

Overview: Public Policy and Administrative Issues in the Middle East: Examining Iraq and Beyond

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This symposium seeks to develop a new framework for understanding the September 11 “attacks” and ensuing government public policy in Iraq and the Middle East. When the “call for papers” went out we challenged the public policy and administration community to interpret the reasons and public policy implications related to the September 11 “attacks”. Not since Franklin Roosevelt’s “New Deal” have the fields of public policy and administration experienced a dynamic environment of change. Policy change (e.g. swift military action in Afghanistan and Iraq, significant changes in foreign alliances (Pakistan) and implementation of the U.S. Patriot Act) and administrative change (e.g. the massive reorganization of the Department of Homeland Security) have occurred at unprecedented speed.

To this end we need to understand the real Pre and Post September 11 administration and public policies? How can we assess the current and future courses of U.S. action in Iraq and the Middle East? As Sharrif points out in his essay, there is a need to derive “real meanings” from these events. This symposium makes such an attempt. There are many diverse, yet conflicting views presented in these essays.

The symposium begins with Alkatry’s analysis of the history and the political/cultural dynamics surrounding the Middle East. He documents the on-going tension between “East and West” in the Middle East during the 20th century.

Soon after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Great Britain and France began “carving up” state boundaries while installing non-democratic regimes (e.g. Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon and Syria). Within this same time period Great Britain could not resolve the Jewish-Arab conflict over the disputed lands in Palestine. According to Alkatry “meddling” and “broken promises” in the Middle East has created a steadfast betrayal and mis-trust felt by Arab peoples. He believes U.S. policy (beginning in the

1950s) has only exacerbated this betrayal and mistrust. If Alkatry is correct in his assessment, Public Administration must find ways to remove the systematic and behavioral barriers, which heighten these conflicts.

Ali and Camp offer a different historical explanation. They document centuries of armed conflict within the region and between the three major religions. According to Ali and Camp, the Christian, Judaism and Muslim religions have engaged in “jihad, impairing constructive dialogue among civilizations.

This symposium also examines the different root causes of the September 11 attacks. For example Ali and Camp examine the derivation and meaning of “jihad”. They analyze “jihad” in light of Bin Ladin’s actions. Nufrio, on the other hand, uses numerous Post September materials to explain the causes of this hideous attack. He explains the political, economic and “clash of culture” causes of the attacks. Alkatry cites identical reasons in his essay.

Following the September 11 attacks, George W. Bush declared an immediate war on terrorism. Within weeks, the U.S. invaded Afghanistan and removed the Taliban regime that actively supported Bin Laden. As the “war on terrorism” grew, U.S. policy soon extended beyond Afghanistan. In the March 2003, U.S. forces invaded and toppled the regime of Sadaam Hussein. According to Nufrio, the Iraqi invasion speaks clearly to the Bush Administration’s goal of “stabilizing” the Middle east via democratic principles? In light of the controversy surrounding the real existence of “weapons of mass destruction” (WMD) we now must ask: would the Bush Administration have obtained domestic and allied support if the goal of “stability through democracy” replaced the WMD argument?

In contrast to Nufrio, Shariff defines U.S. policy as one of “domination” in language, action, and temperament. The “dominant view” links terrorism to religion. It also supports swift military action against terrorism. Ali and Camp warn that this view does affect public perception of events and public policy (it “adds another layer of beliefs about the Muslim world”). Shariff criticizes U.S. policy makers for not seeking a greater understanding of terrorist motivation. In contrast, Ali and Camp see current U.S. policy as an “instrument of religion”. The goal of U.S. policy is to establish a new world order, and Middle East domination.

According to Ali and Camp this policy will only fuel “jihad”, placing the region into a state of “perpetual” conflict.

Nufrio sees economic conditions at the center of Muslim unrest in the Middle East. Public Administration must ask: how can economic conditions change in the Middle East? and, Can globalization play a role in its future? Shariff says that globalization is misunderstood in the Middle East. Lind and Otenyo say Iraq cannot ignore its role in the growing global economic community. They warn that the policy assumptions in building a post-war Iraq (as done in Japan) may be naive. According to Lind and Otenyo , the presence of numerous Muslim factions in Iraq requires a different approach. They also question whether the U.S. can transfer western management systems on a predominately Muslim culture. Nufrio, on the other hand, says that the road to economic stability in the Middle East must extend beyond Iraq. The oil rich countries of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia must find ways to help their poorer regional neighbors. Given this issue, public administration must help identify the barriers to intra-state economic cooperation.

Regarding public administration’s role in this post-September 11 era, Shariff criticizes public administration for turning this “dramatic national event with monumental consequences into minutia of administrative details”. Public administration (PA) places too much emphasis on “implementation” during the post-September 11 period. According to Shariff, PA must seek “deeper meanings” on policy. It must question the “dominant view” and important civil rights issues.

Lind and Otenyo raise important public administration questions in building post-war Iraq. Public administration concepts are not readily transferable to Muslim based societies. In contrast, Vigoda-Gadot believes that “collaboration theory” can help build modern Middle East societies. Vigoda-Gadot believes that citizen trust and cooperation can foster such development. He also believes these approaches may cross religious and cultural borders in the Middle East.

Alkartry, Nufrio, Vigoda-Gadot, Lind and Otenyo address the search for policy solutions in the Middle East. Alkartry warns U.S. policy makers of the difficulty in slowing the rapid growth of political Islam. Policy makers must recognize that political Islam is inseparable from

politics and religion. Lind and Otenyo say Iraq cannot ignore its role in the growing global economic community. There is a need for greater third party involvement (e.g. the Agency for International Development) in post-war Iraq. Finally Nufrio and Vigoda-Gadot offer hope for greater collaboration between East and West. Nufrio says that the West must find ways to work collaboratively with moderate political Islam. Vigoda-Gadot believes that such relationships can be forged around concrete initiatives (e.g. urban renewal) using principles and strategies of collaboration.

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