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***The Dialectics of Humiliation:
Polarization between Occupier and Occupied in Post-Saddam
Iraq***

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What constitutes post-Saddam Iraq? While the White House refers to post-Saddam Iraq as the period following the cessation of major armed activities in the country, the author is drawn to refer to post-Saddam Iraq as the period following the taking of Baghdad by coalition forces on April 9th 2003, an event resulting in the demise of Saddam Hussein's Baathist Government. Although various semantic interpretations can indeed account for the present state of affairs of Iraq, they generally oscillate between liberation and occupation, New and old Iraq, good versus evil. In a presently reasserted context of clash of civilizations, characterisations of post-Saddam Iraq invariably evolve along a series of axes, whose major actors are not only the individuals that place themselves along these lines, but also those who see themselves as the bystanders of history, the members of the media community.

The present paper will attempt to conceptualise the mechanisms of honour humiliation in post-Saddam Iraq, in order to help prevent further escalation of violence within the region. While different variables can account for the present security situation, there is no doubt that the divide between foreign troops and the Iraqi population is growing. Indeed, communities that voiced their approval of the 'liberation' of Iraq to the author in June 2003, now refer to their country as being occupied, and are calling for an end to "American rule".² For this reason, the axis between occupier and occupied will be primarily analysed, this through the dynamics of humiliation, which in an Iraqi context is closely linked to the notion of honour and

¹ The author can be contacted on victoriafirmo@hotmail.com. The information supplied in part of this paper has not been updated since September 2001.

² The Independent, London, September 2nd 2003.

shame. The role of the media, national and international, will be assessed with regards to perpetration of perceptions on both sides of the divide. Is the increasing security vacuum the result of a self-fulfilling prophecy?

The aim of this paper is not put blame any party to the tragedy unravelling in Iraq. Conversely, it will be argued that actors on both side of the axis are now perceiving themselves as victims. Their actions are motivated by the concept of honour, either to be restored, in the case of the Iraqis, or to be maintained, in the case of the coalition forces. A series of suggestions, geared towards immediate conflict reduction, will therefore be issued to all defined actors.

1. Conceptualising honour humiliation in Iraq

In order to establish a pattern for conflict escalation in post-Saddam Iraq, it is necessary to analyse the relationship between humiliation, honour and shame. Of importance to the aforementioned concepts will be their phenomenological expressions in a given context and culture.

1.1 Honour, shame and humiliation

In the psychoanalytic literature, the notion of humiliation has been closely linked the concept of shame. Both have even been characterised as being interchangeable (Levin, 1967; Steinberg, 1996). According to these analyses, the concepts of humiliation and shame are characterised as the result of a shame-inducing event, depriving the subject of self-value, and also ultimately inducing feelings of rejection (Wurmser, 1981). Shame is the result of the self-perception of a failure to live up to certain standards and ideals. Of importance to the analysis of humiliation is therefore the perception of an event as shameful, itself depending on cultural parameters. What is considered shame-inducing in an environment, such as having a woman directing traffic and ordering cars to stop, might not only be considered as the norm in another culture, but also as reflecting gender equality. Would anyone feel humiliated at the sight of a female police officer directing traffic in the middle of Paris, New York or Berlin? In the middle of Fallujah, Baghdad or Nadjaf, not only is this shame-inducing for the drivers subjected to it, it also demonstrates on the part of

the coalition forces a grave lack of cultural relativity in their occupation ‘technique’. Do Iraqis feel humiliated because the Military Police traffic Officer is a female, because she is an American/occupier, or because she is both? What constitutes humiliation for the Iraqi people?

1.2 Honour humiliation in an Iraqi context

Should humiliation be interchangeable with shame, itself understood as the antonym of honour, then a definition of honour in Iraq would help conceptualise the dynamics of humiliation in post-war Iraq. Honour is not a uniquely defined concept in Arab language and culture. It is defined by three words: *sharaf*, *ihitiram* and ‘*urd*’ (Johnson, 2001). *Sharaf* refers to a high rank or nobility obtained at birth. However, under the *Ancien Régime*, this aspect of honour had been appropriated by the Baathist Intelligentsia (Aburish, 1999). *Ihtiram* accounts for the respect coerced upon one through the emanation of a degree of physical force. Under Saddam’s regime, according to which side of the political spectrum one placed himself, members of the police force would be considered as honourable, this as a result of the degree of respect emanating from their monopoly of physical force. While this degree of honourability was not affordable to all, most men would own articles of light or heavy weaponry, this to protect their family and its honour. Finally, ‘*ird*’ represents the preservation of a woman’s purity. Needless to say, the woman represents a most dangerous individual within Iraqi society, as a transgression on her part would cast shame on her whole family. An honourable father, brother or husband will therefore ensure the protection of the women under their tutelage (Firmo-Fontan, 2003). A protection exerted both against themselves, considered as an inherently deviant creature, or against other males (al-Khayyat, 1990) Although Saddam Hussein’s Baathist regime had sought to counter these cultural beliefs –Saddam Hussein once allegedly asserted against the wearing of the *hejab* that the responsibility to control one’s sexuality should be placed upon men, and that the sight of a woman’s hair should not be understood as an encouragement to engage in sexual activity, this vision of women has remained entrenched within Iraqi society.

Considering the expressions of honour depicted above, how will an American woman directing traffic antagonise the Iraqi people? Furthermore, how did the demise of a 25 year-old dictatorship alienate liberators and liberated from one another?

2. Perceptions of honour humiliation in post-Saddam Iraq: conveyed, spread, magnified

Humiliation, the perception of shame by a given event inducing a loss of honour, is felt daily in post-Saddam Iraq. However, according to reports on the ‘liberation’ of the country, 80 per cent of the population should have welcomed the coalition’s liberators with open arms, and should presently facilitate the occupation. The following part will attempt to deconstruct the coalition’s perception of Iraqi society. It will attempt to demonstrate how an oversimplified conceptualisation of Iraqi society may have lost the coalition’s peace. It will do so by providing examples of this humiliation from various communities that constituted the Iraqi population under Saddam Hussein’s regime, understood by the coalition under the banners of victimizers and victimized. It will also explore the concept of reparation with regards to honour. While providing a few practical analyses of honour humiliation according to the criteria exposed earlier, the media’s ambivalence with regards to Iraq will be also analysed. First, its responsibility for nurturing the coalition’s perception of Iraqi society will be questioned, and second, its role in maintaining the fear and discontent among the ‘colonised’ will be assessed.

2.1 Victimizing the victimizer

“Saddam never humiliated us the way the Americans do, I had a job, I was safe, and now look at me”, said Ali Rasheed, exposing a large defence wound on his right leg.³ Ali Rasheed is a 38 year old ‘retired’ police officer who claims to have been robbed by four US marines on May 19th 2003, at an army checkpoint located in the south of Baghdad –on the road to Eskandaria. After discovering that he was carrying a semi-automatic hand gun, Ali asserted that the four soldiers beat him with the gun’s cross, and then took a sum of 600,000 Iraqi Dinars from him, as well as his watch and a packet of cigarettes. Two days earlier, under the de-Bathification process initiated on May 16th by Coalition Provisional Authority’s administrator (CPA) L. Paul Bremer III, Ali had to abjure his membership of the Baath Party, and was stripped of his position as a police officer. He reluctantly signed a form that states: “I will obey the laws of Iraq and all proclamations, orders and instructions of the Coalition Provisional Authority” (see Annex 1). The immediate shame inducing

³ Author interview with Ali Rasheed, Baghdad, May 30th 2003.

effect of the alleged attack on Ali is not difficult to understand. However, Ali also felt humiliated for a number of other reasons, he was stripped of his social status as part of the CPA's de-bathification program. He now is unable to provide for his family ever again as a civil servant, and has also lost his institutionalised monopoly of physical force. Some might argue that as a Baathist official, the ruling hand of Saddam Hussein's regime, Ali's power to terrorise the population had come to an end, and that as 'what goes around comes around', his past victims, probably numerous, were vindicated by the humiliating events he was subjected to. This was the opinion of Jay Garner when interviewed on the subject.⁴ Ali wanted the author to report on his ordeal, and when confronted to this eventuality, he emphasised that he joined the Party because he believed in its pan-Arab, socialist and secular ideology. He believed that the Baathist precepts of welfare and equality were the only hope for sustainable development for the Arab world. He stressed that he never committed any crime against the Iraqi civilian population, he "was just a police officer". As all public records were looted and burned when Baghdad was taken, it is impossible to verify Ali's assertions. Of importance to the debate on humiliation in post-Saddam Iraq is the following. In a Manichean effort to adapt Iraq to a growing fast-food type media industry, the international media seems to have unquestionably adopted US foreign policy's frame of good versus evil (Firmo-Fontan, 2003b). It has assimilated Baathist ideology with Saddam Hussein, in the same way that Marxism was once understood as Stalinism during the MacCarthite era –to that effect, we have been reminded on numerous occasions of the cult that Saddam Hussein used to vow to Joseph Stalin. While the international news-media has rightly emphasised the evil nature of the Saddam Hussien regime, it has failed to recognise the difference between active and passive Baathist officials. Between individuals who joined the Baath Party out of ideological reasons, out of fear, to gain sustainable employment or out of devotion for the *Rais*. By adopting a frame of oppressors and oppressed with regards to the Iraqi society, the international media has failed to its duty, that of acting primarily as monitor of the centres of power. It has validated the CPA's arbitrary retribution against an important component of the Iraqi population without ever questioning its precepts. After years of purges within the Iraqi ruling elite, another purge occurred in time of peace, whether it be negative or positive. Thousands of civil servants like Ali

⁴ Author interview with Jay Garner, al-Hamra Hotel, Baghdad, May 25th 2003.

have been cast aside. Those individuals were professionals, in the case of Ali, they were aware of criminal networks operating within Iraq, whether they be involved in drugs or even human trafficking. This arbitrary division of Iraqi society along ethnic and social lines has had for effect to antagonise the rest of the population to the coalition forces, this through an upsurge in insecurity.

2.2 *Victimizing the vulnerable*

As another expression of honour in Iraqi society, the preservation of a woman's shame is crucial to the well-being of a family, clan and tribe. However remote from modern Western values this perception of women can be, it is of crucial importance to recognise its significance in Iraq, this through exerting cultural relativity when analysing the post-Saddam security situation and its consequences with regards to the reparation of a tarnished honour. According to the above analysis of 'urd, it is necessary to consider that any violation of this honour code will cast shame and humiliation on a family, and will invariably have to be repaired (al-Khayyat, 1990). How is the occupation of Iraq understood by the local population as being extremely harmful to society's most vulnerable? How will the perceived coalition *nonchalance* crystallise the divide between occupied and occupier?

The de-bathification of an important component of the police force in post-Saddam Iraq has maintained the law and order vacuum that emerged after the coalition's invasion of the country. While some communities have seemed to restore security in parts of the country such as Nadjaf -- before the assassination of Sayeed Baqr al-Hakim, Baghdad has been plagued by a resurgence of criminality, targeting especially women and young girls. It is not this discussion's aim to cast blame on any institution for the breakdown of law and order, but it is necessary for the author to recall an interview with a Police Lieutenant Ghazi Kadhum Ghazi, from al-Alawiya station. After being allowed to grant an interview to the author in his own station, Lt Ghazi contended that:

as an Iraqi police officer, I am not allowed to do my job, I cannot implement the law against criminals. I know who they are, and my former boss also, but he was fired, and the Americans do not allow us to arrest them, they are scared to draw attention on themselves from the gangs of criminals. For the first time I have seen drugs sold freely in the streets --hashish, cocaine and mostly heroin, coming from Afghanistan, isn't it ironic?, Afghanistan is another country that was 'liberated' by the US.

Another result of the lack of law and order is the precarious situation in which women find themselves. Since the end of Saddam Hussein's regime, they live in fear of abduction and rape. Rumours of rape thrive around Baghdad. Many are verified. A Human Rights investigation carried out in the space of a month has found 25 credible reports of sexual violence against women. The author found one, that of 16 year-old Baida Juffur Sadick. She was abducted on her way to school on May 22nd, taken into a car at gun-point while walking with her classmates. She had pleaded with her uncle to return to school amidst a climate of fear. She has never returned since.⁵

While Baida's family is anxiously waiting for her return, one of the girl's sister confided in the author that, should her sister ever be found alive, Baida's honour and that of her family would be crucially tarnished, and that someone would have to pay the price of reparation. Nagham fear that Baida will be targeted upon her return, she asserted that "she might be safer if she is dead". In Iraq, a woman who suffered rape is considered to be dead to society, as she is held responsible for having enticed males to abduct, rape or molest her (al-Khayyat, 1990). Of importance in the event of an abduction is for the woman either to prove that she has not been raped – forensic analyses are made at the Baghdad mortuary--, or to marry her abductor. To this respect, article 427 the Iraqi Penal Code states that:

[i]f the offender mentioned in this section then lawfully marries the victim, any action becomes void and any investigation or other procedure is discontinued

Should she not be able to do so, it is likely that reparation will be enforced upon her: she will be killed by her family. She will become the victim of a honour-killing, whereby the (usually) male member of a family, keeper of the 'urd, will cleanse the family's honour by killing the subject of the crime. Courts are usually lenient towards honour-motivated crimes. Article 409 of the Iraqi Penal Code sets a maximum punishment of three year's imprisonment for anyone who kills or disables an adultery wife, whether it be one of her relative or her husband. In the case of Baida, should she ever return home, she would either have to prove that she was not raped, or under article 398 of the Penal Code she should marry her rapist to stay alive:

If a proper marriage is contracted between the perpetrator of one of the crimes covered in the aforementioned section [Chapter 9, Section One: Rape and Sodomy and Indecent Assault, Articles 393-398] and the victim,

⁵ Author interview with Ali Abu Monar (uncle) and Firas Juffur (brother), on May 29th 2003.

it shall be considered a legally mitigating excuse under the terms of articles 130 and 131 of the Penal Code

When asked what was more important to him and his family, Baida's uncle replied that it was security, that the Iraqi people did not want to become economically assisted, they wanted a decent society where their daughters could go to school without being attacked. The coalition forces understood this necessity, and started to place guards at the entrance of some schools towards the end of May 2003. Of importance to a timely understanding of Baida's story is the significance of reparation in Iraqi society, this at any cost.

The virtual decommissioning of the Iraqi army and police has touched the most vulnerable within the population, and has disregarded other members who desperately needed protection. The gangs of criminals who were known to the police are now operating freely. Houses sequestering and selling young girls and women to prostitution to Gulf countries are now functional (Human Rights Watch, 2003). Baida might be found one day working as a prostitute in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia or even Lebanon.

2.3 A tale of two cities: the local media, rumours and the collectivisation of humiliation

Baida's ordeal is an example of the coalition's inability to understand warning signs with regards to the escalation of perceived humiliation in post-Saddam Iraq, for the individual and family humiliation that was felt as a result of a tarnishing of 'urd is taking epic proportions, this through a *médiatisation* of the security vacuum in post-Saddam Iraq.

The fall of 25 years of dictatorship has seen the mushrooming of tabloid newspapers of all kinds in post-war Iraq, an upsurge of freedom of expression that was not necessarily anticipated by the coalition administration. From one day to the next, facilitated by foreign funds or relying on local networks, every fringe of the Iraqi population found a voice. At first, gruesome accounts of the *Ancien Régime* brutality became ordinary to many opposition newspapers. The Double of Saddam sold his story to the press, and a day after day recollection of the horrors of the Baathist rule were serving the interests of the coalition, itself relying on a victimiser-victimised rhetoric to impose an unquestioned occupation. The majority of Iraqi people, relieved to have been saved from the *ogre*, spent the first few days of 'New

Iraq' celebrating their newly-found freedom. However, discontent spurred by the collapse in law and order started to emerge in newly-formed newspapers. Needless to say, after years of censorship and relying on government sources for information, local media outlets were not equipped to apply journalistic ethics to their coverage of 'New Iraq'. Soon, unfounded reports on insecurity fuelled the fears of the population, resulting in a growing anger, and a change in media frame from liberation to occupation. Plethora of reports similar to Ali's ordeal were printed, sometimes without being verified. More damagingly to the coalition, various reports on sexual relations between US soldiers and Iraqi women were printed, such as "US soldiers distribute pictures of naked women to schoolgirls", "American soldiers have sex with Iraqi women in their tanks". In its second edition of June 1st 2003, newly-formed Arabic-English newspaper *Al-Muajaha* – The Iraqi Witness, printed stories such as:

May the mercy of God fall on the earth in these days... Wake up, people, wake up... Invaders are in our country... We've been through hard times under the old regime, but we were better than we are now... Our streets are filled with shame ... Look at those girls who are having sex with the Americans in their tanks, or in the bathrooms at the Palestine Hotel. A man I know saw a girl go with 3 soldiers to the bathroom in the hotel, and went down to see what are they were [sic] doing. The door was locked, so he kicked it down. The Americans ran away, and he threatened to kill the girl if he saw her doing this anymore. Another girl was wearing jeans and nice clothes, hanging around and having "fun" in the tank. Some people in the streets asked her what she was doing with them. Her answer was so honest. She said, "I am a whore". Wake up, Wake up, O People of Iraq –Wake up!

This type of article should have been interpreted as a collective warning sign given by the Iraqi to the coalition. As Iraqi women represent a crucial embodiment of honour in Iraq, reports on sexual harassment on the part of coalition soldiers constituted a grave characterisation of the perceived humiliation of the Iraqis. Coalition officials should have realised that the same type of rumour was once spread about Uday Hussein, who was reputed to abduct and rape Iraqi women randomly. Tar Kovacs (199?) quantified the impact of rumours on conflict escalation in Lebanon. The same exercise could be applied to Iraq. When questioned on the damaging impact of such an article, *Al-Muajaha*'s editor, Ramzi Kysia stressed that the aforementioned feature was ran in the paper's opinion page, and that it was the paper's intention to run an open forum on the occupation of Iraq.⁶ Other newspapers,

⁶ Author interview with Ramzi Kysia, in Baghdad, June 4th 2003.

not openly opposed to the coalition's policies, also ran stories solely based on rumours. Soon, fears became news. Reparation was sought and fantasized about in newspapers: the throwing of a hand-grenade in an American humvee in the Mansour Area of Baghdad became an RPG attack, blowing the car and killing two soldiers. Far from understanding these rumours as the symptomatic expression of a narcissistic collective wish to dispose of the occupier, the coalition authority, the Bremer administration decided by the end of May 2003 to impose press censorship in the country.⁷ The damage was already done, violence escalated in a matter of days. Instead of organising media training sessions, the coalition antagonised the media even more.

A qualitative impact analysis on the local media's collectivisation of humiliation is difficult to quantify. However, its responsibility for the formation and the escalation of violence may be implied. Were newspapers such as *Al-Mujahid* solely reflecting the public mood or were they involved in spreading rumours? Of certainty is that their occupation rhetoric furthered the divide between occupying and occupiers, in the same manner that the International media misunderstood the shaping dynamics of the Iraqis. Should the liberty of expression prevail when it is used to fuel a rebellion?

Concluding remark

While the above considerations pertaining to the dynamics of humiliation in post-Saddam Iraq attempt to seek an understanding of humiliation lying at the core of Iraqi culture, other, more trivial expressions of humiliation can be found daily around the country. Names of American tanks such as: "Another round anyone?", "Abusive father", "And hell's comin with me", "Crusader 2", "Any last words", "Deadly commemoration" are more conducive to an occupier image than to a liberator's one. The treatment of Iraqi prisoners by US soldiers is also understood as a symptom of occupation, and could easily be readdressed according to local standards.

⁷ The Independent staff interview in Baghdad on May 30th 2003, unattributable.

3. “Learn from Fallujah”: clan honour, collective humiliation and reparation

The expressions of honour characterised earlier as individual, are also manifested collectively through a dyadic system of tribal organisation, composed of the nuclear family unit acting as a vector into the extended family network, the clan, and ultimately the tribe.

3.1 Humiliation and conflict transformation

Iraqi society is made out of approximately 150 tribes, composed by the alliance of at least 2000 clans (Tripp, 2000). In this respect, an isolated incidence of collateral damage, through the demonstration of physical force, can become a direct attack on a clan, itself demanding another death to cleanse the clan’s honour. This happened in Fallujah at the end on April 28th 2003, when 18 demonstrators were shot dead near the local school. There is no doubt that the coalition troops present on that day were not equipped to understand the implications of such an incident. According to the tribal organisation of Fallujah, as well as in other part of Iraq, the blood spilled on that day had to be repaid in a similar manner. In the space of four month following the incident, retaliation upon retaliation has caused the death of 26 civilians, and at least 10 US soldiers.⁸ The following incident depicts a typical escalation pattern. During the night of June 3rd, a rocket propelled grenade (RPG) was fired at a 101st Airborne Division US convoy, one soldier died and eight other were injured. The remaining members of the company that was attacked spent the night cleaning the disorder left by the assault, including the remains of their colleague scattered on the road. Central command then ordered the division’s Military Police component to raid the street where the RPG was thought to have been launched. First, the company decides to block the road, and dispatches a terrified young woman to face angry motorists.

Soon a crowd of men gathers in front of her, she yells at two of them not to cross the road, in defiance they follow their paths. A male colleague arrives, shouts abuse at the crowd and lets the two men cross the road. On the other side of the street, the raid

⁸ The civilian figures were found on www.iraqbodycount.net, up to August 16th 2003. US figures cannot be certain, as interview with Seth Cole from 1st Armoured division in Fallujah on June 4th 2003 confirmed. Officer Cole stated that not all deaths were signalled to the media.

starts. House by house, kicking gates and doors open, a disproportionate amount of MP soldiers initiate their search of private properties.

Out of frustration, anger and fear at the American intrusion in her street, a local school teacher takes out her AK 47 in order to defend herself and her house. The troops see her and put themselves in shooting position. A paramedic team is stationed in the back of the street. A woman tells a colleague: "I hope they won't start shooting. They are scared and tired, if they start firing, they will get out of control, they always do". The school teacher realises that she is powerless and lets the MP enter her house. She is arrested, the tension has been diffused. The house-to-house raid resumes until another house decides to resist. The same result of achieved. Then the soldiers are faced with the difficult task to search the local candy store. A frail old man is taken out of his shop, his neighbours are astounded: "How dare they, he is a powerless old man, these people have no shame".

The street residents were certainly ashamed of this treatment of a defenceless old man, praying as he was taken out of his store. Fortunately for everyone that day, there were no casualties, but an irreparable damage had been done to the residents' honour.

When asked if they approved of these methods, Sergeant Seth Cole asserted that these were standard practises, ordered by the Division's chain of command:

We keep telling our superiors that this is not the way to operate with the locals, but they don't listen, they never do this sort of operation. They want us to get tough and they do not understand that this is not the proper way to behave with the Iraqis. The chain of command is alienating the local from us. We kill and get killed because of that.

At the time of writing, such incidents occur in an increasing number of locations placed under US army control. When asked how he saw his involvement with the US army in Iraq, Seth Cole replied:

We arrived in the region genuinely thinking that this was going to be a short mission, and that there were weapons of mass destruction. Frankly, I don't think there are, they [the US government] should just have planted some, so that our country wouldn't do to us what they did to Vietnam veterans. We don't know when we are going to return home, we are tired and we know things are going to get a lot worse before they get better.

Clearly the morale is low among soldiers, whose fear of the population results in a deepening of the gap between occupier and occupied, whereby both parties now see

themselves as victims, blaming each other for the escalation of violence. At the time of writing, raids based on unverified hints can still be ordered on houses, themselves triggering random acts of violence and retaliation. While troops are aware of the shortcomings of these practises, they feel that their plight for more decent procedures are falling into deaf ears. As a result, they become increasingly nervous when carrying out grass-roots operations, as they know that local people are bound to react against daily humiliations. Until August 2003, this escalation pattern has not been understood by the US chain of command.

3.2 The retrocession of collective honour

After months of attacks, retaliation and retribution, the 101st Airborne Division chain of command reluctantly agreed to apply cultural relativity in its handling of the people of Fallujah.

The Mayor of Fallujah organised a meeting on August 9th 2003 between Lt Col Hickey, local US forces commander, and the head of the seven major tribes comprising the town's population.⁹ A stabilization pact was brokered between the different parties.¹⁰ It consisted in initiating the gradual, although limited, retrocession of ownership of force to the Iraqis, and adopting local customs with regards to reparation or blood-money. US Military police fixed checkpoints in town were replaced by Iraqi police, handing over the monopoly of force, *ihitram*, back to the Iraqis. After storming a house on inaccurate grounds, the force's local commander Lt Col Hickey wrote a letter of apology to the owner of the house, thereby defusing future tension. More importantly, it was agreed that the undue killing or wounding of a civilian would be compensated, or repaired, by respectively \$2000 and \$500. This practise has so far been successful in Fallujah until a major shooting went unpaid towards the end of August 2003. While the following, though only temporary, success could be repeated around Iraq of importance to the Fallujah process was the fact that the Mayor had been previously nominated by the seven aforementioned Sheikhs, and later endorsed by the Americans. Such a pattern is not likely to be transposable in other part of the country where the local administration put in place by the coalition is not trusted by the locals.

⁹ The tribes in question are the Albuaisa, the al-Jumela, the al-Halabsa, the al-Mahamuda, the Albu al-Wan, the al-Zuba'a and the Albuaisa-Qais.

¹⁰ The Observer, London, 09/08/2003.

4. Concluding remarks: the dialectics of humiliation in post-Saddam Iraq

At the time of writing, the Fallujah experiment needs to be replicated in other parts of the country, where political leadership is not necessarily present to assume the responsibility of building sustainable law and order in partnership with the coalition forces. However, another case, that of the town of Najaf, will illustrate the dialectical aspect of honour humiliation in Iraq, itself yet another symptom of the growing polarization and escalation of internal violence in post-Saddam Iraq.

The town of Najaf is one of the most prominent holy sites in Shi'a Islam. It is the resting place of the Imam Ali, cousin and son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad, and murdered –or martyred-- in 661 by the Sunnis. It nowadays hosts the *Hawza*, one of the two training sites for clerics in the Muslim world. When the town of Najaf was taken by the coalition troops in April 2003, the *Hawza* organised a demonstration in the city, asking the Americans not to approach Shi'ite holy sites, this under the banner: "Najaf: yes, Ali: no".¹¹ Although a leading cleric has been killed upon his return to the city last April, and the life of Sayeed Mohammed Bakr al-Hakim had been threatened numerous times – in particular by Sayeed Mukhtada Sadr, the *Hawza's* request was accepted by the coalition forces who withdrew away from the holy sites, this until Sayeed Hakim's death on August 29th 2003. On day of Sayeed Hakim's funeral, his brother, Abdel Aziz al-Hakim called for withdrawal of the coalition forces in Iraq, blaming them for the death of his brother. As part of the procession leading to Sayeed Hakim's resting place, banners could be read: "Stop humiliating us". On the day of Sayeed Hakim's death, the US lost their peace with the Shi'ites, the largest community to welcome their liberation wholeheartedly last April.

Can this tragedy be imputed to the coalition? More importantly, was it not the *Hawza's* responsibility to protect Najaf's holy shrine? It takes two to be humiliated, the perpetrator who is perceived and accepted as such, and the victim who at times may be complacent in its role. Reports exposing foreign involvement in the death of Sayeed Hakim abound. Not only do they fuel the wildest Iraqi's rumours of foreign gangs' intervention on their soil, they also justify the White House's rhetoric of the "war against terror". For the first time since the end of Saddam Hussein's regime, two

¹¹ Auhtor interview with Abu Haidar, local school teacher, June 31st, Najaf. Anu Haidar was the primary school teacher of

negatives may have produced an ominous positive: the dual denial of collective responsibility for the escalation of violence in post-Saddam Iraq, on the part of the US, and of the Iraqis. The polarization between occupier and occupied is gradually widening

Recommendations

It is the author's view that the responsibility to rebuild Iraq should be vested in the Iraqis themselves. After 25 years of dictatorship, a lasting sense of civil society needs to be restored, this regardless of ethnic divisions. The following recommendations

- Reform the de-bathification process
- Organise media training sessions to curtail the unnecessary spreading of rumours
- Employ cultural relativity when interacting with local population
- Initiate dialogue with local community
- Retrocede independence

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Annex 1

AGREEMENT TO DISAVOW PARTY AFFILIATION

I, _____(name), hereby disavow and renounce my membership in the Arab Socialist Renaissance Party of Iraq (Ba'ath Party). I understand that the Ba'ath Party is disestablished and abolished. I expressly reject and denounce the Ba'ath Party and Saddam Hussein and his regime, as well as my previous association with it.

I acknowledge that any continued association with, or involvement in, the Ba'ath Party or its activities constitutes a violation of any order by the Coalition Provisional Authority. I pledge to cooperate fully with the Coalition Provisional Authority in serving the people of Iraq and building new Iraqi government. I will obey the laws of Iraq and all proclamations, orders and instructions of the Coalition Provisional Authority. As God is my witness:

Date: _____,2003

(name of signatory)

(signature)

(name of witness)

(signature)

(name of witness)

(signature)

Document translated by Mohammed M. Fahmy, *LA Times*