

Eric Herring, Glen Rangwala. *Iraq in Fragments: The Occupation and Its Legacy.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006. 354 pp. \$27.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8014-4457-9.



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The U.S. Occupation of Iraq

Just in the last two years, the list of books on the U.S. led invasion and occupation of Iraq has grown by leaps and bounds.[1] They include George Packer's *The Assassin's Gate: America in Iraq* (2005), Michael R. Gordon's and Bernard E. Trainor's *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (2006), Rajiv Chandrasekaran's *Imperial Life in the Emerald Green City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone* (2006), Thomas E. Ricks's *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (2006), L. Paul Bremer's and Malcom McConnell's *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope* (2006), and Bob Woodward's *State of Denial: Bush at War, Part 3* (2006), to name but the most popular.

With the American occupation of Iraq in its fifth year, two British lecturers in politics, from the universities of Bristol and Cambridge respectively, have contributed their interpretation of events in Iraq. Eric Herring and Glen Rangwala's *Iraq in Fragments* is an attempt to "describe and explain the U.S. state-building project and its legacy in the context of local, regional and global politics" (p.1). They based their analysis on extensive study of secondary sources such as published U.S. government papers and reports; British, American, and Arabic newspaper articles; think tank papers and databases; and interviews with a few "anonymous" primary sources who

previously worked for Ambassador Paul Bremer's Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA).

Herring and Rangwala divided the book into five chapters followed by a conclusion. A lengthy introductory chapter acquaints the reader with their basic concepts of analysis. The second chapter, entitled "The State," deals with the "fragmentation of political authority." In it, the authors argue that the CPA failed in its attempt to build a strong central government for Iraq because it was not prepared to relinquish control of state affairs to an indigenous government (p. 83). The unintended consequence of the CPA holding on too tightly was a fragmentation of power among different groups at the center and along the periphery.

In the next chapter on "Governance" the authors expand upon their fragmentation of power theory. They contend that the structure of the CPA exacerbated the centrifugal trend in Iraqi politics. The authority's regional offices acted independently of the central office in Baghdad and formed alliances with local tribes. As evidence the authors cite retroactive recognitions that the CPA granted for the appointments (by tribal leaders) of governors and police chiefs in Al-Anbar, Karbala, and Basra (p. 113). In the absence of a strong political center, Herring and Rangwala assert that patrimonial, neo-patrimonial, sectarian, and party relationship bonds

further accelerated the devolution of political power not only to regions and tribes, but also to religious leaders and political parties.

In chapter 4, the authors tackle the thorny topic of insurgency and counterinsurgency. According to their analysis, the insurgency is made up of a mixture of Baathist, terrorist, and sectarian groups that share a common goal of wrecking U.S. attempts at state building (p. 170). Responding to the insurgents' challenge, the Coalition forces had a choice between coercion and what Herring and Rangwala termed "legitimation." The Coalition chose coercion and alienated the Iraqi civilian population in the process. While the authors acknowledge that U.S. Army doctrine writers learned from mistakes and incorporated the lessons in a new counterinsurgency manual, they state that the Army still defaults to employing coercion in response to attacks (p. 178). In asserting that opinion, the authors have effectively dismissed any notion that the Iraqi Interim Government can exert meaningful influence over coalition military operations.

The volume's fifth chapter deals with the reconstruction of the Iraqi economy. Here, as in the chapter on state building, the authors opine that the United States was unwilling to cede control to the Iraqis. Hence, large U.S. corporations received the majority of lucrative rebuilding contracts and American dominated reconstruction institutions ensured that that practice continued (pp. 218-222). Unfortunately, the Iraqi business communities' ability to realistically participate (considering that nation's culture of graft and corruption, the physical damage caused by the war, and a decade of economic sanctions) is not adequately examined. The authors point out, however, that U.S. policies designed to open up the Iraqi economy and integrate it into the global market at least partially succeeded (p. 234). Iraq's integration into "in-

formal" global trading of weapons, oil, pornography, and illegal drugs, on the other hand, was quite complete (p. 216).

In the concluding chapter, Herring and Rangwala offer their analysis of the legacy of the occupation. They assess it by measuring the occupation's impact on the Iraqi state's functional scope, institutional capacity, domestic and international autonomy, identity, and coherence. The authors make a case that, while Coalition revived enough of the state's functions to keep it from failing, the occupation's principal legacy in Iraq is the fragmentation of political authority.

Herring and Rangwala's *Iraq in Fragments* differs substantially from the previously mentioned publications about Iraq because it is strictly an analysis of the U.S. led occupation. As such, the book is best suited for readers who are already familiar with the events in Iraq and who are interested in how political scientists categorize and assess them. The authors attempt to do both with varying degrees of success. The analytical concepts they introduce for measuring the impact of the occupation on the state and on governance allow readers to thread their way through a bewildering labyrinth of tribal loyalties, familial bonds, political parties, foreign influences, and patrimonial relationships. By comparison, the chapters on the insurgency and the economy are ineffective and at times confusing. On the whole, I found the book thought provoking and worth reading.

Note

[1]. The views expressed in this review are solely those of the author. They do not necessarily reflect official positions or the views of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency or the Department of Defense.

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