



Making Enemies

Humiliation and International Conflict

Evelin Gerda Lindner

How the dynamics of humiliation are central to conflicts around the globe

Subject:	Military studies, international relations, psychology	ISBN:	0-275-99109-1
Price:	£28.99	Publication:	July 2006
Imprint:	Praeger Security International	Binding:	Hardback
Pages:	246	Illustrations:	3 figures, 13 tables
Size:	155x235mm		

When the statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad fell, there was joy. Moments later, when an American soldier climbed the statue to place an American flag on the face, the joy was replaced by a sense of humiliation for the Iraqis. Americans had claimed to be liberators, but the placing of the American flag was a sign of conquest. Those tense moments were an example of the power of humiliating acts, even when unintentional. Along with the more predictable effects of intentional humiliations such as those at Abu Ghraib prison, the author examines and explains, across history and nations, how this little-understood emotion sparks outrage, uprisings, conflict and war.

Using the insights from psychology, peace studies, and linguistics, the author explains which words and actions can humiliate, how the victim perceives those words and actions, what the consequences are, and how individuals and organisations can work to avoid instances in the future. From acts of humiliation in Nazi Germany to events during the bloodbaths in Rwanda and Somalia, and precursors to the attacks on the Twin Towers in New York, the author gives vivid examples to explain humiliation across recent history.

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