

U.S. Policy in Post-Saddam Iraq: Lessons from the British Experience

by [Michael Eisenstadt \(/experts/michael-eisenstadt\)](/experts/michael-eisenstadt)

Apr 1, 2003

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Michael Eisenstadt \(/experts/michael-eisenstadt\)](/experts/michael-eisenstadt)

Michael Eisenstadt is the Kahn Senior Fellow and director of The Washington Institute's Military and Security Studies Program.



In-Depth Reports

INTRODUCTION

In launching Operation Iraqi Freedom, the United States embarks on a major undertaking, one that may well involve the creation of a new Iraqi government and a significant, long-term commitment of resources and personnel. This endeavor bears similarities to the British experience in Iraq during the first half of the twentieth century. Beginning with a military occupation during World War I, Britain built a new Iraqi state and attempted to shape its development over the next several decades, establishing a constitutional monarchy that was ostensibly democratic yet fundamentally structured to serve British interests.

Clearly, much has changed in the period since the British era of Iraqi history. Nevertheless, Britain's experience shares certain striking parallels with U.S. involvement in Iraq. U.S. policymakers and planners can benefit from examining the context and dynamics of that experience, analyzing the dilemmas of foreign intervention and other issues faced by Britain as it laid the foundations for the modern Iraqi state.

The chapters that follow offer a detailed assessment of the British experience, addressing the various political, historical, cultural, economic, and military factors that both characterized and determined the outcome of Britain's involvement in Iraq. Along the way, the authors highlight numerous challenges that the United States may have to confront during its own intervention in Iraq, such as balancing traditional U.S. interests in regional stability with Washington's newly articulated commitment to democratic transformation; maximizing postwar administrative effectiveness in Iraq while minimizing the U.S. military presence; decentralizing Iraqi political power and governance; creating a broad-based postwar government that incorporates representatives of all major ethnic and religious groups; avoiding actions that might promote the retribalization of Iraqi society; reorganizing the Iraqi military and reeducating the Iraqi officer corps; redefining the relationship between the Iraqi military and government; and addressing Iraqi concerns regarding key regional issues, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the war on terrorism.

Hopefully, this volume will serve as a useful reference, providing insights into Iraq's past that may help in laying a solid

foundation for the country's future.

- 4 Pages

RECOMMENDED



BRIEF ANALYSIS

[Ongoing Debates over Water and Electricity Privatization in Morocco](#)

May 1, 2024



Soufiane Elgoumri

(/policy-analysis/ongoing-debates-over-water-and-electricity-privatization-morocco)



ARTICLES & TESTIMONY

[Why Israel Should Declare a Unilateral Cease-Fire in Gaza](#)

May 1, 2024



Dennis Ross,
David Makovsky

(/policy-analysis/why-israel-should-declare-unilateral-cease-fire-gaza)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

[Understanding the IRGC's Past, Present, and Future Use of Syrian Tribal Militias](#)

Apr 30, 2024



TOPICS

[Arab & Islamic Politics \(/policy-analysis/arab-islamic-politics\)](/policy-analysis/arab-islamic-politics)

[Military & Security \(/policy-analysis/military-security\)](/policy-analysis/military-security)

[U.S. Policy \(/policy-analysis/us-policy\)](/policy-analysis/us-policy)

REGIONS & COUNTRIES

[Iraq \(/policy-analysis/iraq\)](/policy-analysis/iraq)