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Symposium:

Governments, Governance and War: What We Have Learned in Iraq

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Valerie L. Patterson

Reflective of *Public Voices* unique approach, the works selected for the symposium represent a wide specter of genres: from analytical articles to an eyewitness account to several poems and a play. The symposium contributors, each through a different lens, examine issues of governance and war, democracy and freedom, national security and the right of nations to self-determination and discuss the lessons the conflict in Iraq has taught us about bureaucracy, civil service, political actors and the value of human life.

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The author of this article uses eyewitness account, historical narrative and personal reflection to examine governance from a dual perspective – that of an Iraqi native having suffered the oppression, violation of personal freedom and liberty administered by the regime of Saddam Hussein, and that of a US citizen that has experienced firsthand and explored the contradictions to be found in the freedom of American “democracy.”

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From 1990 to 2003, US/UK policymakers insisted that the UN sanctions regime against Iraq was worth the cost, which, by 1999, amounted to half a million child deaths in Iraq. US policymakers emphasized that the ends (saving the world from Saddam Hussein’s alleged weapons of mass destruction program) justified the means (the adverse humanitarian consequences of the dismantling of Iraq’s economy). The draconian blockade was especially disastrous for the women and children of Iraq. This paper explores the ethical dimensions of the sanctions while presenting an unorthodox view of foreign policy administration and generating new ideas for improving it. I argue that pro-sanctions policy managers had to defend a “Sophie’s Choice:” killing children to save other children. I argue that this was a false dichotomy operating in the US policy towards Iraq since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and that it served as a cover-up for a hidden agenda related to US hegemony in the Middle East region.¹ Interviews in 1999 with three pro-sanctions diplomats reveal the personal moral dilemma of defending a policy of infanticide while appearing virtuous in doing so. I suggest an alternative paradigm and a number of strategies that would ask policymakers whether they speaking truth to power.

**Reconstructing Operatic Melodrama –
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Valerie L. Patterson

In this article, Valerie Patterson employs what she refers to as “lyrical visioning” – a useful tool for garnering support for claims that may or may not be true – to review

¹ The same cover-up is, of course, operating during the present-day occupation of Iraq by US military forces.

several successful strategies used by the Bush administration to secure support for the invasion of Iraq. By assessing the utility of “the hook” that in Hip Hop music and Opera is used to “grab” people and make them like or remember the melody, and in President Bush’s political rhetoric was used to reconstruct and repackage tactics that can be perceived as deceptive by some, the author argues that the repetitive utterance of certain words and concepts could explain the acceptance by many Americans that the WMD claim was a truthful assertion and thus validated and legitimized the decision to engage in a preemptive strike against the people of Iraq.

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Using the medium of a play, the author of the last piece of the symposium reflects on the issues of personal freedoms, moral choices, the right of a nascent nation to self-determination, national liberty, as well as the mentality of violence and culture of non-violence. The play spans only three years but lasts for two political eras: one of Saddam Hussein’s tyranny and another – the era of state building, rebirth and hope in a land ravaged by war.

Analysis and Commentary

**An Interpretive-Phenomenological Critique of the
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Terence M. Garrett

Public Administration as a field of academic inquiry has faced numerous challenges. Public management scholars focus exclusively on the executive level of management in public organizations. Knowledge possessed by lower-level managers, workers, and/or the public is ignored and deemed to be irrelevant or unimportant in the decision-making process within agencies. In general, technical rationality, or what passes for traditional management practice and the new public management, has had some success for executives and managers in public organizations insofar as motivating individuals for instrumental purposes.² The success of public management as a social and political movement makes it difficult to overcome. The concentration of the “public management movement” on the executive level of management has supplanted traditional public administration and public service. It is the ideology of public management that is the primary focus of this paper. Alternatives including the New Public Service and the knowledge analytic will be presented briefly as a counterpoint to address the democratic shortcomings of the public management movement, both new and old.

² See Guy B. Adams and V. Ingersoll’s “Culture, Technical Rationality, and Organizational Culture,” in *American Review of Public Administration*, December 1990, 20/4: 285 – 302, for an excellent elaboration of the concept. In general, technical rationality is an approach to thinking that “has stripped reason of any normative role in shaping human affairs” (Adams and Balfour 1998, xiii).

**“Hit the Bricks, Buddy”:
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Randall Miller

The Reinventing Government (ReGo) movement that was popularized during the 1990's by Osborne and Gaebler's 1992 book of the same title is founded on the concept of "managerialism," which has "management rights" as its core theme (Shafritz & Russell, 2005). The principle of management rights advocates wide-ranging discretion for administrators in the decision-making process that can possibly circumvent the constitutional value of due process in the public sector. With this questionable allowance, unscrupulous public administrators have the opportunity to employ patronage practices beyond acceptable limits that allows a "spoils system" of favoritism to prevail over merit practices.

In this article, the concept of "spoils in government" is linked to reinventing government precepts that allow corruption to become ingrained within an organization's culture. As a consequence, opportunities for ethical violations of office increase relative to the degree of discretionary authority afforded to public administrators. Should a corruptible individual assume office in such an environment, the likelihood of unethical behavior becomes relatively certain.

A case study of nepotism from the same decade of reinventing government is documented that illustrates how the implementation of an employment pool in the hiring process of a municipal fire department permitted unethical violations of due process by its fire chief. The discretionary authority afforded to a corruptible fire chief in the name of managerialism reinstated a culture of favoritism prevalent within the department from earlier days. The resulting public scandal was sensational but short-lived and was ineffectual in redressing the wrongs brought about by the misuse of authority. The discretionary hiring process not only continues in the department to this day but has been expanded to include promotions.

Fiction

**Bree Michaels:
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Diane Kettle

First thing that Bree Michaels, an elementary school principal, does when she comes to work every morning is to compile The List of things she wants to accomplish on that day. For her, *The List* is as a symbolic action, a form of personal self-validation. She creates *The List* for that moment at the end of the day when she can draw lines through items completed. But as the day progresses, she gets distracted by all sorts of unexpected matters, managing a chain of mini-crises. In that, many public administrators can identify with Bree.