

agreements with foreign universities.”<sup>16</sup> While the U.S. cannot shrug off its moral responsibility towards the crisis, the ultimate responsibility for the refugees must lie with the Iraqi government.

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed analysis of the refugees’ situation after the 2003 invasion, see Joseph Sassoon, *The Iraqi Refugees: The New Crisis in the Middle East* (London: IB Tauris, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Ali Merza, “Iraq: Reconstruction under Uncertainty,” *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 1.2 (2007): 173.

<sup>3</sup> Ashraf Al-Khalidi, Sophia Hoffman, and Victor Tanner, “Iraqi Refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic: A Field-Based Snapshot,” The Brookings Institute-University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement, June 7, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> [www.brusselstribunal.org/academicslist.htm](http://www.brusselstribunal.org/academicslist.htm) (accessed April 15, 2008). See also Ismail Jalili, “Iraqi Academics and Doctors: Innocent Victims of a Wider Geological Struggle,” *TAARII Newsletter* 1.2 (2006): 8–11.

<sup>5</sup> *Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN)*, “Iraq: Justice Delayed as

Lawyers Live Under Threat,” April 30, 2007. [www.irinnews.org/PrintReport.aspx?ReportID=71864](http://www.irinnews.org/PrintReport.aspx?ReportID=71864) (accessed November 25, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> United States Government Accountability Office (GAO), “Iraq Reconstruction: Better Data Needed to Assess Iraq’s Budget Execution,” Report to Congressional Committees, GAO-08-153, January 2008. <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08153.pdf> (accessed March 27, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Economic Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 38–43. A poll conducted by *The Economist* showed that the middle class is more supportive of democracy than the poor. *The Economist*, February 14, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> *The New York Times*, August 11, 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Bassim Irheim Mohammed Al-Sheibani, Najah R. Hadi, and Tariq Hasoon, “Iraq Lacks Facilities and Expertise in Emergency Medicine,” *British Medical Journal* 333 (2006): 847.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations University, “UNU Calls for World Help to Repair System,” April 27, 2005.

<sup>11</sup> In 2006, migrants from poor countries

sent home \$300 billion, about three times the world’s foreign aid budgets combined. See Jason Deparle, “Western Union as a Player in Immigration Debates,” *International Herald Tribune*, November 22, 2007.

<sup>12</sup> David Shinn, “Reversing the Brain Drain in Ethiopia,” paper delivered to the Ethiopian North American Health Professionals Association, November 23, 2002.

<sup>13</sup> Çağlar Özden and Maurice Schiff, editors, *International Migration, Remittances and the Brain Drain* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank and Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), pp. 227–44.

<sup>14</sup> Oxfam, “Rising to the Humanitarian Challenge in Iraq,” July 30, 2007. [www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/Rising%20to%20the%20humanitarian%20challenge%20in%20Iraq.pdf](http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/Rising%20to%20the%20humanitarian%20challenge%20in%20Iraq.pdf) (accessed December 18, 2007).

<sup>15</sup> Refugees International, “Iraq: Preventing the Point of No Return,” April 7, 2009. <http://www.refugeesinternational.org/policy/field-report/iraq-preventing-point-no-return> (accessed April 27, 2009).

<sup>16</sup> Robert Malley, “Testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee,” April 9, 2008.

## SIMULATING THE IRAQI PARLIAMENT: BENEFITS OF A NON-TRADITIONAL APPROACH TO TEACHING IRAQI POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

ERIC DAVIS, ANDREW SPATH, BRIAN HUMPHREYS, AND MAROUN SOUEID

During the Spring 2009 Semester, Eric Davis offered an advanced undergraduate course at Rutgers University, “Iraq: Political Development, Sectarian Identities, and Democracy,” with the assistance of Andrew Spath, Brian Humphreys, and Maroun Soueid. Teaching the comparative politics of a foreign country is difficult enough since many American college students often have had limited contact with cultures other than their own. Teaching Iraqi politics

constitutes an especially daunting task. Not only is Iraq a complex political system, and one that is very different from the American political system, but one that has experienced significant change since Saddam Husayn’s Ba’thist regime collapsed in April 2003. A central question that needed to be addressed in the course is the following: What pedagogies would best promote student understanding of Iraqi politics? As we discovered, a classroom simulation proved to be one of the most

effective tools to enhance what students learned from more traditional resources and pedagogical strategies.

A prerequisite for students to participate in the simulation was a necessary grounding in the appropriate conceptual frameworks, and historical and factual basis of Iraqi politics. To address students’ conceptual and empirical lacunae, the course employed multiple resources. Readings were chosen that offered students different perspectives on Iraqi society and

politics. Charles Tripp's *A History of Iraq* was useful due to its emphasis on political history and elites. Eric Davis' *Memories of State: Politics, History and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq* and Faleh Jaber's writings on Iraqi tribes and tribal politics gave students a somewhat different focus by examining the social bases of politics. Jo Tatchell's *The Poet of Baghdad* was chosen because it offered students a "micro-analytic" approach to Iraqi politics by tracing the daily life of an Iraqi family, and the important opposition poet it produced, over a period of almost sixty years. These course readings were intended to offer students a variety of perspectives by employing readings that emphasized different analytic levels and vantage points on Iraqi politics and society.

Course readings were supplemented with an extensive variety of films and video clips. These included the film, "Forget Baghdad," in which four Iraqi Jews who were forced to leave Iraq in the early 1950s recounted their experiences as younger men in Iraq and their continued attachment to and yearning for contact with that past. Another film was "Saddam's Latest War," a 1993 film from the Public Broadcasting System's well-known "Frontline" series. This film, which was produced in Iraq's southern marshlands (*al-ahwar*) and other parts of Iraq by Yale art historian Michael Woods, documents in a very disturbing manner Saddam's draining and destruction of the marsh region after the 1991 Intifada when rebels retreated into this area. We also viewed "Iraq in Its Fragments," especially the sections on the Mahdi Army's activities in southern Iraq, and the section on the problems faced by Kurdish farmers and their families in the rural areas of northern Iraq.

One of the most popular films was the HBO television production, "Baghdad High." This film documents the lives of four Iraqi males as they prepare for their final comprehensive examinations

during their final year of secondary school. What struck students most was the similarity of interests and the fact that the Iraqi youth were from different ethnic backgrounds, long-term friends, but demonstrated no sectarianism.

To offset the pessimistic tone of the films and take account of some of the positive developments that have occurred in Iraq since 2003, we incorporated YouTube video clips (several in Arabic) that were produced by Iraqi youth, as well as those produced by U.S. television channels such as MSNBC. What was interesting to students was how attracted Iraqi youth were to Western music and popular culture, and to Western sports. Among these visuals was an anti-sectarian music video by Iraq's most famous "rock star," Kazim al-Sahir, called "Please Love Me!" (*Ahbini!*). Many of the video clips that highlighted Iraqi youth had a very positive quality because youth often expressed great hope for the future now that Iraq had shed authoritarian rule and violence had receded. The films and videos allowed students to connect text with visual imagery, thereby facilitating a more effective contextualization of the course readings.

Because students obviously required significant historical and political background before they could participate in the Iraqi Parliament simulation, it was scheduled during the last month of the class. To structure the simulation and make it manageable, we organized it around the two of the most central and sensitive issues that Iraq has faced since 2003: security and oil. We divided the eighteen members of the class into nine of Iraq's most prominent political parties, including the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council (ISCI), the Da'wa Party, the Iraqi National Accord, the Tawafuq Front, the Iraqi Islamic Party, the Fadila Party, the Sadrism Trend, the Kurdish Democratic Party, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

Each party was tasked with

developing a position paper that outlined its suggested solution to the security problem and the extraction and distribution of Iraq's extensive oil wealth (hydrocarbon law). In the position paper, students were required to detail the party's objectives in the simulation, and the strategy they would use to entice other political parties to support these objectives. In effect, the position paper required each party to articulate its "private" as well as "public" persona. The position paper was also designed to have students learn the requisite ideological and behavioral parameters of their respective political party. In this sense, the position paper was designed to enhance the realism of the simulation.

Once students submitted their party's position paper two weeks prior to the simulation, they were required to engage in a lengthy period of "negotiations" with parties with which they shared an ideological perspective and hence might be able to conclude agreements prior to the simulation. Students were required to maintain a daily log that discussed the logic and results of these interactions. Half of two class sessions during the month prior to the simulation were devoted to researching the latest developments in Iraqi politics in the Department of Political Science computer lab. Here Davis and the course assistants were able to help students find many additional resources that facilitated their preparation for the simulation.

The simulation itself took an entire class period of three hours (the course met once per week). During the first forty-five minutes of the class, each party was required to make an opening statement outlining its policy regarding passage of a new security and oil law. Following these rhetorical interventions, the parties broke for an hour and a half to engage in negotiations with other parties as they attempted to assemble the necessary votes, through coalitional strategies, to be able to pass a security

and an oil law that accorded with their party's policy objectives. Davis and course assistants expedited meetings among parties in other class rooms. At the end of the hour and a half period, students reassembled to conduct a vote on the security and oil issues. Following the vote, the remainder of class time was used for debriefing as each party contributed its conclusions about the functioning and results of the simulation.

As for the results, students representing the more nationalist parties in the Iraqi Parliament were able to create the necessary coalition to pass both a security law and an oil law. The laws that were passed accommodated the views of a large number of political parties whose goals could be considered, *grosso modo*, nationalist, rather than regional or sectarian in orientation. While this vote may not accurately reflect the current trends and dynamics of the Iraqi Parliament, it should be noted that the Parliament did pass an oil law in May 2009 and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) has begun exporting oil from the Kurdish region for the first time in the country's history. Violence continues to occur in Iraq. However, in many areas of the country, security is the best it has been since the spring of 2003, indicating that important progress has occurred. In this sense, the outcome of the simulation was not that far from the reality of contemporary Iraqi politics.

What was most striking about the simulation was how much the students learned in this exercise. It is no exaggeration to say that students learned as much if not more about Iraqi politics through preparing for and engaging in the simulation as they did from the readings, films, and video clips that they had studied earlier in the course. Why was this the case?

In his study, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the late Brazilian educator and anthropologist, Paulo Freire, distinguishes between the banking

theory of education and the problem posing approach to education. By "banking theory," he means, of course, the time worn and highly ineffective educational process of having students memorize "facts." For Freire, this type of activity does not constitute meaningful learning but rather promotes submissiveness to authority. True learning must be based on developing critical thinking skills. The problem posing approach constitutes real education in Freire's view because here the learner is required to apply the concepts and knowledge that s/he has learned to solve a particular problem.

Students learned the validity of Freire's theory through participating in an exercise that required them to both apply what they had learned and solve problems. The diligence and excitement with which students approached this process underscored Freire's arguments. Once students moved from an abstract and passive learning process (even if they found the blogs, books, and articles that they read and films and video clips very interesting), and began to apply what they learned, Iraqi politics came alive in a way in which it had not up to that point in the course. The competition that emerged during the two week period of "negotiations" prior to the simulation, and during the simulation itself, provided an incentive for students to obtain more detailed information that would give them a competitive edge in trying to achieve their goals.

Combining readings, visual imagery in the form of films and video clips with a capstone simulation proved to be a very effective pedagogy. Student evaluations of the course were very positive and reflected especially well on the simulation. Many indicated that the complexities of Iraqi politics became much clearer as they were forced to situate their party within a much larger political context. It was very satisfying to see the extent to which the simulation worked to integrate other pedagogical

elements by helping to clarify the intricacies of Iraqi politics.

The simulation demonstrated how complex the problems that Iraq faces are in a way that readings could not. The learning process transcended Iraqi politics because students could see that trying to negotiate solutions to political problems on a national level is a difficult and complex process. The simulation forced students to view the Iraqi political process from different angles. It also helped them better understand how political institutions function and the benefits of democratic and participatory politics.

Organizing a simulation can be difficult, especially in a large class, because all students require significant amounts of attention during the process of running it. If our simulation is an indicator, then the rewards can be great. In an era in which it is essential to attract young people to develop greater interest in international affairs, both in the United States and in other countries, course simulations seem certainly to be one of the most effective ways to create such interest.

*Eric Davis is professor of political science; Andrew Spath and Brian Humphreys are Ph.D. candidates; and Maroun Soueid is an undergraduate senior; all at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey. For further information about the Iraqi Parliament simulation and a copy of the course syllabus, contact Eric Davis at [davis@polisci.rutgers.edu](mailto:davis@polisci.rutgers.edu).*

#### LANGUAGE ANNOUNCEMENT

As readers may be aware, TAARII is committed to producing a bilingual newsletter in English and in Arabic. We regret that we are now printing our newsletter in English only. We are seeking funds to resume printing a bilingual newsletter and to include full Arabic translations of English-language newsletters on our website. We appreciate your patience and understanding in the meantime.