
PREFACE

Iraq Decoded is a unique summary and analysis of the war and events in Iraq in that it combines western sentiments and views with a description of the local politics and triggers affecting events. This approach allows the reader to understand the various political and cultural elements that comprise the driving forces behind the apparent chaos in Iraq. “Iraq Decoded” is written by an American who still can call himself a native of that region. By contrast, most available books about Iraq are composed either from a purely western perspective or from the perspective of local writers with a less-than-complete understanding of American ideology. This native writer is a Shiite Iranian from that country’s Arab minority who has unique ethnic and cultural links to Iraq. Dr. Fazeli also had the experience of living in Kuwait, a Sunni country and a melting pot of Middle Eastern migrant workers. This complex local exposure and experience is enhanced by a decade of living in Europe and over 12 years of being immersed in the American culture. This book is a reflection of the views of this self-proclaimed Westerner who happened to observe and witness first-hand many of the critical events in the Middle East during the past few decades.

Despite his current distance from the Middle East, Dr. Fazeli is constantly reminded of his continued links to the region and how his life is still touched by events in Iraq. In April of 2007, as he finished writing this book, he was astonished to realize that his aunt in Iran had traveled to Iraq on a pilgrimage to the Ali shrine in Najaf. She wanted to go, so she went. She is in her 70s. No one in her household seemed to lose sleep over the fact that it is still a tad risky to be traveling to Iraq. Dr. Fazeli had to remind himself that different standards apply there; for his aunt, her action was neither strange nor risky. She believed that if it was her time to die, so be it: she was going to go on her pilgrimage while she still could.

Dr. Fazeli speaks Arabic in a Khuzestani (a province in Iran) dialect indistinguishable from that of southern Iraq, just as he speaks fluent Persian (Farsi) with no hint of ethnic dialect, the latter to the delight of his Tehrani friends. He combines an equal understanding of the news as presented by Western media and as being broadcast by Aljazeera, the Iranian, or even the Lebanese news channels. During the war in Lebanon in 2006, as most in the West were watching the news of the war on CNN, Dr. Fazeli enjoyed the ability to scan through four

Lebanese satellite networks as well as various regional news media networks, including the Israeli English broadcast, in order to obtain his daily news.

“Iraq Decoded” presents local Iraqi events in a way that Americans can relate to. It combines a varied recounting and analysis from the perspective of a multifaceted person and will offer most readers new information, even if they are natives or experts in the region. If you came this far in trying to decode what’s happening in Iraq, then you will not be disappointed as this book could easily have been called “Learn all you need to know about Iraq in three days or less.” You won’t become an expert on Iraq, but you will gain a better understanding of what to consider as the conflict in Iraq evolves. Let’s see how many times you can say “I didn’t know that.”