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Abstract of paper to be presented at the conference.

For details of the conference programme go to [www.iraqistudies.org](http://www.iraqistudies.org)

Speaker: Robert Smith (Lancaster University)

Title: The brief life of the local government movement in Iraq: From regime change to the elections of January 2005

Abstract:

The policy of regime change was justified, in part, through its mission to replace dictatorship with democracy. The strategy for local government in Iraq was built on the experience that democracy promotion practitioners had gained in 1990s. Their model envisaged a decentralised government devolving power away from the control of centre. Such a policy would enable grassroots democracy while also protecting against the possible return of over powerful central authority. This ambitious project challenged existing models of local government in Iraq. However, over a short time this experiment was undermined by questions of legitimacy, lack of local powers, and the demands of the national political process. This paper will consider the work undertaken by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) during 2003 and 2004 in its attempts to establish a new Baghdad City Council and the development of the council leading up to the local election campaign of January 2005. The paper will look at the practice of the CPA staff in their identification and selection of a new local leadership and their attempts to create a local administration that could represent the needs of the citizens of Baghdad before considering the performance of these candidates in municipal elections. The paper concludes by consider what the experience of the local government movement tells us about the future path of governance in Iraq.