

Community Resilience to Sectarian Violence in Baghdad (Peace Psychology Book Series)

Ami C. Carpenter

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The recent conflict in Iraq evolved from an insurgency against the interim U.S. led government (the Coalition Provisional Authority or CPA) into a sectarian civil war. Violence became widespread, especially in areas of Baghdad City such as Sadr City, Al Amiriyah, and Al Adhamiya. However, a number of multiethnic neighborhoods in Baghdad successfully prevented sectarian attitudes and behaviors from taking hold. Four communities stand out in their self-organization to prevent the escalation of violence. This book looks at what makes these communities different from other areas within Baghdad. In-depth interviews in Sunni-dominant, Shia-dominant and Mixed neighborhoods generated a few key insights about conflict-resilience, or the capacity to prevent structural changes associated with conflict escalation. Key factors turned out to be the organization of non-sectarian self-defense groups, place attachment, collective efficacy, active intervention to de-escalate tensions, and also the presence of local religious leaders who forbid sectarian attacks. The continuity or strength of interpersonal relationships supported by the integrated physical structure of these neighborhoods and internal versus tribal conflict resolution mechanisms played a role as well. This volume examines the characteristics of the communities that have successfully prevented the rise of violence, and how they are able to maintain qualities of resilience to violent conflict.

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