than looting. Satellites beamed images of Iraqis looting and burning buildings. Rumsfeld dismissed the initial reports of looting and on April 11, 2003, chided journalists. "The images you are seeing on television you are seeing over, and over, and over, and it's the same picture of some person walking out of some building with a vase, and you see it twenty times, and you think 'My goodness, were there that many vases?'" he asked. "Is it possible that there were that many vases in the whole country?"[17]

News that looters had sacked the Iraq Museum in Baghdad helped coalesce U.S. domestic opposition to the project in Iraq. On April 16, 2003, the American Schools of Oriental Research, a professional organization for U.S. archaeologists working in the Middle East, issued a statement declaring the museum looting to be "the most severe blow to cultural heritage in modern history, comparable to the sack of Constantinople, the burning of the library at Alexandria, the Vandal and Mogul [*sic*] invasions, and the ravages of the conquistadors."[18] While reports of the museum looting were exaggerated and much of the theft was an inside job,[19] the Iraq Museum incident looms large in two postwar books.

The investigation into the museum looting is the subject of Matthew Bogdanos's *Thieves of Baghdad*. Bogdanos, an assistant district attorney in Manhattan and a Marine reservist charged with leading the team investigating the incident, begins his narrative with the museum director, her AK-47–toting guards, and a host of other investigators as they move through the museum to catalogue missing artifacts. Ten days into their work, they entered the museum vault. While its steel doors had remained closed, looters had entered through a secret entrance, long since walled up. The thieves had left unmolested empty boxes and instead made a beeline for those crates that contained valuables. They had located a set of keys hidden behind a stack of otherwise untouched files. Their maneuvers were all in the dark; electricity was out at the time of the thefts. While journalists described the museum thefts as the result of looting and lawlessness, investigators determined it to be an inside job. And while the *New York Times* parroted the estimate of Adonia "Donny" George Youkhanna, the museum's director of research and spokesman, that looters had stolen 170,000 artifacts,[20] the real figure was closer to 17,000.

As the investigation continued, Bogdanos reflects on the nature of society and the impact it has had on the investigation. Iraqis seldom differentiate between hearsay and direct knowledge; rarely does anyone volunteer information. Imams at neighborhood mosques become allies. The museum staff itself is compartmentalized in ways far more complex than any official wire diagram could depict, and titles did not necessarily correlate to power. A handful of employees privy to contingency plans kept the status of certain artifacts secret from others who theoretically outranked them. While Youkhanna was interlocutor for journalists and Western scholars, he was out of the loop. Hana Abdul Khaliq, a staffer at the museum, projected terror throughout the complex not because of her management position, but rather because of her relationship to Muhammad Zimam Abd al-Razzaq al-Sadun, a senior Baath Party activist who was the four of spades (number 41) on the deck of cards of wanted regime officials.

While Bogdanos's work helped lead to the retrieval of many of the artifacts believed lost, navigating among Iraqis was not his only obstacle. He describes—tactfully omitting names—interference by CPA civilians and

State Department ambassadors who wanted personalized tours in ways that would have disrupted the crime scene. He also had to counter UN officials who, despite having accurate information available, made false statements about the artifacts looted.

Complementing Bogdanos's gripping prose are several pages of photographs, maps, and diagrams. Some of the photos also debunk the myth—popularized in academic circles—that the Pentagon discounted warnings about the museum's location and carelessly fired on it, in one case sending a tank round through a replica arch at the Children's Museum. While the ordinance damage is real, so too are the firing positions dug by the Iraqi army. Most U.S. academics have yet to correct the record.

Magnus Bernhardsson, a professor of history at Williams College, begins *Reclaiming a Plundered Past*, his study of archaeology and nation building in Iraq, with reference to the looting of the museum. But this provides only the backdrop to a much deeper investigation of the development of archaeology in Iraq and its role in Iraqi nationalism. While there are records of European travelers in Mesopotamia dating back almost a thousand years, Western archaeologists only began systematic work in what is now Iraq in the early nineteenth century. While the formation of Iraq ended the free export of artifacts, the famous British diplomat and Orientalist Gertrude Bell served as director of antiquities under the British mandate. Upon Iraqi independence in 1932, newspapers launched a campaign for Baghdad to reassert authority over Iraq's archaeological heritage. It did. Quickly, though, archaeology and politics became intertwined. Bernhardsson points out that between 1932 and 1941, and again between 1963 and 1968, Iraqi officials used archaeology to emphasize Iraq's pan-Arab and Islamic heritage. Between 1958 and 1963, and then under Saddam's rule, the government emphasized Iraq's pre-Islamic heritage, the most famous example of which was Saddam's 1982 decision to rebuild Babylon. While the postwar literature is full of instant experts, Bernhardsson is an authentic scholar. He bases his study not only on published Western sources, but, as a scholar comfortable with Arabic, also on an extensive array of Iraqi newspapers, pamphlets, and reports dating back to Iraq's independence. While Bernhardsson's prose is scholarly and dry, he does not bury his story in unnecessary jargon.

Nationalism and identity are not frozen in time. Readers wishing to understand the complexity and development of Iraqi nationalism should read Bernhardsson together with the study by Rutgers University professor Eric Davis, *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq*. Davis also taps a rich array of archival sources to track the rise and fall of the Iraqi sense of state. He not only elaborates on what books and authors the state promoted, but also on those who had their works banned. Unlike many instant experts who have written on Iraq, he does not conflate U.S. political commentary with Iraqi history. Instead he studies Iraq's political and popular cultures in their own right to trace the rise of popular Iraqi nationalism. Davis argues that the Iraqi sense of state peaked in the 1970s but declined as Saddam supplanted Baath Party control with family control.

While Arab-Kurdish strife is well-covered elsewhere, Davis's examination of sectarian divisions within the country is particularly useful given the problems now plaguing Iraq. Davis identifies the warning signs of sectarian struggle: Shiite demonstrations in Najaf and Karbala in 1977, tit-for-tat attacks in 1980, and the rise of the Islamist Dawa Party while also showing why Iraqi Shiites remained unimpressed with the Iranian model of theocracy. What has changed between 1980 and now would be a worthy topic for a sequel.

Davis's chapter on Iraqi political and intellectual cultures in the wake of the Kuwait war is also important. He addresses both new institutions of control as well as Saddam's efforts to alter Iraqi culture. While the Baath Party once declared its intention to eradicate tribalism, Saddam reemphasized tribalism in the 1990s in order to reassert control over the Shiite south. Saddam began to ask officers their tribal surnames during visits to military bases. Davis also surveys Saddam's own articles and writings during this period. While hindsight is always 20/20, Davis exposes the roots of the trends about which other authors—Columbia University professor Rashid Khalidi, for example[21]—appear ignorant.

Themes for the Future

What went wrong is likely to dominate discussion of Iraq for years to come. The first draft of history is seldom correct. Already, the narrative shows fluidity as officials and experts delve deeper into actions of the many actors and decision-makers. Still, the process is far from complete. There has been little study of decision-making in the National Security Council. Many writers focus on the State versus Defense Department rivalry, but few explore decisions made by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, her deputy and current national security advisor Stephen Hadley, senior directors Zalmay Khalilzad and Elliott

Abrams, and later deputy national security advisor Robert Blackwill. There is little reason why their minutes, discussions, and notes should remain classified.

Also lacking in the narrative has been exploration of the CIA's role. This is crucial because of the CIA's ability to leverage funding into policy. The State Department and Pentagon could struggle for months to reach consensus, but so long as the CIA could ply Iraqis with money, their agreement would be moot. In no case was this more apparent than with the prewar and immediate post-liberation maneuverings of Gen. Nizar al-Khazraji and Ayad Allawi, both of whom received logistic and financial support to consolidate their positions in defiance of interagency consensus.

There has been little exploration of other watershed events. Very little is known about the assassination of Iraqi cleric Abdul Majid al-Khoei on April 9, 2003, an act of violence that propelled Sadr into the limelight. While Bing West touches on the issue, there has been little examination of the repeated decisions not to arrest Sadr, nor has there been much treatment of U.S. reconstruction policy, although corruption and mismanagement were rampant. In *Iraq, Inc.*, Pratap Chatterjee, program director of CorpWatch, takes a stab at exploration of corruption and contracting, but his polemics and questionable source treatment undercut his study. There is much room for dispassionate analysis should enterprising financial reporters and forensic accountants choose to do so.

Captured Iraqi documents should also serve as needed correctives. Despite Davis's excellent account, Iraqi history remains a virtual black hole. Little is known of internal deliberations or—beyond Iraqi Kurdistan—of local politics and center-periphery relations. Apart from literature questioning the efficacy or morality of sanctions, the release of such documents will enable discussion of Iraq's economy.

Much has been written about Iraq, but the best may be yet to come.

Notes

1. Joshua Micah Marshall, Laura Rozen, and Colin Soloway,"*The Washington Monthly*'s Who's Who," *The Washington Monthly*, December 2003, available at www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2003/0312.whoswho.html.

2. "Corrections," *Washington Post*, September 20, 2006.

3. Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "Ties to GOP Trumped Know-How among Staff Sent to Rebuild Iraq," *Washington Post*, September 17, 2006.

4. Dan Senor, "The Realities of Trying to Rebuild Iraq," *Washington Post*, October 10, 2006.

5. Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "Former Exiles Given Majority on Iraqi Council," *Washington Post*, July 13, 2003.

6. John Burns, "The Moral Compass of Iraq," in *Embedded*, ed. Bill Katovsky and Timothy Carlson (Guilford, CT: Lyons Press, 2003), 155–63.

7. See also the allusion to the incident in *City Journal*, Autumn 2003.

8. Edward Won, "U.S. Journalist Who Wrote about Police Corruption Is Abducted and Killed in Basra," *New York Times*, August 4, 2005.

9. Steven Vincent, "Switched Off in Basra," *New York Times*, July 31, 2005.

10. Anthony Shadid, *Night Draws Near* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2005), 198.

11. Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006).

12. See "Ambassador Peter Galbraith, Adviser to the Kurdistan Regional Government," Kurdistan Development Corporation, available at www.theotheriraq.com/bio_peter.html (accessed January 11, 2007).

13. Yochi J. Dreazen, *Wall Street Journal*, April 12, 2004.

14. Kofi Annan, "Remarks on the Agreement between the Secretary-General and the Iraqi Government on Weapons Inspections" (remarks, United Nations, New York, February 24, 1998).

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