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In *The Iraqi Federation: Origin, Operation and Significance*, Farah Shakir closely examines the significance of Iraq's "federal experiment" and the multi-dimensional implications of the federated Iraqi state. This insightful and well-written book explores why and how Iraq became a federal state and analyzes how the process of its formation currently influences the operation of the Iraqi federal system. "The significance of Iraq's federal democratic experiment for the regional states in the Middle East," Shakir contends, "lies not only in the fact that it is unprecedented in the region but also in its potential political, democratic and social impact on the regional states" (Shakir, 2017, p. 162). The uniqueness of this work is that it does not simply view Iraq as post-conflict state, as much of the literature about the Iraqi state does, but that it deeply considers the origins and formation of federations while focusing attention on the inadequacies of classic federal theory. Shakir argues that previous approaches taken by various federal theorists, particularly William H. Riker's bargain theory, are insufficient to explain the formation and contemporary operation of the Iraqi federation. The author further contends that a federal Iraq must be understood in the context of its unique history and culture and be considered through the context of the new federal models, like the Russian Federation or that of Bosnia Herzegovina. In turn, Shakir's work questions whether federalism will find fertile ground in Iraq and whether the Iraqis will be able to provide the necessary commitment to federalization and democratization. This highly detailed case study draws attention to the importance of effective political leadership and implicates Iraqi leadership as being partly responsible for the instability that has characterized Iraqi politics (Shakir, 2017, p. 159). Shakir concludes with the revelation that federalism, in the Iraqi model, should be understood as a process, rather than a fixed constitutional structure. Said another way, it would be fruitful to understand federalism in Iraq not only as a continuous process utilized to manage internal conflict, maintain territorial integrity and diversity but also as a political ideology intended to build a political system with particular features (Shakir, 2017, p. 173).

"The main objective of the work," Farah Shakir explains, "is to investigate the origin, operation and significance of the Iraqi Federation from the standpoint of classic federal theory and practice. It seeks to explore why and how Iraq became federal in the light of the classic explanation" (Shakir, 2017, p. 1). Building upon her doctoral work conducted at the University of Kent and informed by her own deep, personal experience as an Iraqi citizen, Shakir has presented the world with a thoughtful and even-handed account of today's federal Iraq that is illuminating and engaging. Specific research for the book, including interviews with elite contemporary political players, was conducted in Iraq between 2010 and 2014 and is presented in a manner that makes understanding contemporary Iraq accessible for the specialist and non-specialist alike.

Chapter 1 addresses the historical context of state-building and the national integration processes of the modern state of Iraq in 1921, which paved the way for the ultimate adoption of federalism in Iraq. Chapter 2 develops the book's main argument, namely that classic federal theory is inadequate to fully explain the formation of the Iraqi federation. Considering the work of federal theorists William P. Maddox, Kenneth C. Wheare, Ronald L. Watts, and William H. Riker, Shakir demonstrates that there is a need to revise current federal theory in the light of new federal models, of which Iraq is the most recent. In Chapter 3, Shakir begins by grounding her discussion in the current socio-economic and political realities of twenty-first-century Iraq and

identifies those objective, observable conditions, specific to Iraq, that can also be found in classic federal theory. She then concludes Chapter 3 by cataloguing the characteristics and conditions that are unique to the formation of the Iraqi Federation. Chapter 4 takes the reader deeper into the question of how Iraq became a federal state, through the lens of William H. Riker's federal bargain theory. This chapter demonstrates how the political bargain controlled the political process, leading to a federal political process. Chapters 5 and 6 examine the 'operation' of the Iraqi Federation, by first investigating the constitutional and then the institutional structures of the federation. Chapter 5 discusses the actors that participated in the constitutional process, their specific aims, and the motives behind these aims. The chapter further considers the circumstances surrounding the constitutional process, explains the constitution-making process through its main three phases, and discusses the combined results of the constitutional process that produced a particular constitutional structure. Chapter 6 aims to answer the question of whether or not the Iraqi federal system is fully functioning and whether Iraq is a fully formed federal state. In truly astounding detail, Chapters 5 and 6 examine the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL), the permanent constitution, and the first major constitutional amendment as well as the origin of the federal institutional design; the constituent units of the Iraqi Federation and their vertical and horizontal relationships; and the legislative, executive, and judicial institutions, including their powers and intergovernmental relationships, confirming the author's argument that the Iraqi Federation is a bargain and demonstrating a situation in which the conditions of success are absent. Finally, Chapter 7 assesses the significance of the Iraqi federation from the standpoint of six aspects of the federal experiment, including historical legacies, political leadership, regional and international significance, theoretical significance, significance of understanding federalism, and comparative significance. The chapter explains the multidimensional theoretical and practical significance of the study of the Iraqi federal experiment and encourages us to think comparatively about the future of new federal models elsewhere in the Middle East and in the world.

Scholarship on Iraq has suffered from a lack of historical and humanistic perspective (Damluji, 2015), and many accounts succeed in further obscuring our perspective to a shallow and often lopsided view. As scholars, we are left with a critical need for greater information on the history, culture, and social aspects of groups within the Iraqi state and how they have contributed to nation-building. "As a child of war, a teenager of war and a youth and mother of war," says Shakir, "my concern was how to live peacefully and how to build a stable and prosperous Iraq. Therefore, I have spent the last twenty years focusing on studying politics with the aim of finding answers to Iraq's problem" (Shakir, 2017, viii). Farah Shakir's commitment and rigor in the study of the federal Iraq has presented us with considerable new insights and has produced an impressive body of research and analysis in *The Iraqi Federation: Origin, Operation and Significance*. Shakir has filled an urgent need to excavate this knowledge from current histories within Iraq, and this text will most certainly form an essential component to understanding Iraq, its significance in the Middle East, and its relations in the world for some time to come.

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