

September 2004

The Self-Defeating Nature of US Counter-Insurgency Strategy in Iraq

***Attitude Formation, Need Theory and Conflict
Dynamics***

By

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Abstract

The paper is an attempt to analyse the apparent failure of US counter-insurgency strategy in Iraq by taking into account the psychological mechanisms of attitude formation, need theory and conflict dynamics. Analysed will be first the attitudes of two populations currently interacting on the ground in Iraq, Iraqis and American soldiers, followed by a discussion of their possible mutual effect on cooperative conflict resolution strategies. It is discerned that the primary reason for the breakdown of American-Iraqi relations are discriminatory processes of moral exclusion at the individual as well as institutional level, which have the effect of denying Iraqis fulfilment of both, their biological and psychological needs. To clarify the argument, examples will be given of symptoms of moral exclusion currently practiced by the occupiers. Lastly, some suggestions will briefly be made as to strategies that could be employed to bridge the current gap between the Iraqis and their occupiers, followed by a short prediction of whether such strategies are likely to be acted upon in the near future.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mark Laffey and Herbert Blumberg for their contributions and thoughts on this paper, and Anneline Blankenhorn for her support throughout.

Introduction

Only six weeks after President Bush landed on the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln for his perfect, sunset photo-op to declare major combat operations over, the US Central Command unleashed its Operation Desert Scorpion in the Sunni triangle “to avoid a prolonged guerrilla campaign”¹. The US administration does not like to admit it, and encourages a different view *a la* “it’s all much better now than it was under Saddam”, but Operation Desert Scorpion indicated a clear shift very early on away from the official position of a liberator engaged in reconstruction to that of an aggressive occupier engaged in counter-insurgency operations.

Now, almost one and a half years later, on the 8th of September 2004, the death toll for US military personnel officially passed a thousand, with only 138 of the casualties sustained during the actual combat period². This amounts to three times the number of American lives lost in Gulf War I³ - loss of life among the Iraqi civilian population easily exceeds ten times that figure, even according to conservative estimates⁴. Air strikes have been resumed in Fallujah, Najaf, parts of Baghdad, and a number of other areas effectively declared off-limits to ground-patrols, and the shaky peace-deal negotiated between Moqtada al-Sadr and Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani is not only fragile, but seems to have been achieved *despite* American involvement, rather than *because* of it⁵. Whether one is a supporter or an opponent of the war and/or occupation, it is now widely accepted that over the last 17 months the United States has been faced with an increasing number of situations in Iraq that are neither of its own design, nor

¹ G. Friedman, *Military Doctrine, Guerilla Warfare and Counter-Insurgency*, 14th of August 2004, http://www.paginedidifesa.it/2003/friedman_030814.html

² *Iraq Coalition Casualty Count*, <http://icasualties.org/oif/>

³ ITV News-Report, 8th of September 2004

⁴ Iraqi Body Count Database, <http://www.iraqbodycount.org>

⁵ Christopher Allbritton, *Moqtada Redux*, August 17th 2004, www.backtoiraq.com

apparently amenable to its influence to any significant degree – mission goal “to avoid a prolonged guerrilla campaign” has perished amidst Iraqi and American corpses a long time ago.

The aim of this paper is to shed some light on the development of this phenomenon by taking into account underlying psychological mechanisms and conflict dynamics within and between the local population and their foreign rulers. The first section will give a brief overview of the concept of counter-insurgency and the forms it has taken in history, and identify attitude formation and need satisfaction as the major underlying psychological mechanisms that any successful counter-insurgency strategy will have to take into account. After a short summary of current status of attitude formation and need research, factors from which inferences about the type and strength of certain attitudes held can be made will be identified in both the occupier and the local population.

It will become apparent that there is a primary underlying psychological mechanism that can account for much of the counter-productive behaviour that has been observed among the coalition forces. It seems that there is an inherent double standard in the treatment of Iraqi civilians and Westerners – a process that is termed Moral Exclusion in the Conflict Dynamics literature⁶. Moral exclusion in Iraq manifests itself both as (propaganda induced) discriminatory attitude formation and inaccurate enemy-image creation in the individual, but can also be found at most institutional levels of the occupation. It is argued that through numerous discriminatory symptoms, Moral Exclusion on both levels implicitly precludes any form of cooperative problem solving as it reduces the scope for employing communication and denies equality and justice towards Iraqis.

⁶ M. Deutsch and P. Coleman “Justice and Conflict” *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc. 2000) p.50

It is acknowledged that certain difficulties persist in the acquisition of reliable data regarding the attitude formation of both, Iraqis under the regime of Saddam Hussein, and the US army military population – the specific attempts in this paper to minimise these shortcomings will be discussed within their sections later.

Also, this paper can, due to lack of space, unfortunately not discuss the needs of the soldier. This is a significant factor that any investigation into interpersonal conflict dynamics between occupation soldiers and occupied population must take into account if it aims to give a truly comprehensive insight into underlying conflict dynamics. The needs of the soldier, the degree to which they are satisfied, and the resultant impact on his or her general psychological health can have a marked impact on their behaviour, their attitude formation as well as mechanisms of attribution, all of which are key aspects of interpersonal conflict resolution. However, as interpersonal conflict resolution is only one part of the analysis, it is my view that an analysis of the attitudes of both populations will suffice to make accurate postulations in the present context.

Chapter I: Counterinsurgency

Part A – Counter-Insurgency and the Historic Option

Counter-insurgency strategy aims to eliminate local opposition without alienating larger parts of the population and thereby create an environment amenable to foreign rule⁷. It is a military tactic that has been developed by the great industrial powers to make up for the lack of mobility and precision of conventional armed forces when engaged in guerrilla warfare with a local guerrilla movement or insurgency⁸. The Insurgent's greatest strength has always been the ability to conceal him/herself among the indigenous social and geographical surroundings. This not only ensures that in the case of large-scale attacks against the resistance large parts of the population would likely be alienated, but it also enables the insurgent to easily infiltrate the local institutions used by the occupier and therefore acquire much more intelligence than the occupier is likely to be able to.

To counter such tactics, the focus of the industrialised powers has primarily been on fighting the insurgents on a symmetrical unit level, that of the individual or squad, but at the same time employing the superior firepower and technology they have at their disposal. Yet, as can be imagined, despite technological and military prowess, there are many other skills and prerequisites required for successful infiltration. Subsequently, Western forces have always been severely limited in penetrating through to the operational base of indigenous guerrilla movements to any significant level⁹.

When faced with such a dilemma the historic option for most great powers, as for

⁷ D. Isenberg, *Counter-productive Counter-insurgency*, Asia Times Online 2nd of May 2004, accessed at http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/FD23Ak03.html

⁸ G. Friedman, *Military Doctrine, Guerilla Warfare and Counter-Insurgency*, 14th of August 2004, accessed at http://www.paginedidifesa.it/2003/friedman_030814.html

⁹ G. Friedman, *Military Doctrine, Guerilla Warfare and Counter-Insurgency*, 14th of August 2004, accessed at http://www.paginedidifesa.it/2003/friedman_030814.html

example for America in Vietnam or Russia in Afghanistan, has been to overcome this intelligence-gap with large-scale conventional operations. Both, Afghanistan and Vietnam, are also proof to the inadequacy of such replacement of intelligence with crude force as neither is success guaranteed by trying to hunt down individuals or squads with battalions, nor is the political situation improved as conventional forces, untrained in distinguishing between sympathizers, neutrals and insurgents, regularly mishandle large parts of the civilian population, creating alienation and hostility towards the attacker and sympathy for the insurgency movement. This points to the essential problem of guerrilla war and insurgency - at its lowest level it is political and psychological, rather than military in nature¹⁰. Unless we're talking about an extremely small country with just as small a population, loosing the battle for the "Hearts and Minds", as Mr. Bush aptly put it, will make the war of attrition neigh impossible to win.

Part B – The Psychology of Counter-Insurgency

The line of reasoning is that more than just by military tactic, counter insurgency is best achieved by first identifying those parts of the population that would support one's own side, those that could potentially yield to influence and those that are opponents; then to isolate the opponents while at the same time encouraging cooperation with supporters or non-opponents. Only if cooperation and isolation are used in concert is a successful and effective strategy guaranteed as the only other possible outcomes are:

- a) More than one party to the conflict finds appeal among the wider population or each finds appeal among certain or equal

¹⁰ B. Hoffmann, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq*, RAND National Security Research Division, Occasional Paper June 2004, accessed at <http://www.rand.org/publications/OP/OP127/OP127.pdf>

segments of it – the conflict is likely to extend in time and scale, which will expend greater material and human resources
(Only Cooperation)

- b) All parties are isolated from the wider population – time and effort spent also likely increases, likelihood of resistance by non-opponents increases (Only Isolation)

To identify those parts of the population that might be open to influence means identifying the attitudes they are likely to hold towards oneself or other opponents. To find the best measure of appeal is to identify the physical and psychological needs of the sections the population and satisfy them to as great an extent as is logically feasible. The local civilian population one is trying to influence or control, however, only represents one side of the interaction.

On the other side there is the military occupier: its institutions and its representatives. The main representatives interacting with the local population will in the case of occupation in most instances be the ordinary foot soldier of the army, as counter-insurgency units on the necessary scale are first of all simply not available and would secondly be too costly to train and maintain on a continuous basis. The attitudes that the soldiers have towards the indigenous population will therefore greatly affect possibilities for cooperation and peaceful resolution on the individual level.

Thus, only if the evolution of the formation of the attitudes that took place in both populations prior to the invasion as well as the physical and psychological needs of the local population are successfully identified, can one hope to separate overt symptoms from underlying causes, identify segments of the population amenable to influence and guard from potentially conflicting aims and desires in advance, therefore

maximise effect and minimise expenditure. Let us now take a brief look at the current state of psychological research on attitudes and needs.

Chapter II: Psychological Mechanisms

Part A – Attitudes, Attribution and Behaviour

Attitudes have long been accepted in Socio-psychological circles as one of “the most distinctive and indispensable concepts”¹¹. They derive their quantitative importance from the fact that people hold a great number of them towards objects, other people and themselves. For the social psychologist, they also derive qualitative importance from the fact that knowledge of people attitudes can provide crucial insights into people’s behaviour. As all psychological mechanisms, attitudes have a purpose for the individuals carrying them:

1. They serve to order ones social surroundings according to ones own psychological likes and dislikes
2. They serve as means of self-expression, differentiation and individuality
3. Attitudes have a knowledge function – they provide a cognitive framework according to which we organise, structure and process incoming information.

The knowledge function that attitudes hold is of particular importance not only because it provides a cognitive framework for processing and categorizing information in a variety of situations, but also because it manifests itself externally as a drive or an inhibition towards initiating any given behaviour. A very important concept in understanding attitudes, how attitudes lead to behaviour and how incoming information is accepted, rejected, organised and processed is the concept of “Cognitive Consistency”. This is “...the idea is that people strive to maintain consistency between:

¹¹ G. Allport as quoted in D.C. Pennington, K. Gillen and P. Hill “Attitudes, Attitude Change and Behaviour” *Social Psychology*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) p. 71

- a. Beliefs, Values and Attitudes
- b. Attitudes, Intentions and Behaviour
- c. Different Attitudes”¹²

“Cognitive dissonance”, creates a state of negative inner tension that the subject is likely to try and move away from when two or more of the above are in conflict with one another, and is one of the primary pre-cursors to attitude change.

Part B – Physical and Psychological Needs

References to needs of the Iraqi population will be based on a model developed by John Burton in 1990¹³, which has at its core the recognition that it is impossible to solve a conflict constructively, meaningfully and thus permanently if not all the parties’ basic human needs are identified and dealt with satisfactorily. Burton identified a number of differing needs and placed them under three headings: Biological needs, Safety needs and Esteem needs. Burton established that the first, as its name states, is biological, the second semi-psychological and the third purely psychological, yet that all three are equally important for cooperative and constructive communication and coexistence.

Biological Needs comprise those that have to be fulfilled to guarantee the immediate survival of the person, such as air, water and food; lack of these needs leads to apathy and death.

Safety Needs comprise security, shelter and protection from danger, a certain degree of predictability regarding future satisfaction of biological needs and a degree of

¹² K. Gillen and P. Hill “Attitudes, Attitude Change and Behaviour” *Social Psychology*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) p. 84-85

¹³ Burton, J.W. “Conflict: Human Needs Theory”, New York, St. Martins Press 1990

control or perceived control over one's environment; lack of fulfilment of these needs leads to fear, anxiety, rage and psychosis.

Esteem needs are divided into self-esteem and social-esteem and are those that have to be fulfilled for the individual to develop identification, self-worth and an ability to develop self-actualisation as well as attachment and thus empathy. Feelings of shame, guilt, inferiority, helplessness and injustice, associated with the frustration of these needs, will likely lead to anxiety, aggression or depression.

Burton acknowledged that there is an implicit hierarchy and that some needs are reliant on the fulfilment of others. Thus it is hard to satisfy security needs if there is insufficient or unpredictable satisfaction of biological needs and fulfilment of esteem needs can often be frustrated in the absence of security and a sense of control over ones environment. He has since¹⁴ accepted, however, that in certain circumstances the hierarchy of biological needs – safety needs – esteem needs is ignored. This would happen for example when one forgoes security or biological needs in order to satisfy esteem and attachment needs one might hold towards oneself, others or groups.

Having established the basic processes underlying attitudes and needs, let us now turn to the factors that could have impacted on attitude formation in both these populations.

¹⁴ M. Deutsch and P. Coleman "Justice and Conflict" *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc. 2000) p.53

Chapter III: Attitudes among US Army Soldiers and Reservists

Part A – Susceptibility to Propaganda and Psychological Defence Mechanisms

The majority of the attitudes formed in the minds of soldiers prior to invasion that are relevant for the current discussion, namely those dealing with Iraq or American-Iraqi relations, are to a major extent a product of a combination of socio-economic status and degree of exposure to news media and state-propaganda. This is because most of the American soldiery going into Gulf War II, unlike many Iraqis, never had direct experience either with Iraq, its policies or the average Iraqi citizen. Unfortunately, polls regarding psychological well-being and attitudes among soldiers are not openly available to the public. I attempted to overcome this problem by locating the soldier within a model John Galtung introduced in his paper on “Foreign Policy Opinion as a Function of Social Position”¹⁵. Once the soldier is located within this model, I can use polling data on attitudes that are available for the general American population and deduct the likely average soldier’s attitudes from there.

Galtung’s model essentially incorporates two dimensions: social position and exposure to mass media. Exposure to mass media as a factor in the formation of foreign policy attitudes is important because of the often little direct relation that members of a nation have with such foreign policies. Socio-economic status is important because, Galtung argues, this will affect the capacity for critical thinking, as well as the availability of different sources of information that can be used to judge any given issue. The average US army soldier or reservist can unfortunately clearly be situated as

¹⁵ J. Galtung, “Foreign Policy Opinion as a Function of Social Position”, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 1, No. ¾ (18th of July 1964), 206-231

coming predominantly from the lower working class of the south and Midwest of the United States¹⁶. Since after the end of conscription and the beginning of a completely voluntary army in the United States after the Second World War, the military sector had to compete for labour with the other civil service sectors. The relatively low price of training a soldier meant that the army primarily concentrated on recruiting the lower socio-economic classes, as they could be expected to be willing to join for lower expenditure, but remain equally effective¹⁷. It was also meant the beginning of benefits such as state-sponsored education upon completion of the military service, again largely drawing in those parts of the population that could otherwise simply not afford such costs.

The army also target primarily the young. From age 16 onwards, a southerner will find a newsletter of the territorial army in his mail-box on a monthly basis as well as updates regarding post-army employment opportunities, state-benefits acquired through serving in the military, mixed together with chances to “get to know the world”¹⁸, “visit exotic locations”¹⁹, and, more recently, the call for “fighting terrorists abroad so that the American homeland will remain safe”²⁰. With most other opportunities lacking and the pressure on providing at least rudimentary family support already prevalent at a young age (whether to support parents or their own families), the army does often present the most certain road to at least some form of financial security. According to Galtung, the problem is that in the above mentioned socio-economic environment and considering the average age of the soldiers sent to Iraq last year, it is very likely that neither analytical thinking skills nor the life-experience with

¹⁶ “US Army Recruiting and Public Affairs Offices” accessed at <http://www.usarec.army.mil/hq/apa/download/apadir.pdf>

¹⁷ R.F. Weigley, “The American Military and the Principle of Civilian Control from McClellan to Powell”, *Journal of Military History*, Vol. 57, No. 5, New Jersey (October 1993), 27-58

¹⁸ “Go-Army” Website, accessed at <http://www.goarmy.com/nfindex.jsp>

¹⁹ “Go-Army” Website, accessed at: <http://www.goarmy.com/nfindex.jsp>

²⁰ President Bush’s Address at the Republican National Convention 2004, New York

which to judge incoming information have been sufficiently developed to confront state-propaganda material critically.

Furthermore, the soldier is differentiated from the average population in terms of his exposure to such propaganda, because as an American soldier, American military adventures into foreign countries can very well affect his or her individual life directly. It is for this reason that many soldiers will pay very close, but unfortunately uncritical, since untrained, attention to news regarding military developments in foreign policy. On top of that, the news are likely to have been edited by the decision making centre of the society by the time it reaches the soldier. Combining these influences, one can classify the soldier as a high-vulnerability (meaning propaganda prone) segment of the population within Galtung's "Propaganda-Influence Model". It is therefore likely, that attitudes regarding propaganda-induced misperceptions will be more prevalent in this population than it would be in the average American. Note at this point also that obedience, authority, and a strictly hierarchical structure are the pillars of every well functioning army and cornerstones of army training. This has equipped the soldier with several psychological defence mechanisms that guard against possible attitude change by reducing feelings of above-mentioned "Cognitive Dissonance":

1. An action or decision is not attributed to oneself, but to the superior giving the order, thus absolving the individual soldier of direct responsibility
(EXTERNAL ATTRIBUTION)
2. Soldiers will likely have a higher threshold of experiencing cognitive dissonance as punishment and reward mechanisms within the army are based on obedience, not morality or values – a classic case of conditioning
(FORCED COMPLIANCE)

3. Cognitive dissonance can also be reduced by the conviction that one's superiors already took all considerations into account and made their choice based on a bigger picture than that accessible to one at the moment

(EXTERNAL JUSTIFICATION)

Thus, not only is the soldier susceptible to attitude formation by exposure to propaganda, but is also less likely to sway from such attitudes when confronted with conflicting material. Bearing this in mind, we will now take a look at the most common popular myths and misperceptions that have prevailed over the years or been implanted into the news media prior to the war.

Part B – Myths and Misperceptions: Presentation of American-Iraqi Relations in Popular Media and Other News Outlets

There are a number of common misperceptions regarding American-Iraqi relations which have frequently, even after having been corrected on several accounts, found their ways into the TV News and other media outlets and which, probably as a result of this, are prevalent among large parts of the American populace. These are primarily:

1. **Iraq expelled the Weapons Inspectors after it accused them of spying.**

FACT: US and UN officials leaked information in 1999 that the US had indeed inserted spies into the inspection team²¹. Furthermore, inspectors were *withdrawn* following their orders from the US and UK, who then started a four-day bombing campaign – a fact acknowledged at the time, but seemingly forgotten later on.²²

²¹ “Common Myths in Iraqi Coverage”, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), 27th of November 2002, accessed at <http://www.fair.org/activism/iraq-myths.html>

²² Washington Post, 18th of December 1998 as quoted in “Common Myths in Iraqi Coverage”, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), 27th of November 2002, accessed at <http://www.fair.org/activism/iraq-myths.html>

2. **The topic of sanctions and the detrimental effects they had on the Iraqi civilian population are often covered in a “Saddam says...”-manner; numbers are often vastly understated.** EXAMPLE: “...., which Baghdad claims led to thousands of preventable deaths”²³ – this is in the same range of accuracy as saying “dozens of people died on 9/11”.
3. **Saddam had the choice to prevent the civilian suffering caused by the UN-sanctions by simply complying with the relevant resolutions and the Security Council voted unanimously on these.** FACT: Both, President Clinton as well as his successor President Bush, made it clear in several interviews and addresses that neither of them intended for the sanctions regime to be lifted as long as Saddam Hussein remained in power²⁴. This was reinforced by the US and UK being the sole nations continuously vetoing reviews of the effects of the sanctions, as well as boycotting resolutions asking for an easing or lifting of the sanctions²⁵.

The above myths combined convey a picture that allows the public to create an image of itself which corresponds to the moral values of justice and liberty by internalising three main beliefs:

1. The firm belief that Saddam is the “bad guy” – an evil, murdering tyrant with hardly a comparison in recent history

²³ TIME Magazine, 25th of November 2002 as quoted in “Common Myths in Iraqi Coverage”, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), 27th of November 2002, accessed at <http://www.fair.org/activism/iraq-myths.html>

²⁴ “Autopsy of a Disaster: US Sanctions Policy in Iraq” Institute for Public Accuracy (IPA), November 13th 1998, accessed at <http://www.accuracy.org/iraq.htm>

²⁵ H. v. Sponeck “Iraq: Economic Sanctions and the Humanitarian Exemption – An Example of Failure”, 21st of February 2002, accessed at <http://www.casi.org.uk/oldsites/iht/articles/vonsponeck-humanitarian-exemption.html>

2. The belief that the United States has been acting in the interest of the Iraqi people and in accordance with its values, as well as international standards and with international support
3. And, following from these, the feeling that should the United States free the Iraqi people from Saddam, they will undoubtedly be seen as liberators, not aggressive occupiers

In addition to these misperceptions, which cannot only be found in American, but indeed in most Western popular perception (with maybe the exception of opinions on the sanctions-regime), there are a number of “Media-Myths” which the Bush-administration has consciously planted in America in the run-up to Gulf War II, and which have been met with a lot of criticism in much of the rest of the world, not least due to being seen as tools for the manipulation of public opinion to support an unjust war. Presented here are the three most common Myths found among Americans according to a poll conducted by the Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA)²⁶:

1. **There is concrete evidence showing conclusively that Iraq’s WMD program is still up and running and that weaponry retained after Gulf War I has not been destroyed and presents a “clear and present danger”.** Although much of the international community believed indeed that Saddam Hussein had, if not an active WMD program, than at least some left-over of his unaccounted-for chemical stockpiles, all of the evidence the US presented in support of this was either inconclusive, extremely circumstantial, has been insufficiently investigated to substantiate policy-claims on their basis

²⁶ <http://www.pipa.org>

or, in some instances, even proven to be complete fabrication on the part of both US and UK administrations²⁷.

2. **World Opinion favours the United States going to war with Iraq.**

It was always clear and internationally acknowledged that Saddam was a very brutal and tyrannical leader and that his people suffered terribly under his rule (amongst other things). Yet, this was never seen by a majority as reason to invade a sovereign country not presenting a current threat and thus violating the very foundations international law and international relations are based on. The up to thirty countries²⁸ that the US included in its “Coalition of the Willing” at some point were mostly small countries that have been promised assistance or aid²⁹ and some, for example Haiti, have since protested to have been counted to this group in the first place. Also, in many countries that ended up supporting the United States in some form or another, public opinion was actually against the war, as was the case with Spain, Britain, or Turkey.

3. **There is a link between Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi regime, and the terrorist organisation *al-Qa’ida* and thus, even more importantly, between them and the events of September 11th 2001.**

Several examples will serve to clarify the point:

- i. October 2001: After Anthrax-scares in the US and UK, CIA officials brief journalists with striking level of detail on an

²⁷ e.g., UK’s “Iraq bought Uranium from Nigeria”-claims, or Colin Powell’s presentation of satellite-pictures of “mobile chemical weapons production facilities” at the UN

²⁸ BBC News Report “US Names Coalition of the Willing”, 18th of March 2003, accessed at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/2862343.stm>

²⁹ S. Anderson, P. Bennis and J. Cavanagh “Coalition of the Willing of Coalition of the Coerced? – How the Bush Administration Influences Allies in its War on Iraq”, Institute for Policy Studies, 26th of February 2003, accessed at <http://www.ips-dc.org/COERCED.pdf>

alleged meeting that took place between Mohamed Atta (leader of the 19-man 9/11 suicide squad) and a top Iraqi intelligence officer in Prague. October 2002, CIA director George Tenet tells Congress that no supporting evidence has been found.³⁰

- ii. February 2003: The attempt to present a recording by Osama Bin-Laden, calling for Muslims everywhere to exact revenge upon America should it invade Iraq, as proof that *al-Qa'ida* and Saddam are collaborating. Ari Fleischer, Whitehouse spokesman, comments on the 13th of February: "If that is not an unholy partnership I have not heard of one.(...)The linking of Iraq with *al-Qa'ida* is the nightmare people have warned about"³¹
- iii. March 2003: In a prime-time press-conference which focussed solely on Iraq and the reasons for going to war with Iraq, President Bush mentioned 9/11 eight times, four of which in the same sentence as Saddam Hussein (although never going as far as to explicitly blaming him for the attacks).³²

22% of people interviewed believed the myth that there was hard evidence of WMD found in Iraq, 25% believed that world opinion favoured the US to go to war,

³⁰ P. Lashmar and R. Whitaker, "Ordinary Americans Think Bin Laden and Saddam Are the Same", *The Independent* 2nd of February 2003, accessed at <http://www.president-bush.com/osamabinhussein.html>

³¹ as quoted in N. Solomon, "Playing the Terrorism Card", *February* 13th 2003, accessed at http://www.dissidentvoice.org/Articles2/Solomon_TerrorismCard.htm

³² L. Feldman "The Impact of Bush Linking 9/11 and Iraq", 14th of March 2003, accessed at <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/iraq/media/2003/0314impactbush.htm>

and 48% believed that there was a link between Iraq and *al-Qa'ida*. Overall, the poll found that 60% of the populace held one or more of these false beliefs.³³

I purposefully elaborated on the last myth, as it is here that the administration seems to have been most successful in propagating it among large parts of the population. In an earlier poll, also conducted by PIPA, right after the 9/11 attacks, citizens were asked open-ended questions about possible perpetrators of the attacks - only 3% mentioned Iraq or Saddam Hussein³⁴. This presents a fifteen-fold increase in public perception of a claim that has no basis in evidence and is widely refuted around much of the rest of the world.

The poll found also that there was a strong link between the number of misperceptions held by a person and their support for war. Of those people claiming to have none of these misconceptions only an average of 23% supported action in Iraq. This rose to 53% when one misconception was held, 78% when two were held, and 84% when all three misconception were believed to be true³⁵.

All these polls were conducted on a civilian population sample – it is thus important to remember at this point that, as we have mentioned above, the soldier represents a special slice of the populace which is probably significantly more prone to influence through propaganda than the average citizen. Bearing these factors in mind it is likely that percentages holding these misconceptions among the US army population (and thus unfounded support for the war) will be somewhat higher than those found in the general population.

The effect this has on large parts of the American soldiery (as well as citizenry) is the emergence of an image construction of Iraqis effectively consisting of two extreme poles: on the one side is the “Innocent Civilian”, who hates Saddam, wants the

³³ <http://www.pipa.org>

³⁴ <http://www.pipa.org>

³⁵ <http://www.pipa.org>

US to come, will see them as liberators, etc., on the other side the “Saddam Loyalist” or “Insurgent/Terrorist”, who hates the US and the values it stands for (liberty, justice, equality) and is a direct enemy of the US, the free world and the Iraqis (and maybe even had a hand in 9/11 or other *al-Qa'ida* operations).

Chapter IV: Attitudes among the Iraqi Populace

Part A: Identification of the Major Influences in Iraqi Attitude

Formation

Iraqi citizens, however, might be predisposed to a somewhat different view of themselves, America and their relationship. As in the US-army population discussed above, we encounter problems regarding either the absence, or reliability of direct information on Iraqi attitudes. Believable polls regarding Iraqi public opinion under Saddam Hussein's rule are simply not available³⁶ and even the polls that have been conducted since the beginning of the occupation suffer from serious short-comings, primarily with regards to how representative sample-populations of these studies are of pan-Iraqi attitudes and desires³⁷. I will therefore not claim to be basing my conclusions on "unquestionable facts" or pretend to have "certain knowledge" of Iraqi attitudes prior to the second US invasion in 2004. Instead, I will take the approach of reviewing the literature on Iraq's internal structure and its relations with America through the lens of standard attitude-formation literature and thereby deduct which attitudes might be prevalent.

As many Iraqis already had the "pleasure" of experiencing American-Iraqi relations and policies rather more directly than their US-army counterparts, the number of sources of information that can be used, or manipulated, for that matter, for attitude formation are that much greater. Major influences in Iraqi attitude formation can be traced back to three dimensions: the relationship an Iraqi has with the regime of

³⁶ This predisposes the unreliability of Ba'ath-regime polls, such as the 2002 elections with over 98% of people allegedly having voted for Saddam

³⁷ S. Smith, "A Closer Look at the Polls: Do Most Iraqis *Really* Want The US To Stay?", 3rd of April 2004, accessed at <http://www.counterpunch.org/smith04032004.html>

Saddam Hussein, the direct historical experience with American policy or military and lastly the state-propaganda used to amplify and distort such historical encounters. Note, however, that these categories can potentially overlap: for example, relationship with the regime will directly affect to what extent a group or section of the population will try to establish ties with outsiders (e.g. Kurdish-American relations).

Part B: Relationship with the Regime

The relationship a person has with the existing regime is obviously a rather important clue as to how he or she will perceive an invading force that has explicitly stated as its aim the “removal of this tyrannical regime and the persecution those responsible for its perpetuation.”³⁸ With respect to this and similar statements made in the run-up to the invasion, there must have also been considerable anxiety as to whether this applied to the entire Ba’ath party apparatus or only those people involved in the regime’s military and authoritarian structures.

Those who had most to lose were obviously Saddam himself and those directly embedded in Saddam’s patron-client networks and thus directly benefiting from his personal rule. This would primarily include government ministers or other high administration officials and officers in the military as well as family members (the two often coincided). But also a considerable part of the population, Sunni Arabs, for one, had reason to be afraid of anything that might spell an end to their dominance over the majority Shiite population, not least due to fear of revenge and reprisals. Demographic enclaves that had been established by Saddam for economic/political purposes faced a

³⁸ “President Says Saddam Must Leave Iraq Within 48 Hours”, Remarks by President Bush in Address to the Nation, 17th of March 2003, accessed at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030317-7.html>

similar problem, as they would be exposed to the rather hostile environment in which they would find themselves if their support from the regime should break down.

At the other end of the spectrum are those that were repressed: the Kurds and the Shiites together make up over 70% of Iraq's population and those who had been exposed to the greatest suffering and marginalisation under Saddam. Excluded from the circles of the regime and with civil support and political representation only as far as it was necessary or advantageous for Saddam, their status as the undisputed underdogs in the country could only improve. Exiles and Iraqi Diasporas abroad as well as political prisoners could also expect a direct gain as they can now be expected to be able to return, have a political career, visit families, transfer money, be released.

Part C: Historical Encounters³⁹

To understand how Iraqis might have felt about the 1991 invasion of their country, it is necessary to look at the developments that preceded it not from an international, but from an Iraqi-historical standpoint. The economic and political predicament that the Iran-Iraq war had landed Saddam Hussein in was indeed enormous and threatened to undermine him in several ways. For one, he faced a shortage of funds to keep the wheels of patronage, on which his rule was based, turning. Furthermore, the unsustainability of a consumption-led, import-oriented economy and the high indebtedness to a wide range of creditors directly challenged the credibility of Saddam's image as an all-powerful leader⁴⁰. Iraq's regional allies were in no way

³⁹ The discussion on historical encounters will be limited to the period subsequent to the first Gulf War in 1991 up until the second Gulf War in March 2003. This is because prior to this, America was regarded in Iraq as an ally, at least up until the Iran-Contra affair, but was internationally declared neutral. It was thus not in the interest of either country to pronounce any kind of involvement they might have with one another – a circumstance that would change with the invasion of Kuwait in late 1990.

⁴⁰ C. Tripp "The Ba'th and the Rule of Saddam Hussein" *A History of Iraq*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p. 251

forthcoming either. “Unsuccessful was the attempt to boost oil-revenues by persuading OPEC to raise the price of oil through new restrictive quotas – an effort largely undermined by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. It was also these two countries that throughout the Iran-Iraq war had given approximately \$40 billion to Iraq in loans and who now resided over a sizeable part of Iraq’s massive debt repayment burden, which at the time amounted to over 50% of Iraq’s oil-revenues⁴¹. Repeated attempts by Iraq to convince them to renegotiate these debts as a grant were also unsuccessful, not to mention Iraqi suggestions that they should take over a rather sizeable chunk of Iraq’s reconstruction burden⁴².

To a considerable degree, therefore, the invasion of Kuwait can be said to be an effect of the long war with Iran. For many Iraqis, however, it must have also seemed like a repetition of that war in more than one way. Once again, their “great leader” made ecstatic claims about the unity of Iraq and how Kuwait and the Kuwaitis had “unjustly [been] severed from their homeland and betrayed of their Iraqi destiny”⁴³ – all too reminiscent of the claims made regarding the *Shatt al-Arab* waterway ten years earlier that started the Iran-Iraq war. Exhausted and still suffering from what was described as “one of the great human tragedies in Middle Eastern history”⁴⁴, pan-Arab rhetoric found more appeal in the Arab population of other countries than that of Iraq⁴⁵. However, a year and a half of what was perceived as arrogance from Kuwait and Saudi-

Arabia and refusal to alleviate severe economic hardship in the face of first pleading

⁴¹ C. Tripp “The Ba’th and the Rule of Saddam Hussein” *A History of Iraq*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p. 251

⁴² C. Tripp “The Ba’th and the Rule of Saddam Hussein” *A History of Iraq*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p. 252

⁴³ Saddam Speech as quoted in C. Tripp “The Ba’th and the Rule of Saddam Hussein” *A History of Iraq*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p. 252

⁴⁴ S.R. Shalom, “The United States and the Iran-Iraq War”, February 1990, accessed at <http://www.zmag.org/zmag/articles/ShalomIranIraq.html>

⁴⁵ which can be seen by the fact that shows of support “from Beirut to Nablus, Annan, Sana and Algiers” (Source: I.S. Lustig “The Absence of Middle-Eastern Great Powers: Political “Backwardness” in Historical Perspective”, *International Organisation*, 51(4), 1997, p.672), but not in Baghdad (C. Tripp “The Ba’th and the Rule of Saddam Hussein” *A History of Iraq*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p. 251)

and then ever more threatening language did not only knock Saddam's pride a little, but also that of the wider Iraqi population.

Important here is not necessarily the fact that the Iraqi population supported the war with Kuwait to a certain degree, but that in the minds of most of Iraqis, this was simply seen as yet another of Saddam's military-political manoeuvres – always aimed as much at the reshuffling of domestic political and military structures as it was at strengthening Iraq's position in the region as a whole or his personal image as supreme leader – and therefore nothing particularly new. Likely then, that when the United States denounced the invasion in the UN Security Council as “grave and unacceptable violation of international law” and started pointing at Saddam Hussein's human rights record, it was largely met with little comprehension by those who had just been through a bloody and gruesome, eight-year long battle that had seen the deployment of chemical weaponry on a regular basis and had enjoyed continued US-support throughout⁴⁶. Furthermore, those, admittedly minor, sections of the Iraqi population sympathetic to the idea of a pan-Arab state and those angry at the double standards employed at the UN when dealing with belligerent occupation perpetrated by Israel instead of Iraq, probably saw the subsequent US/UK intervention as simply one in a long string of western attempts to keep Middle Eastern countries in their original, colonial shell and deny the Arab race its struggle for greatness and self-determination.

America and the United Kingdom did not exactly use the first Gulf War to make a good name for themselves with the Iraqi population neither. Despite initial claims that

⁴⁶ S.R. Shalom, “The United States and the Iran-Iraq War”, February 1990, accessed at <http://www.zmag.org/zmag/articles/ShalomIranIraq.html>

the intervention was aimed only at Iraq's armed forces and their expulsion from Kuwaiti territory, the reality soon belied such conceptions:

The 43-day bombing campaign that marked the beginning of operation Desert Storm, wreaked havoc on large parts of the Iraqi infrastructure and caused massive civilian casualties. During the campaign the list of targets was extended from 400 to 700⁴⁷ as the focus and aim of the bombings shifted from gaining military or strategic advantages to disabling Iraqi society at large⁴⁸. Lack of understanding as to the initial causes of such a ferocious and widespread use of force⁴⁹ only amplified the feeling of helplessness that must have been prevalent in the face of such awesome destructive power and the distinct feeling that more than just the regime was being under attack.⁵⁰ Statements in direct contrast to the earlier portrayals by US and UK authorities of a campaign aimed solely at the regime were expressed as little as three weeks into the bombings⁵¹. Three main points emerged from these statements:

1. Structures where it was known that Iraq would be unable to rebuild these without western assistance were heavily targeted and almost exclusively destroyed (among civilian structures

⁴⁷ B. Gellman "Allied War Struck Broadly in Iraq Officials Acknowledge Strategy Went Beyond Purely Military Targets", Washington Post, 23rd of June 1991, accessed at http://www.whodies.com/full/wp_allied_war_struck_broadly_in_iraq.html

⁴⁸ B. Gellman "Allied War Struck Broadly in Iraq Officials Acknowledge Strategy Went Beyond Purely Military Targets", Washington Post, 23rd of June 1991, accessed at http://www.whodies.com/full/wp_allied_war_struck_broadly_in_iraq.html

⁴⁹ 109.876 sorties were flown during the campaign, giving an average of 2.555 sorties every single day. Source: "Operation Desert Storm", accessed at http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/desert_storm.htm

⁵⁰ Neither were such feelings entirely a product of the Iraqi people's imagination. A senior Air Force officer, responding to the question of whether the allies had tried their utmost to not harm innocent Iraqis during their bombing campaign, expressed his view in late 1991 that "the definition of innocent gets to be a little bit unclear.... many Iraqis supported the invasion of Kuwait.... They do live there and ultimately the people have some control over what goes on in their country" The interview took place around the same time that Saddam Hussein Republican Guard was executing thousands of Shiites and Kurds (quoted in B. Gellman "Allied War Struck Broadly in Iraq Officials Acknowledge Strategy Went Beyond Purely Military Targets", Washington Post, 23rd of June 1991, accessed at http://www.whodies.com/full/wp_allied_war_struck_broadly_in_iraq.html)

⁵¹ B. Gellman "Allied War Struck Broadly in Iraq Officials Acknowledge Strategy Went Beyond Purely Military Targets", Washington Post, 23rd of June 1991, accessed at http://www.whodies.com/full/wp_allied_war_struck_broadly_in_iraq.html

these included electrical switching stations, water purification plants and pharmaceutical complexes)

2. Military planners hoped the bombing would amplify the economic and psychological impact of the sanctions
3. They also hoped that widespread economic hardship would put the population in a mood of rebellion and that the Iraqi citizens would rise against their leader

And indeed, the protests and armed resistance that followed in the Kurdish North and the Shi'ite South were undoubtedly the result of the US propaganda campaign claiming to support any Iraqi attempts at liberating themselves from the Hussein regime. When no help was subsequently forthcoming, however, and the Allies, after having advanced to the gates of Baghdad, simply withdrew their armies as well as all support for these uprisings, they most likely alienated large parts of the Iraqi population that would otherwise have been amenable to the prospect of temporary foreign occupation. No-fly zones in the North and the South of the country did not apply to helicopters, meaning that the Iraqi army was only marginally handicapped in its ruthless hunt for the "traitors of the regime" - the presence of coalition aircraft patrolling the skies above must simply have made it seem that much more farcical. The "Safe-Havens" established for the Kurdish population only materialised 16 days, thousands of dead and hundreds of thousands of replaced Kurds later. Similar measures for the Shi'ite population in the South were never set in place and the exact body-count, estimated in the tens-of-thousands, will probably never be known. All in all the US Census Bureau demographer Beth Osborne Daponte, who was assigned in 1992 to estimate the number of total casualties that came about as a result of the war, the

subsequent repression of Shia and Kurds and immediate post-war deprivation, put the numbers at 86.000 men, 40.000 women and 32.000 children⁵².

Over a decade of economic sanctions was to drive up these numbers considerably, though. A global review of child health by UNICEF in 2000, for example, shows that Iraq has had a 160 percent increase in child mortality, the highest of all 188 countries surveyed for the 1990 to 1999 period. Illiteracy is once again on the increase in Iraq; 20 percent in 1987, 42 percent in 1998. All in all, UNICEF estimates that as many as 1.5 million people, half of them children, died prematurely from preventable causes during the 13 years of sanctions⁵³. This had the effect that at the time of the second invasion in 2003, 40.3% of Iraqis were below 15 years old⁵⁴, meaning that these children had spent most of their lives under the crippling conditions of these sanctions – some maybe could remember vague pictures from their early childhood or were told by their elders of a better time, when their friends and family did not used to die of malnutrition, diarrhoea and childhood cancer so much.

If this sounds “far-fetched” or “utopian”, it might be worthwhile to recall that despite a long and ferocious war with Iran and the above-mentioned economic difficulties it faced, “Iraq had still resources and used them not just for its defence budget. Socio-economic indicators for health, water, electricity, sanitation and certainly for education identified Iraq as the most progressive country in the Middle East. Yet,

⁵² After months of protests the Census Bureau retracted the report and published it 2 weeks later with reduced numbers and the data on women and children removed. A pentagon report on the Gulf War released a few weeks after that, had its chapter on Iraqi casualties removed (Source: “Autopsy of a Disaster: US Sanctions Policy in Iraq” Institute for Public Accuracy (IPA), November 13th 1998, accessed at <http://www.accuracy.org/iarq.htm>)

⁵³ H. v. Sponeck “Iraq: Economic Sanctions and the Humanitarian Exemption – An Example of Failure”, 21st of February 2002, accessed at <http://www.casi.org.uk/oldsites/ih/articles/vonsponeck-humanitarian-exemption.html>

⁵⁴ CIA - World Factbook, accessed at <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/iz.html>

since 1990, Iraq has become an increasingly impoverished and, in economic and social terms, poorly performing state”.⁵⁵

Deterioration commenced quickly, spread far and would last for over a decade as Saddam quickly began integrating the sanctions regime into his punishment and reward mechanisms. Already in May 1991, UNICEF reported 52 cases of cholera as well as cases of marasmus and kwashiorkor – diseases indicating severe malnutrition that had not had been seen in Iraq for 50 years⁵⁶. During the fighting the US military also left approximately 300 tonnes of depleted uranium (or Uranium 238) shells on the battlefield in spent ammunition⁵⁷. Uranium 238 is a potent radioactive carcinogen with a half-life of 4.5 billion years that can easily penetrate the food chain and contaminate water and cause cancer in the kidney, lung, bone and blood. The use of this material in ammunitions and even tank-armour has caused a heated debate in the United States as to being the likely (almost definite) cause of the famous “Gulf War Syndrome”. That the same syndrome also affected the Iraqi children, between 10 and 20 times more susceptible to radiation than adults, on a much larger scale, contributing substantially to the six to twelve times increase in the incidence of childhood leukaemia and cancer that has been observed since⁵⁸, does somehow not make the headlines in the Western media.

As the death toll began to reach new heights, so did apparently the US-UK determination not to lift the sanctions as long as Saddam Hussein remained in place – a condition that exceeded those set Iraq by the Security Council in resolutions 687⁵⁹ and

⁵⁵ H. v. Sponeck “Iraq: Economic Sanctions and the Humanitarian Exemption – An Example of Failure”, 21st of February 2002, accessed at <http://www.casi.org.uk/oldsites/ih/articles/vonsponeck-humanitarian-exemption.html>

⁵⁶ as quoted in T.J. Nagy “The Secret Behind The Sanctions: How the US intentionally destroyed Iraq’s Water Supply”, September 2001, accessed at <http://www.progressive.org/0801issue/nagy/0901.html>

⁵⁷ H. Caldicott, “The Spoils of War”, 6th of October 2002, accessed at <http://www.afsc.org/pwork/0212/021213.htm>

⁵⁸ H. Caldicott, “The Spoils of War”, 6th of October 2002, accessed at <http://www.afsc.org/pwork/0212/021213.htm>

⁵⁹ Dealing with weapons inspections, return of Kuwaiti properties seized and Iraqi liability for all losses and damage resulting from Iraq’s occupation of Kuwait

later 1137⁶⁰ and which brought fierce opposition from France and Russia. On May the 20th 1991 President Bush I stated bluntly that:” My view is that we don’t want to lift these sanctions as long as Saddam Hussein is in power”⁶¹. Similarly, John Major had told the press earlier on in the month that the UK would “veto any attempt to weaken sanctions against Iraq for so long as Saddam Hussein remains in power”⁶² - successive governments of both countries would take a similar stance - never failing to mention, however that “we would welcome any internal uprising”⁶³

The sanctions and the effect they had on the civilian population of Iraq have caused widespread complaint and have been a wellspring of anti-American sentiment throughout the Middle East⁶⁴ that regularly feature in Osama bin-Laden’s campaign videos – to assume that they should not have had an at least similar effect on the views and attitudes the Iraqis themselves hold towards America would be right-out naïve.

To conclude, the history of American-Iraqi relations will in the minds of many Iraqis, and especially Arab Iraqis, very likely consist the following or a similar sequence: America attacks for unknown or at best dubious reasons – Civilian population and infrastructure are heavily targeted, but Saddam is not removed – similarly, uprisings are encouraged but not supported – sanctions and restrictions are implemented leading to grave deterioration of living standards generally, but leaving the regime in terms of domestic projection of power largely untouched – while the sanctions regime is in place, the US and UK let it repeatedly be known that no lifting

⁶⁰ Dealing with the UNSCOM inspectors specifically

⁶¹ “Autopsy of a Disaster: US Sanctions Policy in Iraq” Institute for Public Accuracy (IPA), November 13th 1998, accessed at <http://www.accuracy.org/iarq.htm>

⁶² J. Pienarre and L. Doyle, “UK Maintains Tough Line on Sanctions Against Iraq”, The Independent, 11th of May 1991, accessed at <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/iraq/history/1991major.htm>

⁶³ “Autopsy of a Disaster: US Sanctions Policy in Iraq” Institute for Public Accuracy (IPA), November 13th 1998, accessed at <http://www.accuracy.org/iarq.htm>

⁶⁴ “Causes of 9/11: U.N. Sanctions on Iraq?” Terrorism: Question & Answers, Council on Foreign Relations, accessed at <http://www.terrorismanswers.org/causes/iraq.html>

comes into question unless there is a regime-change – US and UK also continue to repeatedly encourage uprisings, but supply little support themselves.

To clarify, my argument is not that the people of Iraq did not know that Saddam was at the root of most of their suffering. It is however, that what the UK and US administrations have achieved in establishing with their policies in Iraq between 1991 and 2003 is a condition in which the civilian Iraqi population was punished severely for an inability to change the brutal regime under which they have to live. This is certainly not an environment conducive to creating a picture of Americans as well-meaning liberators.

Part C – State Propaganda of the Regime

Thus, in comparison to the American soldier, propaganda probably takes a rather secondary place in how the average Iraqi formed his or her attitudes towards their future occupier. Clearly, Saddam would not be Saddam had he not tried to milk every opportunity to amplify and distort such actions to suit his own political needs best. However, it is doubtful that his propaganda rhetoric was aimed at giving America a bad name *per se*. Rather, it is more likely that he used propaganda in combination with the already apparent catastrophic consequences of American politics on Iraqi citizens to distract the international community from his own atrocities (which he was probably only able to do to a limited extent), present economic and social shortcomings as result of aggressive and superior foreign powers and, in the later stages of the sanctions, present himself as the one and only person that can save and protect Iraq, and maintain its integrity⁶⁵.

⁶⁵ C. Tripp “Iraq Under Sanctions And the Long Aftermath of the Gulf War” *A History of Iraq*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) p. 262

Again, to what degree Saddam was successful in achieving these aims through propaganda is difficult to ascertain for sure, as the relevant data on type and amount of exposure or availability to news and other material is not readily available for the period preceding the second Gulf War. It can be assumed with some confidence, however, that none of the above were conducive to improving America's image in Iraq⁶⁶ and only added to already felt grievances.

⁶⁶ To mind comes a play claimed to be written by Saddam himself, that had its opening for Saddam's 65th on the 26th of April 2002. The play tells the story of an Iraqi woman that is raped and left to bleed on the day of the first invasion and is in (licensed) critic's eyes supposed to depict the story of Iraq (Source: "Birthday Boy Saddam stages his latest anti-US protest in Baghdad", The Sunday Express, 28th of April 2002, accessed at http://www.indianexpress.com/full_story.php?content_id=1690)

Chapter V: Impact of Attitude Formation on Conflict Dynamics - Difficulties Pre-programmed...

It becomes immediately evident that there is a huge difference as to how the two populations perceive themselves, one another and their relation. Obviously, both populations, Iraqis and American soldiers, fall prey to predispositions and attribution biases alike. Yet, the origins of attitudes differ greatly: whereas the Iraqi population will likely have formed their views of America based on actual direct effects carried away from real interaction, the American soldier is more likely to have evolved the majority of his/her attitudes about Iraqis as a result of exposure to propaganda – the latter evidently much more open to influence⁶⁷. Furthermore it is expected that whatever the situation, the attitudes of one's own forces are, due to much tighter supervision and controls, more easily accessible and thus easier to manipulate. For these reasons it is among his own forces that the occupier can implement changes most effectively and rapidly - and frankly, there have been serious shortcomings in the way the administration handled attitude formation and stereotyping in its soldier population, even if at the time it was considered necessary in order to gain domestic support for the War.

One big problem is that both categories, “Innocent Civilian” and “Insurgent/Terrorist”, represent extreme and unlikely combinations of attitudes as well as irrational pairings of behaviour and attitude-attribution⁶⁸ so that they will realistically only be able to describe a minute amount of the Iraqi population. The yawning gap

⁶⁷ What I mean here is that it would be harder to tell an Iraqi father that his child did not actually die from malnutrition resulting from the sanctions regime, than it would be to tell a US soldier that maybe not all Iraqis that do not want the US in Iraq are terrorists

⁶⁸ For example the absence of any logical or causal link of pairing “Innocent Civilian” with the attitude “will see the US as liberators” or the pairing “Insurgent/Terrorist” with the attitude “hates freedom”

between these two poles, which is crammed with the vast majority of Iraqis, remains unacknowledged to date. They will thus display behaviour that is inconsistent with the established cognitive structures of the soldier resulting either in misclassification or ambiguity, possibly anxiety, experienced by him or her.

This, however, is not the major “cognitive crime” the US administration is guilty of: the images that have been nurtured in the mind of the soldier *both* have distinctly discriminating tones to them. The Terrorist/Insurgent categorisation displays blatant demonising, and therefore assumes first a moral superiority and secondly the presence of direct threat to those superior values. The Innocent/Civilian category as well suffers from similar failure. Created is an image of a helpless people in need and want of those superior values that will welcome the western attempts at education with open arms. This view of “benign father”, however, can easily turn into a more ugly form of “education” if expectations are disappointed, as the foundations for discrimination are already laid. And due to the above-mentioned shortcomings in identifying-power of the two categories, and the absence of any real cultural familiarity between the two populations, there are likely to be ample ambiguous or “disappointing” situations. Here we have the first point of direct friction between Iraqi and American perceptions of reality.

Underlying these discriminating attitudes, lay processes of Moral Exclusion⁶⁹. Moral exclusion presents itself as a host of different psychological mechanisms aimed at justifying behaviour that would normally be regarded immoral by excluding the target or target group from one’s moral community.⁷⁰ The major mechanisms of justification are:

⁶⁹ M. Deutsch and P. Coleman “Justice and Conflict” *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc. 2000) p.50

⁷⁰ Importantly, as we shall see later, it resides not just in individuals, but also in institutions, where it significantly contributes to the persistence of what is known as structural violence.

1. Appealing to a higher moral value
2. Re-labelling behaviour
3. Minimizing/Ignoring the impact of the behaviour
4. Blaming the victim
5. Isolation and Desensitisation from the consequences

Thus, not only are the “main representatives” of the US in Iraq (the army soldiers) untrained in the art of counter-insurgency and therefore only marginally able to differentiate between friendly, neutral, and hostile, but more importantly, the attitudes with which they were imbued before they went into battle do not include a “neutral” and are inherently discriminatory. Through the underlying (often even subconscious⁷¹) discriminatory tendencies they are more likely to attribute behaviour negatively in ambiguous situations – negatively in this case meaning evil, murdering terrorist that might have an indirect link to the greatest attack ever committed on American territory⁷².

This can set in motion a case of self-fulfilling prophecy with the following possible sequence. First, behaviour by an Iraqi is not understood and negatively attributed. This results in activation of the “Terrorist/Insurgent” stereotype which is accompanied by a corresponding script with regards to best possible behaviour towards the target identified such. The script activated will at best be cautious, at worst aggressive, both of which inhibit communication and likely enhance the negative stereotypes of Westerners the Iraqi might have⁷³. This can then produce a corresponding negative reaction in the Iraqi, either overtly, but most likely covertly due

⁷¹ Krosnick et. Al. (1992) as referenced in D.C. Pennington, K. Gillen and P. Hill “Attitudes, Attitude Change and Behaviour” *Social Psychology*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) p. 73

⁷² indeed what may startle is the fact that for the last year and a half, recruitment numbers have not once dropped below requested levels. Increasing numbers of soldier now say that they want to go to Iraq because “by fighting the terrorists abroad, I can stop them from attacking the homeland and thus preserve the American way of life” (Source: “Ten Solid Reasons for Joining The Army”, accessed at <http://www.rttc.army.mil/empinfo/reasons.htm>

⁷³

to the inherent power-differentials, which can then be observed by the American and used to support the initial identification of the target as “Insurgent/Terrorist”. The circle is complete and by the next time a similar situation is faced, negative attribution has been reinforced and its threshold lowered setting the same chain in motion more easily. Furthermore, through absence of between-party communication and presence of inter-party communication, there will be little challenge to established cognitive structures and likely also a horizontal spread (meaning across the populations) of the attitude as well as a vertical one (meaning intensification of the attitude in each individual). Given the number of interactions that take place between soldiers and civilians on a daily basis, even a small percentage of troops disposed towards such negative attribution styles can over time have a large accumulative impact.

Yet, having said all this, it would be unjust to blame the soldiers personally for the stereotypes and the likely negative predispositions they bring with them, as they are to large extent the product of their social and military environment. Even the argument that most crimes committed by occupation-soldiers are “the result of twisted individuals”⁷⁴ does not stick, as all US-army personnel are, or at least are required to be, screened for psychological problems. Furthermore, although the presence of such factors might go some way in explaining the constant deterioration of American-Iraqi relations, it can hardly account for the speed and scale in which anti-American sentiment took hold even among large parts of the Shiite population previously supportive of the American invasion⁷⁵.

⁷⁴ Statement made by Donald Rumsfeld as quoted in T. Lang “The Real Abu-Ghraib Scandal – When Will The Real Guilt Be Exposed?”, 9th of August 2004, accessed at <http://www.etherzone.com/2004/lang080904.shtml>

⁷⁵ A poll conducted in and around Baghdad a few days after its fall found that in the mainly Shiite slums of Sadr City, support for the coalition at two-thirds (Source: J. Lobe, “From Liberation to Counter-Insurgency” 15th of June 2003, Accessed at: http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/EF18Ak01.html

Chapter VI: Shortcomings of the Occupational Strategy in Dealing with Iraqi Needs

Part A – Initial Steps: Political Desertification, Economic Exclusion and the “Beginning of the End”

By the end of combat operations, most needs of the average Iraqi must have been severely compromised: deterioration of the security situation amidst widespread looting, reprisal killings and personal vendettas, made possible by the 3-week near vacuum of any form of government presence and the almost total breakdown of the sanitary and civil infrastructure undermined primarily basic and security needs. The fault for this should not, and probably wasn't by most Iraqis, be placed squarely on the shoulders of the invading forces. Certainly, the absence of law, order and most public services that followed the fall of the regime⁷⁶ was as much a result of Saddam's last actions as it was of the occupying power's first. The release of 22.000 criminals⁷⁷ from Iraq's prisons while battle was still going on multiplied the presence and operational capabilities of high-profile organised crime gangs, and the number of raided arms caches during that time is, as of yet, unknown, and will probably remain so. Further, the regime literally seemed to “disappear” overnight. Until a day before the large Saddam Hussein statue was pulled down on Baghdad Square, the Iraqi Information Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf had still regularly appeared on television for his morning

⁷⁶ The fall of the regime is in this case meant to be the 9th of April 2003, the day on which Baghdad fell and on which Iraqi state-officials were nowhere to be found in the city

⁷⁷ “Coalition Says Iraqi Regime Has Lost Control of Baghdad”, April 9th 2003, accessed at http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/jan-june03/baghdad_4-9.html– Note, however, that this number is contradicted by a statement made by Donald Rumsfeld on July 8th 2003 claiming the number is closer to 100.000 (as quoted in “US Evaluate Success of Operation Desert Scorpion”, 8th of July 2003, accessed at <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/meast/06/27/sprj.irq.main/>) – independent verification was not available

press-briefings to vehemently deny any American presence inside the city. That Baghdadis themselves were quite aware that this was a farce can be seen by the fact that widespread looting of government buildings was already in progress when the US military moved into central Baghdad. It is now speculated that there were also a significant number of Iraqi military and intelligence personnel that followed a last-minute order by the regime to go underground and continue their resistance from there⁷⁸.

Yet, it almost seems that the hastily established Coalition Provisional Authority made a special point of exacerbating these difficulties: for example the order by US-appointed Civil Administrator Paul Bremer for a total dissolution of the entire Iraqi armed forces, which put approximately 300.000 young, militarily trained people out of a job in one stroke. The problem was that, as mentioned above, many officers (largely Sunni) went underground and/or independent, leaving it primarily to the Shiite ground forces, which had only a few weeks earlier helped the swift successes of the Coalition by deserting *en masse*, to be disbanded. This, however, had not been the first step of Bremer's large-scale desertification of Iraq's political and civil landscape: at the time the order to disband the military was given, on the 23rd of May, the other one of his measures to dismantle every shred of a state-apparatus, the process termed "de-Ba'athification", had already been in full progress for a week⁷⁹. Many Iraqis were angered at these forced mass-redundancies implemented in such short time and especially at the fact that these difficulties even spread beyond the civil employment into the private sector, leading some middle-class Iraqis to go so far as to suspect a US-

⁷⁸ J. Lobe, "From Liberation to Counter-Insurgency" 15th of June 2003, Accessed at: http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/EF18Ak01.html

⁷⁹ It commenced on the 16th of May affecting approximately 50.000, but was later extended to include lower posts as well as activities in the private sector – leading to approximately 600.000 redundancies

plan to brain-drain the country⁸⁰. Such worries were not particularly alleviated by the fact that Ahmed Chalabi, an Iraqi exile facing fraud-charges in Jordan and widely disliked and mistrusted among the general population⁸¹, was heading the de-Ba'athification Committee.

It is therefore not totally unlikely that when the US launched its first military counter-insurgency operation only 45 days after major combat was declared over, their opponents did not exclusively consist of Saddam loyalists or foreign insurgents, but maybe also of a certain percentage of those hundreds of thousands that have found themselves completely excluded from any kind of stake in the future of their country and therefore only had to gain by fighting the status quo.

Part B: Institutional Moral Exclusion

Unfortunately, quite apart from ill-calculated decision-making at the beginning of the occupation, which could at least be attributed to negligence⁸², a more sublime and sinister trend amongst the occupying powers can also be discerned: Institutionalised Moral Exclusion (IME). Effects of IME are very much alike those identified above in individuals but obviously present on a much greater scale and therefore that much more detrimental. One does not have to look far to find evidence of **appeals to a higher moral value**: any given speech by PM Blair, President Bush or their staff with regard to their reasons as to their presence in Iraq will be riddled with references to “liberty,

⁸⁰ S. Danilochkin, “Ba’ath-Party Members need not Apply”, May 2004, accessed at: http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/FA16Ak04.html

⁸¹ an opinion poll conducted by the ICRSS in June 2004 found that more people would prefer having Saddam again as president (1.7%) than Ahmed Chalabi (1%); Source, “The Results of the Public Opinion Poll in Iraq” ICRSS, June 2004, accessed at <http://www.back-to-iraq.com/archives/Files/Final%20Results%20of%20JUNE.doc>

⁸² Although I would argue that taking into account the repercussions, even negligence becomes criminal

justice, equality” or its mirror-image, the “elimination of evil, injustice, terrorism and oppression”⁸³. Such appeals constitute the base-line of Moral Exclusion, as they focus on identification of one-self with a morally superior concept and position from which the remaining environment can be judged. Unfortunately it creates conditions in which future admission of any guilt is not acceptable as once an immorality is accepted on the institutional level it could then undermine the morality of any given past actions⁸⁴. The fact that after one and a-half years there are still no mechanisms of compensation for those suffering as a result of the war is in my opinion clear proof of this inability to admit the possibility of *any* kind of injustice done. Shockingly, the administrations of both countries even seemingly get away with the excuse that setting up such a mechanism would “open up the possibility of millions of claims” and “the endemic fraud that would creep into this.”⁸⁵. This is moral logic turned upside-down as it basically says that it is fine to offer no compensation if only enough people are affected.

In the exceptional circumstances where compensation has been offered officially, it would either come in token amounts, two million Iraqi dinar (around \$1400) have become the apparent standard in such cases⁸⁶, and always accompanied by statements that such compensation does not in any way amount to admission of any guilt⁸⁷. Furthermore, official payment of compensation was in any case only available if there would otherwise have been a bigger political reaction and most compensation

⁸³ For example the Speech by President Bush’s at the Republican National Convention 2004, New York

⁸⁴ as morality is seen as universal, the admission of acting immorally when one claimed one didn’t, denies the claim to moral superiority on all other issues that are and have been acted on upon

⁸⁵ Donald Rumsfeld as quoted in H. Dardagan, J. Sloboda and K. Williams “Adding Indifference to Injury”, 7th of August 2003, accessed at <http://www.occupationwatch.org/article.php?id=398>

⁸⁶ Amnesty International, “Killings of Civilians in Basra and al-Amara”, 11th of May 2004, accessed at <http://www.amnesty.org/library/index/engmde140072004>

⁸⁷ Amnesty International, “Killings of Civilians in Basra and al-Amara”, 11th of May 2004, accessed at <http://www.amnesty.org/library/index/engmde140072004>

payments were not made to families directly, but largely to local leaders⁸⁸ – whether the affected families ever saw a single dinar is open to debate. In cases where soldiers or officers approached families of victims personally and offered compensation from their own means they were actually ordered by superior officers to cease such activities immediately – such behaviour was “not seen as acceptable”⁸⁹. Yet, from the point of the victim, admission of guilt is often the minimal prerequisite to expect cooperation with the perpetrators of past and present violence. The inability to do so inherent in identification with a higher moral value thus greatly reduces possibilities for future reconciliation. Furthermore it encourages a form of externalisation as it suddenly becomes appropriate to inflict much pain for little gain. Such an attitude displays itself for example in the indiscriminate approach the US has used when conducting their manhunts, as well as the inappropriateness of the response force used when retaliating after having come under attack.

Indiscriminate sweeping became already apparent in the first large-scale counter-insurgency operation, dubbed Desert Scorpion. During the 69 mostly night-time raids, over 1300 buildings were searched and 412 people detained. Of these, all but 65 were released the following day⁹⁰ – presumably not connected to any insurgency. Residents not detained also complained about being tied up and dragged out of their houses while the searches went on and that this treatment and the searches were especially inappropriate for women⁹¹. Similar statements can be taken from locals after

⁸⁸ Amnesty International, “Killings of Civilians in Basra and al-Amara”, 11th of May 2004, accessed at <http://www.amnesty.org/library/index/engmde140072004>

⁸⁹ H. Dardagan, J. Sloboda and K. Williams “Adding Indifference to Injury”, 7th of August 2003, accessed at <http://www.occupationwatch.org/article.php?id=398>

⁹⁰ Jim Garamone, “Operation Desert Scorpion Continues Throughout Iraq”, accessed at http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jun2003/n06172003_200306171.html

⁹¹ David Isenberg, “Counter-productive Counter-insurgency”, accessed at http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/FD23Ak03.html

most of the 38 operations that the US and the UK have undertaken in Iraq since end of combat and up until the 23 of August 2004⁹².

Inappropriate uses of force whether when engaging, retaliating or responding to attack, have also been witnessed on numerous occasions. An example of such behaviour would be an incident in *Maja-al-Kabir* in August 2003, in which British military opened fire on a crowd of protesters in response to handgun fire from a probable Ba’th-party official. British soldiers reportedly fired on automatic for several minutes and by the time they retreated, more than 17 people were hurt, several of them children, and 5 died.⁹³ This type of behaviour seemingly reached new heights on the 31st of March 2004, when the US conducted a major, air-strike-supported raid into the city of Fallujah in response to the killing and public mutilation of 4 private contractors that had taken place there a day earlier. The operation left 600 dead. Such behaviour is simply unacceptable to Iraqis, and furthermore clearly counterproductive, as the following month saw a five-fold increase in attacks on coalition personnel, resulting in a spike in American deaths from 52 in March to 140 in April, and injuries from 321 to 1203⁹⁴. I can only agree that “Unless these operations are yielding consistently excellent intelligence and results, they should be curtailed.”⁹⁵

Re-labelling of behaviour derives directly from this, acts as a supporting mechanism and appears in a very similar form. The day after the above-mentioned air-strikes in Fallujah, military spokesmen asserted with pride-inflated chests that everyone of the resultant deaths was a Saddam loyalist, insurgent or terrorist. It seems the coalition is always incredibly sure when it has killed insurgents and not civilians...

⁹² Iraqi Pacification Operations – Overview (see Appendix A)

⁹³ H. Dardagan, J. Sloboda and K. Williams “Adding Indifference to Injury”, 7th of August 2003, accessed at <http://www.occupationwatch.org/article.php?id=398>

⁹⁴ Iraqi coalition Casualty Count, accessed at <http://icasualties.org/oif/>

⁹⁵ Dr Juan Cole, professor of modern Middle Eastern history at the University of Michigan, as quoted by David Isenberg, “Counter-productive Counter-insurgency”; accessed at http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/FD23Ak03.html

Deployments such as this are also frequently only mentioned by their codenames, rather than by their actual, or even desired effects (e.g. sweep, search and destroy, flush out, etc.) and civilian casualties in any case referred to as collateral damage. On a larger scale, the almost 3500 civilian deaths⁹⁶ that have occurred as a result of suicide bombings and other “acts of terrorism” in the period between, and including, 9/11 and the 29th of October 2003 are said to be proof of the terrorist’s “contempt, their utter contempt for innocent life”⁹⁷, whereas the 16.000+ civilian deaths⁹⁸ that have occurred in the same period through the US initiated War on Terror seem somehow to be considered noble and necessary. The re-labelling of own and enemy behaviour as “terrorism”, “liberation” or “provision of security” has had the result that a four-to-one ratio regarding purely non-combatant, civilian deaths has been largely overlooked by the western public.

Another symptom of IME is the total lack of investigations into civilian deaths that have occurred in Iraq since the invasion – illustrative of **Minimising and Ignoring Consequences of the Behaviour**, but also related to the above mentioned inability to admit guilt. Although an occupier has a legal (as well as a moral) obligation to follow-up such incidents, “We do not keep records for the simple reason that there is no really accurate way”⁹⁹. The UK even stooped so low as to argue that “Through very strict rules of engagement, the use of precision munitions and the tactical methods employed to liberate Iraq’s major cities, we are satisfied that the coalition did everything possible

⁹⁶ 2752 plus approximately 408 victims in another 18 attacks around the world

⁹⁷ President Bush as quoted in J. Sloboda and H. Dardagan “Civilian Deaths in Noble Iraq Mission Pass 10.000 – We Need a Tribunal To Administer Justice for the Victims”, 7th of August 2004, accessed at http://www.iraqbodycount.net/editorial_feb0704.htm

⁹⁸ in both Afghanistan (3000+) and Iraq (13.000+) (Source: J. Sloboda and H. Dardagan “Civilian Deaths in Noble Iraq Mission Pass 10.000 – We Need a Tribunal To Administer Justice for the Victims”, 7th of August 2004, accessed at http://www.iraqbodycount.net/editorial_feb0704.htm

⁹⁹ US military spokesman Colonel Guy Shields on August 4th 2004, as quoted in J. Sloboda and H. Dardagan “Civilian Deaths in Noble Iraq Mission Pass 10.000 – We Need a Tribunal To Administer Justice for the Victims”, 7th of August 2004, accessed at http://www.iraqbodycount.net/editorial_feb0704.htm

to avoid unnecessary casualties. We do not, therefore, propose to undertake a formal review of Iraqi casualties...¹⁰⁰. Such attitudes would clearly be inappropriate if applied to western deaths, which can be seen when one contrasts these statements to an article that appeared in the New York Times regarding the recent revision of the official 9/11 death-toll on the 29th of October 2003, lowering it from 2792 to 2752: “The change in the number...reflects the best in human nature as personified by investigators determining the true and sacred number of the dead that they properly took their time, even if it meant that a few fraudulent names, or the names of the living, were sprinkled among those of the many dead. Better that, they reasoned, than to exclude the name of one true victim”¹⁰¹.

Closely related to this is the **Isolation and Desensitisation from the Consequences**. Iraqis and occupiers live very different lives in Iraq at the moment. The green-zone, the ex-Saddam palacial compound in the heart of Baghdad is a concrete fortress void of Iraqis. American soldiers and other personnel within the green-zone or other secluded and heavily fortified bases around the country listen to American radio, watch American news and eat chicken-wings, medium spicy. Most leave only if absolutely necessary or under orders, in case of the military. American soldiers themselves say that “anything outside is enemy territory.....even in here we get a few mortar rounds a week”, talking about above-mentioned Green-Zone..

Similarly, lack of electricity, food and water does not apply to foreign military personnel. This is not to argue that it should, but it must be acknowledged that the fact that the contrast of foreign forces seemingly causing deterioration of Iraqi living

¹⁰⁰ UK Defence Secretary Adam Ingram replying to a question by Llew Smith, UK Labour MP on the 2nd of July 2003 regarding Iraqi civilian deaths sustained in the combat period prior to 1st of May as quoted in J. Sloboda and H. Dardagan “Civilian Deaths in Noble Iraq Mission Pass 10.000 – We Need a Tribunal To Administer Justice for the Victims”, 7th of August 2004, accessed at http://www.iraqbodycount.net/editorial_feb0704.htm

¹⁰¹ New Times Article of the 30th of October 2003 as referenced in J. Sloboda and H. Dardagan “Civilian Deaths in Noble Iraq Mission Pass 10.000 – We Need a Tribunal To Administer Justice for the Victims”, 7th of August 2004, accessed at http://www.iraqbodycount.net/editorial_feb0704.htm

standards while at the same time being visibly better supplied and protected than Iraqis themselves has the potential to cause deep resentment - and can thus not simply be ignored as a victim of circumstance.

If distancing oneself from the consequences is impossible, **Blaming the Victim** is also frequently employed to guard from both, official admissions of guilt and personal feeling of moral tension and cognitive dissonance. Point in case would be the killing of 7 women and children by American Soldiers at a checkpoint near Najaf on the 31st of March 2004. The headline this incident received in a New York Times article of the 1st of April was “Failing to Heed Warning, 7 Iraqis Die”¹⁰². The Miami Herald even went so far as to run an article titled “Civilian Deaths Cast Pall Over Nervous Unit”¹⁰³, as if the civilians should be blamed for getting themselves killed and causing distress amongst US troops. Both papers also quoted an “officer with the 3rd Infantry Division, who would not be identified [saying] “The soldiers did the right thing””. Similar behaviour takes the form of blaming the occupation’s opponents for civilian deaths caused by their actions, as when, for example, an American missile went astray and hit a busy market square in Baghdad on the 20th of March 2003, leading to 55 civilian deaths, 15 of them children¹⁰⁴. First came speculations that the cause of the explosion was ageing Iraqi anti-aircraft fire. When remains identifying the missile as a US Paveway laser-guided bomb were found at the scene, it was claimed that Iraqi officials had planted the shrapnel. When this also became an impossible conclusion¹⁰⁵,

¹⁰² As referenced in J. Sloboda and H. Dardagan “Civilian Deaths in Noble Iraq Mission Pass 10.000 – We Need a Tribunal To Administer Justice for the Victims”, 7th of August 2004, accessed at http://www.iraqbodycount.net/editorial_feb0704.htm

¹⁰³ As referenced in J. Sloboda and H. Dardagan “Civilian Deaths in Noble Iraq Mission Pass 10.000 – We Need a Tribunal To Administer Justice for the Victims”, 7th of August 2004, accessed at http://www.iraqbodycount.net/editorial_feb0704.htm

¹⁰⁴ J. Sloboda and H. Dardagan “Civilian Deaths in Noble Iraq Mission Pass 10.000 – We Need a Tribunal To Administer Justice for the Victims”, 7th of August 2004, accessed at http://www.iraqbodycount.net/editorial_feb0704.htm

¹⁰⁵ Robert Fisk reports that the piece was recovered by an old man who lives only a few hundred yards away from the blast-site minutes after the explosion – quoted in J. Sloboda and H. Dardagan “Civilian Deaths in Noble Iraq Mission Pass 10.000 – We Need a Tribunal To Administer Justice for the Victims”, 7th of August 2004, accessed at http://www.iraqbodycount.net/editorial_feb0704.htm

both the US and UK reverted to accusations of the Iraqi military positioning its personnel and installations in highly populated areas.

If it is not Saddam loyalists or insurgents and their “despicable” tactics, it is the Arabic TV stations, such as the Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya satellite news channels, that are blamed for growing feelings of resentment amongst the Iraqi populace with their “negative, anti-American and unhelpful”¹⁰⁶ reporting and propaganda. Indeed it is certainly true that these networks frequently show scenes of U.S. forces shooting into Iraqi neighbourhoods in hot spots such as Fallujah and Najaf and were also condemned for broadcasting gory pictures of American and Iraqi casualties¹⁰⁷, one should on the other hand also consider following numbers when deciding whether to pay heed to General Rumsfeld’s contention that “only 7% of Iraqi people actually had direct negative experience with the American military or administration”¹⁰⁸ (the assertion being that that perceived bad American behaviour is in fact largely the result of inter-Arabic “hear-say”): Iraq sustained at least 30.000 military deaths in the war itself¹⁰⁹, de-Ba’athification and dissolution of the army accounted for about a million jobs lost in a few weeks, the minimum estimate of civilian deaths during the subsequent occupation lies at approximately 12.000, five times as many are injured, and tens of thousands of homes searched and hundreds demolished. This would furthermore not include other, less damaging, but nevertheless direct effects such as sleepless nights during fighting or bombings, the threat of unexploded ordinance or frequent road-blockings. Where

¹⁰⁶ C.G. Soriano and S. Komarow, “Poll: Iraqis out of Patience”, USA Today, June 2003, accessed at http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2004-04-28-poll-cover_x.htm

¹⁰⁷ Note here that the it was apparently not beneath the administration to show Uday and Qusay Husein, each riddled with dozens of bullet-holes, on their own news-outlets

¹⁰⁸ C.G. Soriano and S. Komarow, “Poll: Iraqis out of Patience”, USA Today, June 2003, accessed at http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2004-04-28-poll-cover_x.htm

¹⁰⁹ Iraqi military deaths during combat phase are estimated to be above 30.000 (Source: “The Cost Of War: Lives Lost in Iraq” 20th of March 2003-28th of September 2004, accessed at <http://www.infoshout.com/iraq%20death%20toll.htm>)

exactly Rumsfeld has his numbers from he did not specify, but it does not seem to be Iraq.

It is needless to say that these behaviours have only multiplied the lack of fulfilment of needs. Basic needs are primarily attacked through the exclusion of economic or political opportunities. Security needs are undermined most obviously through the absence of law and order and the additional presence of seemingly trigger-happy coalition forces, further compounded by the sparse availability of possibilities for satisfaction of basic needs. Lastly, esteem needs, already heavily compromised through the severely inconsistent satisfaction of both basic and security needs, are additionally denied by the Moral Exclusion so much more obvious to Iraqi civilians than it must be to us.

A Gallup poll conducted among the Iraqi population in July 2003 compounds this: 89% said the coalition forces are not trying hard to restore basic services such as electricity and clean drinking water, 58% said soldiers conducted themselves badly or very badly, 60% said they showed disrespect in searches of their homes and 46% said they are particularly angry at the lack of respect towards Iraqi women¹¹⁰. Bearing in mind that this was only about 6 weeks after beginning of the occupation and that these polls probably do not include population samples from areas considered “hotspots”, this gives a reasonably accurate picture of how rapidly and widespread the situation deteriorated.

¹¹⁰ As quoted in C.G. Soriano and S. Komarow, “Poll: Iraqis out of Patience”, USA Today, June 2003, accessed at http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2004-04-28-poll-cover_x.htm

Chapter VII - Does This Tunnel Have a Light At The End?

The paper has shown that discriminatory language, disregard for Iraqi civilian life and the processes of moral exclusion that underlie them have become apparent in almost every aspect in which the US administration handles “its” Iraqi citizens. When such processes are in place at the institutional level, and are in addition continuously buttressed at the individual level through top-down reinforcement, it is bound to establish a local as well as nationwide environment and relation with the populace that is inherently hostile to cooperative conflict resolution. These factors lie at the core of the problems currently facing the coalition in Iraq and have made it impossible for them to conduct a successful counter-insurgency strategy over the past 18 months. When taking attitude formation and discriminatory tendencies in both the soldiers and the occupier’s institutions and into account it is easy to see how one can quickly find oneself in such a state of affairs as the famous “incident” at the *abu-Ghraib* prison complex. Whether or not there was an order or a sanctioning of such behaviour from the higher echelons of the administration, the degree to which the torture methods were fine-tuned and the increasing evidence indicating government knowledge way before these cruelties came to light throws huge shadows of a wider disregard for basic rules of human decency towards Iraqis on the wall. Thus, I would argue that *abu-Ghraib* is simply a logical conclusion of the interaction of the “twin-evils” of interpersonal and institutional moral exclusion; itself standing out more for the attention it has received in the West than for its inexplicability or particularly immoral quality.

By now, a year and a half into the occupation, many bridges have already been burned and it seems that anything connected to America is widely resented throughout large parts of the Iraqi population. The Iraqi Interim Government set up on June 30th 2004 seemed initially as the first glimmer of hope, as it was not seen by most Iraqis to be “tainted with association”¹¹¹ with America. Yet, even this light seems to quickly have faltered as the IIG draws increasing criticism for its inability to protect Iraqis, reign in the occupying powers or improve the economic situation. Yet, all this does not in any way preclude the possibility of still reducing aggressive and discriminative behaviour or engaging in unilateral cooperative strategies. America hated or not, it is doubtful whether any significant amount of Iraqis would complain about more security, electricity, the availability of jobs, or other satisfaction of the huge range of currently heavily compromised needs.

It is vital that the majority of Iraqis acquire a stake in a future stable Iraqi government and are the ones primarily employed in, as well as coordinating and managing the reconstruction of their country and that only assistance is given to them when requested. If reconstruction contracts could be tied to the condition that they employ primarily Iraqis on all levels it would greatly alleviate the unemployment problems and thereby get rid of a lot of angry young men with guns. This will mean that funds will have to be spent on providing training opportunities in the economic sphere (not just the security sphere) and large subsidies for Iraqi up-start firms for quite some time. This might not be exactly tailored to the free-market democracy that America has been pushing for with its economic policies in Iraq so far, but one does not need to be a Joseph Stiglitz to realise that given the state Iraq is in currently “Trade

¹¹¹ See, for example, “The Results of the Public Opinion Poll in Iraq” ICRSS, June 2004, accessed at <http://www.back-to-iraq.com/archives/Files/Final%20Results%20of%20JUNE.doc>

liberalization will lead to a loss of jobs in the import competing sectors, leading to more massive problems for the economy”¹¹².

But there are other, more direct measures that can be implemented instantly and would make the climate more hospitable to cooperative conflict resolution. Most important of all, there needs to be a realisation at all levels of institutions, and not only in America or the UK, of the prevalence moral exclusion when dealing with non-western lives. Admission of responsibility and payment for compensation for *any* death, injury and loss as a result of an unprovoked attack on a sovereign nation and subsequent occupation is not only fortified in international occupation law, but is also a moral imperative and a prerequisite for quelling of the insurgency. Even if the above assertion was true that this would open up the possibility of “millions of claims”, and even if a more decent compensation of say \$10.000 was given on average¹¹³, rather than the usual \$1.500, at two million claims this would amount to \$20 billion dollars – or the cost of occupying Iraq for five months, currently estimated at \$4billion per month¹¹⁴. A more realistic number of around 200.000 if only those suffering from injury or death of a family member would be compensated, would result in a \$2billion compensation bill, equal to only 2 weeks of occupation. In doing so, they will be eventually serving their own interests as the need for seeking “extra-judicial” and “extra-institutional” justice amongst the population will be reduced, and the stereotypes they hold towards America and the West will come under attack. Who knows, such action might even reduce the time that coalition presence is required in the country by just as many months, resulting in no financial loss, but massive political gains. Such action is therefore in my view as

¹¹² Columbia News Forum, “Iraqi Unemployment Rate Is High, But There Is No Shortage of Human Resources, Says Joseph Stiglitz”, accessed at http://www.columbia.edu/cu/news/vforum/03/globalization_discontents/

¹¹³ Still nothing compared to what an American court would order as compensation for loss of life or injury, but in Iraq going at least some way in creating the possibility of building a new life

¹¹⁴ It is not like it is the first time in history that billions are paid in response to millions of claims....Germany is currently still doing exactly that; more than 50 years on

much a strategic imperative for the administrations currently occupying Iraq, as it should be a moral imperative for the civilian public living in those countries.

All of the above will have to involve an admission of guilt in some form and will therefore entail the uncomfortable dismount off the high moral horse. One problem is that over the course of the last four years, the Bush Administration has relied more and more heavily on moral concepts in order to publicly justify the nature of its foreign policies. This is especially so in Iraq where moral imperatives have become the prime, and indeed the only excuse the coalition can bring forward for their presence in the country that does not crumble to ashes under minute scrutiny. Therefore, especially in the case of President Bush, admission of immorality would amount to political suicide and definitely spell an end to any hopes for running as president a second term. In any case, the tendencies Mr. Bush has displayed so far point towards a “Better Iraq than Me” attitude. This is doubtful to change in the foreseeable future.

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