To understand Iraq, Charles Tripp’s history is the book to read. Since its first appearance in 2000, it has become a classic in the field of Middle East studies, read and admired by students, soldiers, policymakers, journalists and all those seeking to make sense of what has gone wrong in this troubled country. The book is now updated to include the events of the last few years: the American invasion, the fall and capture of Saddam Husain and the subsequent descent into civil strife. What is clear is that much that has happened since 2003 could have been predicted, and in fact was foreshadowed in the account found in the pages of this book. Tripp’s thesis is that the history of Iraq throughout the twentieth century has made it what it is today, but also provides alternative futures. Unless this is properly understood, many of the themes explored in this book – patron–client relations, organised violence, sectarian, ethnic and tribal difference – will continue to exert a hold over the future of Iraq as they did over its past. There is much to learn here, and there can be few books which tell this sad story to such effect.

Charles Tripp is Professor of Politics in the Middle East at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. His publications include Islam and the Moral Economy: The Challenge of Capitalism (2006), Iran–Saudi Arabia Relations and Regional Order (with S. Chubin, 1996) and Iran and Iraq at War (1988).
For Venetia
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Illustrations

Chronology

1831  Ottoman reconquest of Baghdad: capture of the last mamluk governor
1908  Young Turk revolution in Istanbul
1909  Sultan Abdulhamid II deposed
1914  November: British occupation of Basra
1917  March: British occupation of Baghdad
1918  November: British occupation of Mosul
1920  April: San Remo meeting assigns Mandate for Iraq to United Kingdom
       July–October: Iraqi revolt
       November: Sayyid ʿAbd al-Rahman al-Kailani forms first Iraqi government
1921  March: Cairo Conference decides on Prince Faisal bin Husain al-Hashemi as king of Iraq
       August: enthronement of King Faisal in Baghdad
1924  March: Constituent Assembly opens
       June: Anglo-Iraqi Treaty passed
1925  March: Iraqi government signs Turkish Petroleum Company oil concession
       December: League of Nations decides that Mosul should remain part of Iraq
1927  First major oil finds near Kirkuk
1930  June: new Anglo-Iraqi Treaty signed promising Iraqi independence
1932  October: League of Nations ends Mandate and grants independence to Iraq
1933  September: King Faisal dies; King Ghazi succeeds
1935  January: official opening of Kirkuk – Mediterranean pipeline
1936  October: military coup d’état, backed by General Bakr Sidqi; Hikmat Sulaiman forms a government
1937  August: Bakr Sidqi assassinated; Hikmat Sulaiman overthrown by army
Chronology

1939 April: King Ghazi killed in car accident; succeeded by infant son, Faisal II, under regency of Prince ‘Abd al-Ilah

May: British troops march on Baghdad; collapse and flight of Rashid ‘Ali al-Kailani’s government
June: regent returns to Baghdad

1948 January: new Anglo-Iraqi Treaty signed at Portsmouth; mass protests in Baghdad – known as al-Wathba (the leap); treaty abandoned
May: Iraq sends expeditionary force to Palestine

1949 February: Iraqi army withdraws from Palestine

1952 February: Iraqi agreement with Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC) on 50–50 share of profits
November–December: demonstrations erupt in Baghdad – known as al-Intifada (the uprising)

1953 May: King Faisal II enthroned; regency ends

1955 February: formation of Baghdad Pact

1956 October: Suez Crisis; riots in Baghdad, Mosul and Najaf

1958 February: formation of United Arab Republic (Egypt and Syria); Jordan and Iraq form Arab Union
July: military coup d’état in Baghdad; monarchy overthrown and republic established; Brigadier ‘Abd al-Karim Qasim becomes prime minister, minister of defence and commander in chief
September: Agrarian Reform Law

1959 October: Mustafa Barzani asserts his control of Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP)
December: Iraq withdraws from Baghdad Pact

1961 June: Kuwaiti independence; Qasim demands its integration into Iraq; Great Britain sends troops to Kuwait, replaced by Arab League force in August
July: Barzani demands substantial autonomy for Kurdish region
September: fighting in Kurdistan between Barzani’s forces and Iraqi army
December: Law 80 reclaims unexploited areas of IPC’s concession

1963 February: military coup d’état by Ba’thist and Arab nationalist officers; Qasim and colleagues killed
October–November: splits and confusion in the Ba’th
November: President ‘Abd al-Salam ‘Arif and military allies eject Ba’thists from power
1964
July: nationalisation of all banks, insurance companies and large industrial firms; further land reform
October: Kurdish autonomy talks break down and fighting resumes

1965
April: full-scale war in Kurdistan
September: ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Bazzaz appointed prime minister

1966
April: death of ‘Abd al-Salam ‘Arif in helicopter crash; succeeded by his brother ‘Abd al-Rahman ‘Arif
July: Barzani accepts al-Bazzaz’s twelve-point programme on Kurdish autonomy
August: ‘Arif dismisses al-Bazzaz

1967
June: war with Israel; Iraq sends token force to Jordan

1968
17 July: military coup d’état by Arab nationalist and Ba’thist army officers; ‘Abd al-Rahman ‘Arif sent into exile; Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr becomes president
30 July: Ba’thist military coup d’état organised by al-Bakr ousts non-Ba’thist allies

1969
June: major agreement between Iraq and USSR on Soviet assistance in exploiting Iraqi oil fields
November: Saddam Husain appointed to ruling Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) and becomes its vice-chairman

1970
March: manifesto on Kurdistan, granting limited autonomy; Barzani calls cease-fire
May: land reform measures
July: new provisional constitution recognises Kurdish nationalism
November: relations between Iraq and Iran severed

1971
April: Iraq and USSR sign fifteen-year Iraq–USSR Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation
June: IPC nationalised
November–December: fighting in northern Kurdistan

1972
July: failed coup attempt by Kazzar; al-Bakr and Saddam Husain reinforce their hold on the state
October: limited Iraqi participation in war with Israel

1973
March: Autonomy Law for Kurdish areas announced despite continuing disagreement between government and KDP; widespread fighting throughout Kurdistan

1975
March: Algiers Agreement between Saddam Husain and shah of Iran ends Iranian assistance to KDP; Kurdish revolt collapses
June: Kurdish movement split; KDP–Provisional Leadership led by Masoud Barzani, and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), led by Jalal Talabani
Chronology

1977 February: 30,000 process from Najaf to Karbala; called the Safar intifada, it becomes a general anti-government protest

1978 October: expulsion of Ayatollah Khomaini from Iraq
November: Baghdad Summit following Camp David accords marks Iraqi bid for Arab leadership

1979 Spring: success of Iranian revolution encourages Shi’i Islamist organisations to launch more active campaign in Iraq
July: al-Bakr resigns; Saddam Husain immediately sworn in as president; purge of RCC and Ba’th Party
November: KDP Congress elects Masoud Barzani as chairman and calls for continuing armed struggle inside Iraq

1980 March: law for election of National Assembly in Iraq
April: Ayatollah al-Sadr and his sister, Bint al-Huda, executed in Baghdad; over 40,000 Shi’a expelled to Iran
September: Iraqi forces invade Iran

1981 June–July: Iran’s countercampaign recaptures most of its territory;
9th Regional Congress of Ba’th Party reasserts Saddam Husain’s absolute control
Autumn: sudden death of former president Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr

1984 Escalation of war in the waters of the Gulf
Iraq re-establishes diplomatic relations with United States

1986 Iran captures al-Faw peninsula

1987 Iraqi government campaign against KDP and PUK in Kurdistan

1988 February: beginning of al-Anfal in Kurdistan
July: Iran accepts UN cease-fire resolution; war with Iraq ends

1990 August: Iraq invades and annexes Kuwait; UN imposes total trade embargo and sanctions on Iraq

1991 January: ‘Desert Storm’ begins: air bombardment of Iraq by US-led allied forces leading to liberation of Kuwait by allied forces in February
March: eruption and crushing of al-Intifada, uprisings against Iraqi regime in Shi’i south and Kurdish north
April: UN Security Council Resolution 687 – demands Iraqi recognition of Kuwait and destruction of all Iraq’s non-conventional weapons, and affirms that economic sanctions would continue until full compliance; ‘safe haven’ established in northern Iraq, effectively placing most of Kurdistan under allied protection; Resolution 688 calls on Iraqi government to stop oppressing its own people
May: first visit of United Nations Special Commission on Disarmament (UNSCOM) weapons inspection team
October: Iraqi armed forces blockade Kurdistan
1992
May: elections in Kurdish zone: more or less equal balance between KDP and PUK
July: Kurdish Regional Government formed by both parties, but in effect two parallel administrations created, running separate areas

1993
May: UN Security Council approves demarcation of Iraq–Kuwait border in Kuwait’s favour
June: United States launches missile strike on headquarters of Iraqi intelligence services in Baghdad in reprisal for Iraqi plot to kill President Bush during his visit to Kuwait
October–November: Iraqi forces launch campaign against inhabitants of marshes in south of Iraq and finalise plans for draining of marshes

1994
May–August: open fighting between KDP and PUK
October–November: Iraqi threats to Kuwait lead to crisis and eventual Iraqi recognition of Kuwait as an independent state

1996
February: Iraq finally accepts UN Security Council Resolution 986 allowing limited Iraqi oil sales for purchase of vital civilian supplies
August: Iraqi government forces enter Kurdish region at invitation of KDP and help to capture Arbil from PUK; United States responds by launching missile attacks on southern Iraq and extending southern no-fly zone north to 33rd parallel
December: Iraqi oil flows again through pipeline to Turkey; Iraq returns to world oil market as a producer

1998
September: Washington Agreement ends fighting between KDP and PUK
November: Iraq Liberation Act passed by US Congress
December: ‘Operation Desert Fox’, air bombardment of Iraq by US Air Force and Royal Air Force in retaliation for Iraqi non-cooperation with weapons inspections; Iraq ceases all co-operation forthwith

1999
January–December: weekly attacks by American and British planes on Iraqi forces challenging their right to overfly Iraqi territory in southern and northern no-fly zones
December: UN Security Council Resolution 1284 offering to suspend sanctions if Iraq cooperates with a new weapons inspection regime for 120 days; new weapons inspection agency set up – UNMOVIC. Iraq rejects the resolution and refuses to allow UNMOVIC into Iraq

2000
March: Iraq defies UN ban on civil air flights and organises flights of pilgrims to Mecca
Chronology

September: Baghdad airport reopens. Much-publicised flights arrive from Russia, France, Syria and other countries
November: domestic civil flights resume within Iraq

2001
January: Masoud Barzani (KDP) and Jalal Talabani (PUK) meet for first time in three years
February: extensive American and British air strikes against air defence systems around Baghdad
May–July: UK and United States try and fail to persuade UN Security Council to adopt ‘smart sanctions’ resolution
August: extensive American and British air strikes against air defence systems in southern Iraq
October: KDP–PUK cooperation proceeds. PUK forces in armed combat with Kurdish Islamist group Jund al-Islam
November: UN Security Council Resolution 1382 renews six-month ‘oil for food’ arrangement and opens way for possible reform of sanctions regime and return of weapons inspectors

2002
January: US President Bush identifies Iraq as part of an ‘axis of evil’
March: public Iraqi reconciliation with Saudi Arabia at Arab League Summit in Beirut
June: President Bush and staff finalise war plans against Iraq
October: US Congress passes resolution authorising use of military force against Iraq
November: UN Security Council Resolution 1441: requires Iraq to re-admit weapons inspectors of UNMOVIC. Iraq accepts

2003
January: General Garner appointed to head Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance to rule Iraq after invasion
February–March: US and UK try and fail to obtain UN SC resolution explicitly authorising the use of force against Iraq
March: ‘Operation Iraq Freedom’ launched by US, UK and allied forces to overthrow Saddam Husain and occupy Iraq
April: Basra, Baghdad and Mosul fall to allied forces; Saddam Husain flees into hiding; widespread looting and destruction of government buildings
May: Paul Bremer replaces Garner as chief US authority in Iraq, heading the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA): dissolution of Ba‘th Party and of Iraqi armed forces; UN SC Resolution 1483 grants US and UK power to govern Iraq and ends thirteen-year sanctions regime
July: CPA sets up Iraqi Governing Council with limited powers; US military command admits it is facing ‘guerrilla war’ in Iraq
Chronology

2004

March: IGC approves draft provisional constitution (Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period [TAL])

April–May: fierce fighting between US forces and insurgents in Fallujah; US and Mahdi Army forces clash in Najaf

June: CPA and IGC dissolved and sovereignty handed to an interim government, headed by prime minister Ayad ‘Allawi

August: US forces fight Mahdi Army in Najaf

November: US and Iraqi forces attack insurgents in Fallujah – widespread destruction

2005

January: general elections for the transitional national assembly charged with drafting a new constitution, boycotted by Sunni Arabs: United Iraqi Alliance (‘Shi’i list’) wins overall majority; elections for Kurdish Regional Assembly dominated by KDP and PUK

April: Ibrahim al-Jafari of UIA becomes prime minister and forms government; Jalal Talabani elected president of Iraq

August: constitutional committee presents draft constitution to assembly which submits it to a plebiscite

October: constitutional plebiscite approves constitution by 78% to 22% – Shi’i and Kurdish provinces vote in favour, Sunni Arab provinces against; trial of Saddam Hussein and associates begins

December: general elections for national assembly: UIA largest single bloc, but no overall majority

2006

February: al-Askariyya mosque in Samarra blown up; sectarian conflict intensifies

April: Jalal Talabani sworn in as president of Iraq

May: Nuri al-Maliki of UIA forms new government

July: British authorities hand over Muthanna province to Iraqi control

September: Italian forces hand over Dhi Qar province to Iraqi control

October: national assembly passes law allowing groups of provinces to form federated states
November: Saddam Husain sentenced to death by Iraqi High Tribunal
December: Saddam Husain executed; death toll of US forces since 2003 reaches 3,000; UN estimates over 100 Iraqi civilians die violently every day
2007 January: draft law allowing foreign investment and participation in Iraqi oil industry put before national assembly
February: US sends 28,000 extra troops to Iraq to implement new security plan for Baghdad
Glossary

agha   Kurdish chieftain
amir    prince
al-Anfal literally, ‘the spoils of war’, and the title of the eighth sura of the Qur’an; the codename given by the Iraqi authorities to their forces’ operations in Kurdistan in 1988
ashraf (sing. sharif) descendants of the Prophet Muhammad
naqib al-ashraf senior descendant of the Prophet Muhammad in a community
‘Ashura tenth day of month of Muharram, held in special reverence by Shi‘i Muslims since it commemorates the death of Imam Husain in 680 CE at Karbala
‘atabat literally, ‘thresholds’ or ‘doorways’; denoting Holy Cities of Shi‘ism in Iraq: Najaf, Karbala, al-Kazimiyya, Samarra
ayatollah literally, ‘sign from God’; an honorific title for senior Shi‘i clerics
fatwa a formal opinion or judgement delivered by an expert in the Shari‘a
fiqh Islamic jurisprudence
hajj Muslims’ annual pilgrimage to Mecca
hawza short for al-hawza al-‘ilmiiyya – ‘the seat of knowledge’, meaning the Shi‘i clerical establishment
iltizam tax-farming or tax-gathering concession
jahsh literally, ‘little donkeys’; derisory term used about the National Defence Battalions, Kurdish tribal irregulars employed by the Ba‘thist government
jihad war against unbelievers according to the shari‘a
mamluk member of a military elite, originally a slave
Glossary

marja‘ al-taqlid  literally, ‘source of emulation’, the highest accolade of the most senior of Shi‘i scholars
millet  a recognised autonomous religious community in the Ottoman Empire
mujtahid  a Shi‘i cleric recognised as competent to deliver independent opinions on matters relating to the shari‘a
peshmerga  literally, ‘those who face death’; term referring to Kurdish guerrilla forces
qaimaqam  district governor, subordinate to governor of a province
salafi  term used to denote a believer in the need for Muslim reform with reference to the example of earliest Muslims (al-salaf al-salih – the pious forebears)
saniyya  lands land belonging to the Ottoman sultan
sarifa  literally, ‘hut made of reed matting’; general term for shanty towns that grew up around Baghdad
sayyid  descendant of the Prophet Muhammad
shaikh  in Arab Iraq, either an Arab tribal chieftain or a religious scholar; in Kurdish Iraq, a man of saintly descent, usually head of a religious order
shari‘a  the body of rules guiding the life of a Muslim
Sufi  member of an Islamic mystical (sufi) order
Thalweg  median line of deepest channel of a waterway
ʻulama (sing. ʻalim)  those learned in Islamic law
vali  governor of a province (vilayet (Turkish))
wafq(pl. awqaf)  religious endowment, generally landed property
List of abbreviations

CPA Coalition Provisional Authority
CUP Committee of Union and Progress; Constitutional Union Party
DFI Development Fund for Iraq
GFIW General Federation of Iraqi Workers
IAEA International Atomic Energy Agency
ICP Iraqi Communist Party
IFTU Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions
IGC Iraqi Governing Council
IIP Iraqi Islamic Party
IMF International Monetary Fund
INA Iraqi National Accord
INC Iraqi National Congress
INOC Iraqi National Oil Company
IPC Iraq Petroleum Company
ISG Iraq Survey Group
IWN Iraqi Women's Network
KDP Kurdistan Democratic Party
KDP-I Kurdistan Democratic Party – Iran
KRG Kurdish Regional Government
LUP Liberal Unionist Party
MEF Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force
NCRC National Council of the Revolutionary Command
NDP National Democratic Party
NGO Nongovernmental organisation
OPEC Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries
ORHA Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance
OWFI Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq
PKK Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan (Kurdistan Workers’ Party)
PUK Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
List of abbreviations

RAF Royal Air Force
RCC Revolutionary Command Council
SCIRI Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq
TAL Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period
TPC Turkish Petroleum Company
UAR United Arab Republic
UIA United Iraqi Alliance
UNMOVIC United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission
UN SC United Nations Security Council
UNSCOM United Nations Special Commission on Disarmament
WAFDI Women’s Alliance for Democratic Iraq
WMD Weapons of mass destruction
Map 1 Iraq: principal towns

Shaded area: area under control of Kurdish Regional Government since 1991
Map 2 Basra, Kuwait and the Shatt al-‘Arab
Map 3 Iraq and the Middle East
International boundary
Boundary of Kurdish regional government after 1991
Area of significant or majority Kurdish population

Map 4 Kurdish Iraq