
Examining Iraq's Past, Present and Future: A Public Policy and Administrative Perspective

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This volume and issue continues the public policy analysis of the Middle East found in volume 9 of this journal as well as of U. S. public policy in Iraq following the September 11, 2001, attacks. Alexander Dawoody, in "Governance and the Shiite Political Movement in Iraq," leads off the issue with his historical examination of Iraq's political-religious history. According to Dawoody, the Sunni-Shiite conflict has existed in Iraq since the initial domination by the Umayyad caliphate in 661. Dawoody further states that the Sunni-Shiite conflict is one not over religious differences but rather an economic-political struggle among these sects.

In addition, Abbas and Nufrio, in "Post War Iraq: Understanding and Shaping the Forces of Positive Change," illustrate how the Sunni-Shiite struggle continues to frustrate attempts to mold Iraq into a unified political community. Thus far, Sunni insurgents have increased their terrorist attacks on Shiite cities and towns, and several thousand Iraqi civilians have been killed.

Both Dawoody and Abbas and Nufrio trace Iraq's history from the seventh political revolt by the Shiites in 1920 through the remainder of the twentieth century when Sunni-Arabs took advantage of new economic and educational opportunities. Ultimately, the Sunnis eliminated from the political process both Shiites and other Iraqi ethnic groups.

These authors furthermore document how the Iraqi nation state in the twentieth century emerged to preserve the political and economic power of the Sunnis. In contrast, to Abbas and Nufrio, the U.S.-sponsored invasion ultimately provided the pacifist elements in the Shiite community with an opportunity to rid Iraq of both Sunni rule and the associated decades of oppression.

Nevertheless, all authors believe that, as a political movement, the Shiites are far from either being homogeneous nor unified. In the long run, it remains to be seen if the Shiites can build alliances among the diverse Shiite political stakeholders; without such cooperation, the Shiites will be unable a. to govern; b. to achieve a real “consensus” in the national assembly; and, c. to ratify a new constitution that is seen as legitimate by all Iraqis.

To Abbas and Nufrio, the ultimate goal in Iraq rests on the success of the Shiite leadership in building networks of cooperation, genuine equity and justice. At the same time, the Shiites must rid Iraq of the dangerous “insurgents” who not only threaten Iraq’s future but also U.S. security in the region.