

# The Arabs and the US after the Invasion of Iraq: Politics and Prejudice

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It is a curious, even vexing, for an observer of international affairs in the Arab World today to hear of anti-Americanism as a free-floating charge that denounces an ostensibly irrational sentiment divorced from concrete political realities. There is no denying the existence of an anti-American sentiment in the Arab World and in the world at large, nor indeed of anti-American passions among superior and among quaintly conservative Europeans, or among murderous zealots. But one would need to approach this fact of life in terms of concrete conditions that give rise to it, of the concrete forms it takes, and of course one needs to distinguish it from hostility to the policies pursued by the United States.

Thus, reflecting on current discourses on Anti-Americanism, it would appear that the classification of Anti-Americanisms into that of fanatical terrorists and into what might be described the “lite” or banal (*pace* Hannah Arendt) variety requires closer examination, before one might broach the matter usefully. The former forms part and parcel of a political ideology, at once nihilistic and chiliastic,

which is hostile to the world at large, and for whom the US is quite simply the most potent manifestation of evil which it combats murderously everywhere – not only in Manhattan, but also in Egypt, Morocco, Spain, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Indonesia, and elsewhere. This variety of anti-Americanism, it must be said, has much in common with the critique levelled against US domestic politics and society by Evangelical Americans.

The latter type seems to require particular scrutiny, for this arguably “lite” variety is generally based on views of US foreign and domestic policy that are to a great extent shared by very many Americans, who cannot be charged with anti-Americanism. One might mention the myriad of Americans who “apologised” to the world after the 2004 presidential elections, Noam Chomsky, Herbert Marcuse, C. Wright Mills, Thorstein Veblen, the anti-war movement during the Vietnam war, and liberals during the McCarthy era and today. The US is a complex country, like all others, and one would certainly be guilty of overpatterning – the very overpatterning and construction of prejudicial and stigmatising, or otherwise laudatory, stereotypes, that lie at the heart of anti-Americanism as of pro-Americanism or of ceremonial American self-admiration – if one assumed the country to be somewhat homogeneous, that it could be described summarily, and that the resultant image could be used as a backdrop for a homogeneous image “anti-Americanism” or of “Occidentalism”. Reserve towards US policies is extending in recent months even to the Atlanticist journal *The Economist* and to eminent New Europeans in Hungary and Poland.

There therefore seems to be little reason to regard anti-Americanism “lite” as some kind of “master framework” animating those with serious reservations towards US international and domestic politics. Anti-Americanism “lite” is located not in the sheer imagination, nor simply in the resentment of some un-American and therefore unwashed herd, but is ever pronounced in conjunction with specific conditions and complaints.

Such an open construal of anti-Americanism, in my view, tends to reassert and reconfirm the muscular apologies made for the present condition of US policies, external as well as internal, by official spokesmen, the popular media in the US, and the social, religious and political constituencies of the present regime in Washington, and in some cases unwittingly to play into their hands. In its implicit assumption that what goes for anti-Americanism is somehow irrational, at best a resentment, this construal seems very much to be congruent with the common refrain in Washington that some people "out there" simply “hate us for what we are”, without for a moment addressing the question of “what we do”. It must be said that not everyone in the United States, nor indeed within the machinery of government, is in agreement with this defensive posture. In October 2004 a number of high-ranking diplomats signed a petition to the effect that American foreign policy is irrational and in many ways delinquent. A Pentagon commission, set up under the auspices of the Defence Science Board, prepared a report in August 2004, leaked to the *New York Times* on 24 November (and immediately picked up by the Arab press – for example, *as-Safir*, 25 November 2004), concluded that Muslims,

generally regarded as the prime carriers of anti-Americanism, “do not hate our liberties” but rather “our policies”, which it saw as entirely lacking in credibility, especially with regard to Palestine and Iraq.

Clearly, the ascription of blind hatred and irrational resentment to criticism – piecemeal or systemic – of the US at the present moment, abstracting anti-Americanism from the conditions that might give rise to it, is a device for inhibiting criticism. It is a device buttressed by an etherealisation and sentimentalisation of political realities internal and external, rendered all the more out of bounds by increasing associations with anti-Semitism. The analogy with anti-Semitism, surfacing now and then, seems a diversionary tactic, seeking to transfer to the former the emotional and stigmatising energy of this latter, to give sustenance and credence to charges of anti-Americanism, now piggy-backing on the enormity of anti-Semitism.

I believe that a more reasoned case for anti-Americanism “lite”, and indeed a case for pro-Americanism “lite”, can be made from another angle: namely the conception of the US held world-wide from the time of the Enlightenment. This is a conception of the US as being ever youthful and consequently callow, boundlessly energetic yet crude and distempered, with a combination of fascination, optimism, and profound reserve. America was, until it came explicitly into its imperial function, regarded as somehow childish yet, being so, opening avenues to the future: a trope ubiquitous in human history, where the representatives of older, mature civilisations wondered, with fascination and alarm, at

uncouth, childish and energetic novelty. Tocqueville and Hegel shared this view with Arab commentators on the US in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In addition, other images which come into the making of the “lite” variety of anti- and pro-Americanism included a number of stock characters, made all the more salient and ubiquitous by the international success of popular American culture as reflected in cinema. Thus we have the figures of the cowboy, the mobster and the huckster, prosperous middle class life, swagger and extreme violence, colossal architecture and free-wheeling, stories of rags-to-riches, lone rangers, Rambos and infinite possibilities, conspicuous wealth --- a myriad of ambiguities which exercise the public imagination outside the US. This imagination has a negative turn, as for instance with the sniffy superiority of many Europeans, and the positive engagement of aspirants to a better life, an emergent international and highly consumerist middle class, and the Saudi technocracy.

To Arabs specifically, this fascination was given more concrete political form by the anti-imperialist positions taken by the US after the first world war and during the tripartite invasion of Egypt in 1956 by Israel, Britain and France – a position which itself is often ascribed to the eternal youth of the US. Yet these positions of pro- and anti-Americanism “lite” can only crystallise into hard and enduring conditions under specific circumstances, when the vast distance of the US is annulled by systemic, global and aggressive politico-military engagement and muscularity, as for instance

during the Vietnam war, in Latin America in the 1970s, and in eastern Europe in the closing years of the Cold war and beyond.

If one were therefore to look concretely, and beyond the requirements of polemic or of defensiveness, and beyond the incongruous assumption that the US is a sacrificial lamb and victim of the blind prejudice and hatred of others, one would need a degree of precision in describing hostility to the US, and in scrutinising circumstances that give rise to it. One would need to ask what it is in the US domestic situation which others find abhorrent, and what it is in her foreign policy that attracts such fierce hostility. One would need to read such hostility beyond the disturbing televisual images of hostages in Iraq dressed up in the uniform of detainees in American hands in Guantanamo and Abou Ghuraib, one of whom, at least (Ken Bigley on 29 September, 2004), confined to a Guantanamo-style cage, before being put to death.

I propose to take up this matter with regard to the Arab world in recent years, and specifically to Iraq. I can think of no better angle from which to do this than to follow the lead of the person whom I take to be the most prescient reader of American policy and institutions, a person who, like many others, combined a superior admiration for, a fascination with, and a profound reserve towards that country. I hope it will be seen that one can usefully conjugate Tocqueville's reading of democracy in America with American claims to bring democracy to Iraq.

Tocqueville's reflection on the nature of American polity compares most favourably with those now commonly encountered, with those of Harold Bloom, Michael Ignatieff, or Bernard-Henri Lévy for instance, or even of Thomas Jefferson and George W. Bush, not least because it is level-headed, sober, and not self-serving. Tocqueville's celebration of democracy in America both lauds and estranges, and his evident and discomfiting reserve dampens the appetite for disquisitions on impeccable destiny and on Election, human or divine. It helps bring a certain poise and a sense of proportion and temperance to descriptions of this country. Not least by bringing back a sense of the standardly human, it helps one go beyond the usual toing and froing between postures of the heroic and the semi-divine, which figure in the drama of Manifest Destiny, on the one hand, and on the other, cultural exports of post-human mutant figures such as Michael Jackson or the Terminator, before his latest transmogrification.

Differently put, Tocqueville offers us an insight into the workings of American democracy beyond the undoubted idealism of many Americans, indicating certain conditions under which this idealism operates -- conditions often overlooked, and usually overlaid with references to Founding Fathers and foundational texts like the Constitution<sup>1</sup>. American credibility in the Arab World, and beyond, is mortally compromised by such attitudes of superior

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<sup>1</sup> A contrastive reading of the Founding Fathers and of the course of US policies at home and abroad is offered by Gore Vidal, *Inventing the Nation: Washington, Adams, Jefferson*, New Haven 2003

complacency and of hubristic swagger. And it does bear repetition that critical, even acutely critical attitudes to the US are shared widely in the US itself. In the domain of foreign policy, crucially important for Arab hostility, one might almost at random cite Dr. Brzezinsky who is worried by "extremist demagoguery that emphasizes worst-case scenarios, stimulates fear and induces a very simple, dichotomous view of world reality" and which "theologizes" any challenge as "terrorism", and speaks against "political cowardice" with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict<sup>2</sup>.

Now to Tocqueville: in aiding us with understanding America with respect to the Arab world and specifically Iraq, Tocqueville refers us also to Europe and to an older America, for hostility to or at the very least alarm at America today is a global phenomenon, as is anti-Americanism "lite", now superseded by more firmly crystallised attitudes arising from a major event. This is of course the dangerous drift in American policy after September 11, manifested in the Arab World at once by the invasion of Iraq, and by unlimited, tail-wags-the-dog support for the systematic Israeli demolition of all possible elements of Palestinian statehood: the Palestinian economy, housing, and agricultural land, the destruction of Palestinian administrative and educational infrastructure, the murder or incarceration of virtually the entire political elite of the Occupied Territories, the targeting of youth, the relentless dispossession of Palestinian land and water resources and the implantation of colonies for immigrants from Cincinnati or

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<sup>2</sup> Z. Brzezinski, in *International Herald Tribune*, 15-16

Birobidjan, and not least by the wide-scale murder of civilians (adjusted to population figures, this amounts to over 1/4 of a million American deaths and to 4 million wounded).

This is dangerous drift indeed. That there has so far been no catastrophic failure for the occupying forces in Iraq of the sort that would cause them immediately to cut and run is no evidence of impending success. Signs grow daily more ominous, with lawlessness, chaos and extreme violence being the prime features of the situation in that country under occupation. It is unsurprising that America's credibility, once extraordinarily high in the Arab World, is at rock-bottom, except amongst Iraqi clients and a number of Arab liberals. Ambassador Djerejian's report on US "public diplomacy", commissioned in 2003 by the State Department, is evidence that many Americans have become aware of this, though it is not sufficiently realised that hostility to the United States in the region is only in very small measure the affair of Islamic political forces.

I do not have the space here to take up these forces, and most saliently of the radical, nihilistic wing of Ibn Laden, al-Zarqawi and their associates. But let it be said here, as a cautionary remark, that Arabs cannot, if one were to have any measure of realism, be described simply as Muslims -- this commonplace is a fatal categorical and historical error made by Ambassador Djerijian and his team as well as by American officialdom and by most influential commentators, expert and inexpert, not least those who give

sustenance to neo-conservative positions. Neither should Islam or Muslims be summarily assimilated to the more perverse interpretations of their religion, any more than Christianity be summarily reduced to the Inquisition or to evangelical fundamentalism, or indeed Judaism being assimilated to the views and actions of the rabbinical Ayatollahs in the Palestinian occupied territories. Be it coming from inside or outside, this view that collapses Arabs into Islam should be as little believed as the claim that all Americans are virtuous, or that all are cowboys.

Let it be repeated that hostility to American policy has less to do with what America is than what she does, less to do with a visceral or resentful anti-Americanism, which does indeed exist in a variety of forms and inflections<sup>3</sup>, banal as well as determined, than with a perception of national and, indeed, universal danger, arising of what America does. It is unsurprising that a European Union poll in 2003 has established that fully 53 per cent of EU citizens regard the United States as a danger to world peace -- 6 percentage points lower than the 59 per cent scored by Israel (national variations range between 79 and 51 per cent in Italy, for over a decade blighted by Berlusconi's media and soccer empire).

### Salem, Massachusetts

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<sup>3</sup> As an example: Philippe Roger, *L'ennemi américain. Généalogie de l'antiaméricanisme français*, Paris, 2002

This takes us to the second vantage point opened up by Tocqueville, one that is less immediately political and more universal, relevant to the question of democracy, to the genuine or formulaic declamation of "American values", to their muscular proclamation as universal. It must be said at the outset that democracy is not an American, but a universal value which has taken many forms which might be reduced to the civic and the communal, the latter being, in a complex way, peculiar to America. I will not for the moment beg the question of "American values", or inquire whether these might be those of the Rev. Al Sharpton, of Jesse Ventura, of AIPAC or Enron, of Pat Robertson or the late Timothy McVey, the values of joggers and skaters at Venice Bay in California, of assorted hill-billies, those of East Coast universities, or indeed those most interesting and eminently changeable combinations one encounters in speeches by politicians seeking election or re-election. For though this is a vast and diverse country, it does, like other countries, conduct herself formally and project herself to the outside by claiming that her complexity is for practical purposes suspended, superseded by a ceremonial discourse which bespeaks more self-image than reality. The discomfiting Tocqueville is surely second to none as a guide to reflecting upon the interplay of reality and illusion in American public life. And though I am a reader of Tocqueville who has deepest possible aversion to anachronism, yet by general consensus this Frenchman of genius produced an image of American democracy as lasting as that of the Founding Fathers, and more

reflective, and bringing it up to date is still in line with its main thrust.

Reflective, among other things, upon the implications and assumptions of the statement by President Bush that one was either with him or against him – Senator McCarthy had made a similar statement, albeit with his inimitable vulgarity<sup>4</sup> -- and his apportioning of good and evil. Like most Arabs, most Europeans have felt grievously bullied since September 11, though some exception should be made to certain ruling circles in eastern Europe who, on the eve of the invasion of Iraq, received a dubious compliment of Mr. Rumsfeld when described as the "New Europe" -- this is doubtless with reference to their switching to the US the fauning and automatically complaisant reflexes well practiced, especially by ruling post-Communist parties, in relation to the Soviet Union in a previous era not long past.

Most Europeans and Arabs, moreover, feel bullied by a country that presents herself fully as a hyper-power, despite exception taken to this term, one that is seen at once as institutionlising a state of permanent war on a planetary scale<sup>5</sup>, and casting this endemic condition as necessarily arising from the overriding primacy of local values, American values, clearly set above universal values expressed in, for instance, the Kyoto

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<sup>4</sup> McCarthy once told journalists: "If you want to be against the McCarthy boys ... you've got to be either a communist or a cocksucker": J. A. Morone, *Hellfire Nation. The Politics of Sin in American History*, New Haven, 2003, p. 393

<sup>5</sup> Emmanuel Todd, *Après l'empire*, Paris, 2002, p. 17

Protocol, the International Court of Justice, the ABM Treaty, and not least the Security Council<sup>6</sup>.

It is this violently particularistic orientation and its extra-legal presumptions, premised on unparalleled economic and military capacity and served up in the name of universality, that is especially worrisome, and which requires explanation. For after all, as one Old European observer remarked <sup>7</sup>, the US seems to be adopting a classic strategy of a rogue state, a strategy of intimidation by irresponsibility, ill-suited to a country of continental proportions, one that might indeed sway Europeans with regard to smaller but aggressive countries like Israel, but inappropriate for the dispassion that one would ordinarily associate with maturer empires which, when truly imperial, tend to be cosmopolitan, not provincial in outlook. Such empires might be and are indeed often muscular, but are normally capable of managing ecumenical diversity without recourse to shrillness..

It is almost as if the US, as she appears officially, takes the world for her unruly hearth, according to a domestic model of the world, the model of the “town on the hill”, of a Salem, Massachussetts, of witch-hunt fame, duly reconfigured from a folksy

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<sup>6</sup> The extent to which this power is unlimited, and the proposition that the resort to militarism in fact obscures a serious weakness, are made by Todd, *apres l'empire*, and I. Wallerstein, *The Decline of American Power*, New York and London, 2003

<sup>7</sup> Todd, *Apres l'empire*, p. 10. See also C. Prestowitz, *Rogue Nation: American Unilateralism and the failure of Good Intentions*, New York, Basic Books, 2003

Thanksgiving remembrance<sup>8</sup>, to a hearth whose moral economy is ruled, in the words of Toqueville, by unrestrained instincts and passions: passions with a puritanical expression implacably dividing Light from Darkness, friend from foe, fighting angels of virtuous retribution from demons, Good from Evil empires and axes, passions propelled by the sovereignty of received opinion and beholden to a majoritarianism "fettered by numbers", to the tyranny of the majority<sup>9</sup>, served up as "consensus" by nature parochial and exclusivist

The early Puritans had of course had their own axis of evil: Quakers, witches, and Indians. Later Americans were equally over time, and still are susceptible to apparitions of uncanny outsiders and enemies within: Catholics, the Irish, Blacks, drinkers, anarchists, Communists, and of other aliens.<sup>10</sup> They hounded them mercilessly, by various acts of reservation and discrimination under the title of what we might call "social-political hygiene" including eugenics, by lynchings (4,742 officially recorded between 1882 and 1968), festive occasions fit for the whole family, of which spectators exchanged postcards<sup>11</sup>, by the Prohibition, by the Committee on Un-American activities, by the continuous production of science-fiction films featuring preternatural and devious aliens, some dressed up as

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<sup>8</sup> See Richard T. Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, Urbana and Chicago, 2003, for a discussion of the abiding motifs that idealise the United States

<sup>9</sup> *Democracy in America*, tr. H. Reeve, rev. F. Bowen, edited by P. Bradley, New York, 1990, i:14, 53, 301, ii: 10, 11

<sup>10</sup> Morone, *Hellfire Nation*, passim

<sup>11</sup> A. Chaon, in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, 24 June 2000

natives, and most recently by anti-Arab and anti-Muslim hate-mongering (even by a ranking General, Boykin, who has a God bigger than those of others, and by preachers who officiate at state occasions), by official racial and religious profiling, and murderous private vigilantism. With regard to this last episode of mass hysteria, that involving terrorism, though nobody in their right mind would deny the reality of international terrorist networks or their danger to all of us, Satan must be confined to some extra-terrestrial sphere or cavernous abode in order to be properly and effectively tackled by the root, rather than certain collectivities demonised after his image. Terrorism has no solution that is purely military, or purely imaginary.

Tocqueville alerts us to the dark, irrational, and highly illiberal and intolerant side of the way in which American politics -- American democracy -- functions, rendering it at times undemocratic in all but formal arrangements. This has been the subject of some excellent recent work by American and other scholars, on collective hysterias like some of those I mentioned, on various religious and secular forms of nativism, on the politics of sin<sup>12</sup> -- on the fevered style in public expression generally, on precedents to the sanctimonious voyeurism of a Kenneth Starr or

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<sup>12</sup> For instance: Morone, *Hellfire Nation*; S. M. Lipset and E. Raab, *The Politics of Unreason: Right-Wing extremism in America, 1790-1970*, New York, 1970; D. Bennett, *The Party of Fear: From Nativist Movements to the New Right in American History*, Chapel Hill, 1988; R. Bellah, *The Broken Covenant*, Chicago, 1988; M. Gardell, *Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism*, Durham, 2003

the present erosion of civil liberties under the Patriot Act (or its predecessor, the National Security Act of 1947).

Yet this is part and parcel of the American democratic order. This is a democratic order modelled in part, in its relation to the outside, on that of a small community, severely managing unwholesome outsiders, as reflected in the notorious American penal regime, based on principles of retributive justice, resulting in facts such as the State of California spending, from 1994, more on prisons than on state universities<sup>13</sup>, or the US joining China and the Congo in accounting for 80 per cent of executions world-wide<sup>14</sup> -- and this at a time when crime rates overall had been falling. The ostracism of miscreants benign or malign (those standing against Christ, against the American way of Life, against American values), this communalist inflection of national selfhood, tends according to Tocqueville to sap the virtues of public life and is in his opinion admirably suited to human weakness, as "the power of the majority [or what presents itself as speaking for the majority] is so absolute and irresistible that one must give up one's qualities as a man if one intends to stray from the track which it prescribes", and public opinion, or what stands for it, becomes "a species of religion, and the majority its ministering prophet"<sup>15</sup>. For such communalism tends to devalue liberty in favour of collective virtue as defined by the winning party, and dissolves civility into community - it is

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<sup>13</sup> See in general D. Garland, *The Culture of Control*, Chicago, 2003

<sup>14</sup> S. Mallat, *al-Dimuqratiyya fi Amerika*, Beirut, 2001, p. 76

<sup>15</sup> *Democracy in America*, i: 98, 123, 267, ii: 11, 123

unsurprising, therefore, that upon his re-election in November 2004 President Bush declared that he had accumulated political capital which he intended to spend.

This communalism tends to configure the body-politic as a coalition of communities, Black, Gay, Hispanic and Jewish, gun lobbies, agricultural lobbies, church lobbies and AIPAC, and tends to turn national politics into a space for special pleading. Thus the strength of American federalism, according to Tocqueville: that of a nation where towns were organised before counties, counties before states, states before the Union, combining, in his words, the advantages resulting from "the magnitude and littleness of nations", but not necessarily appropriate elsewhere<sup>16</sup>, particularly when this balance is broken in favour of magnitude.

This model, of New England Puritan provenance, is in a remarkable continuity that marks American political life noted by a long line of commentators from Tocqueville to Robert Bellah and others<sup>17</sup>. Tocqueville wrote: "The civilization of New England has been like a beacon on a hill which, after it has diffused its warmth immediately around it, also tinges the distant horizon with its glow"<sup>18</sup>, thus describing the continuity a model of free individuals (and communities), more independent than equal, who confound

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<sup>16</sup> *Democracy in America*, i: 40, 163

<sup>17</sup> Bellah, *Broken Covenant*, 48 ff. and passim; *Democracy in America*, passim

<sup>18</sup> *Democracy in America*, i:31

equality with freedom, in the expression of Tocqueville<sup>19</sup>, each a Mayflower with some errant passengers. But this unique composite must manage diversity, and must manage the staggering inequalities and unevennesses of third-world proportions as exist in the US today, so as to produce a serviceable platform for action inside the country and outside on behalf of this entire collectivity of collectivities. This is done by setting a ceiling for acceptable dissent from a central cluster of positions taken for self-evident consensus, beyond which ostracism or worse comes into play, both centrally and individually, as witnessed respectively by regimes of national and sectoral codes of political correctness and by the related phenomenon, unique to the US, of fierce and rampant litigiousness. Thus we have what Tocqueville characterised as the American moral world, in which "everything is classified, foreseen, and decided beforehand", in contrast to American politics, where "everything is agitated, disputed and uncertain"<sup>20</sup>

There are various ways and means of managing diversity, from informal vigilantism to formal police action to the manipulation of public opinion, which is the subject of so much negative comment on America inside the US and in both Europe and the Arab world, by mass media, described by one European as "informing without being informed"<sup>21</sup>. Tocqueville had written: "The characteristics of the American journalist consist in an open and

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<sup>19</sup> *Democracy in America*, i:301, ii:95

<sup>20</sup> *Democracy in America*, i:43-4

<sup>21</sup> E. Balibar, *L'Europe, l'Amerique et la guerre*, Paris, 2003, 140

coarse appeal to the passions of his readers; he abandons principles to assail the characters of individuals, to track them into private life and disclose all their weaknesses and vices". Exorbitant generalisation apart, one might well assent with Tocqueville's conclusion from this crude trait which with some notable exceptions tends to characterise much contemporary US written and televisual journalism, that this "extreme license" tends indirectly to enhance the maintenance of public order<sup>22</sup>. This whole matter has attracted much public commentary on a theme cognate to Tocqueville's "tyranny of the majority", inside the US by intellectuals such as Thornstein Veblen, C. Wright Mills, Herbert Marcuse (who spoke of "repressive tolerance"), Dean Acheson (the "conditioning of the public mind"), and Noam Chomsky (who speaks of "the manufacture of consent"), all of whom commented on the ultimately authoritarian dialectic of revelation and obscuration in American public life, and on other characteristics of national political culture in the US<sup>23</sup>. These themes are continually brought out in commentary, especially on the financial and pollster conditioning of electoral campaigns.

Public opinion is not the natural emergence of some public self: the ingathering of private concerns and sentiments, highly differentiated, fragmented and dispersed, its uniformisation and evening-out so as to create a smooth space of agreement over issues made common, is an elaborate and very costly process. It is a process which, for Tocqueville, uses benign and idealistic general

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<sup>22</sup> *Democracy in America*, i:187

terms much too plentifully, like freedom and equality, terms each of which is like "a box with a false bottom; you may put in it what ideas you please, and take them out again without being observed"<sup>24</sup>. Ultimately, according to our Frenchman, powers in effective control cover the face of society with "a network of small complicated rules, minute and uniform, through which the most original minds and the most energetic characters cannot penetrate ... The will of man is not shattered, but softened, bent, guided; men are seldom forced by it to act, but they are constantly restrained from acting. Such power ... does not tyrannize, but it compresses, enervates, extinguishes and stupefies". Further, such a system of controls often invisible and imperceptible allows citizens to "shake off their state of dependence just long enough to select their master and then relapse into it again"<sup>25</sup>.

I must add, and this is a crucial point in my view, that this recursive model of communal cohesiveness, harking back to the much earlier America witnessed by Tocqueville, represents a regression from another America much admired, one whose universalism reached its apogee in the three decades following the era of Woodrow Wilson. It is a turn from open curiosity and a certain genuine globalism towards an introverted denial of the existence of the world "out there", except insofar as it is made to appear as a demonic un-American domain, excluding always reliable

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<sup>23</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 2, ch. 10-18

<sup>24</sup> Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ii:70

<sup>25</sup> *Democracy in America*, ii:319

allies like Britain, Estonia or Micronesia, and, much like ancient Muslim law, dividing the world between the Abode of Islam and the Abode of war. This strange world in which America appears to be acting as a pyromaniac fire-fighter<sup>26</sup>, goes very much against another grain, another seam of American polity, celebrated by Tocqueville. This is the one that calibrates the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution so as to manage the arithmetical simplicities of popular will through the stately minuet of the legislative, the executive and the judiciary, beyond the cant of communalism and exclusivism, indeed beyond the pleasing grail of Manifest Destiny. It is also the America that out of which emerged the New deal, Desegregation, the Great Society, and the great universities. The two Americas, now labelled "blue" and "red", liberal and conservative, had always coexisted, sometimes interpenetrated, sometimes conflicted; but neither is some prelapsarian utopia of "real" America and her values.

What seems to have occurred in recent years, particularly since the Reagan presidency, is the extension of the Monroe Doctrine from a strict geographical to an ideological interpretation, from an anti-colonial to an imperialist reading and a global unilateralism, much as had been done sixty or seventy years earlier by that canniest and most brilliant of political meta-strategists Carl Schmitt, in defence of the notion of a *Lebensraum*<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Todd, *Après l'empire*, 143, 156 and ch. 5, passim

<sup>27</sup> C. Schmitt, "Volkerrechtliche Foemen des modernen Imperialismus", in idem., *Positionen und Begriffe im Kampf mit Weimar-Genf-Versailles*, Berlin, 1994, pp. 184 ff.;

The muscular liberalism of contemporary American neoconservatives, the most sophisticated of whom is perhaps Robert Kagan, is older than that particular group of strategists, and has very strong affinities to Schmitt who is again coming into fashion, most particularly with his fundamental idea that the most basic categories of politics are those of friend and foe. And it seems to me that it is this group of the East Coast intelligentsia, for long not particularly welcome in liberal universities, and who consequently drifted into public service under Kissinger and in later years<sup>28</sup>, who have had a decisive influence on the recession of universalism and the reclamation of other strands in American foreign policy, in a line associated with Morgenthau, Wohlstetter, the Rand Corporation, the American Enterprise Institute, the Hudson Institute, with fundamentalist evangelical inflections in the American Heritage Institute and in the White House.

This last is perhaps not surprising in a country where three times as many people would rather believe biblical accounts of the virgin birth than Charles Darwin, and where 39 per cent of the 80 percent of Americans who are believers describe themselves as born-again Christians<sup>29</sup>, and where bookshops contain row upon row of eschatological and otherwise religious fiction, aesthetically and

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Balibar, *L'Europe, l'Amerique et la guerre*, 107 ff.; G. Balakrishnan, *The Enemy. An Intellectual Portrait of Carl Schmitt*, London 2000, ch. 18

<sup>28</sup> See the excellent article of A. Frachon and D. Vernet in *Le Monde*, 16 April 2003

<sup>29</sup> *The Economist*, 8 November, 2003, p. 9 of "A Survey of America"

narratively akin to science fiction, of which the *Left Behind* series has sold over 40 million copies. This seems indeed to be a country in which, according to Tocqueville, "religious insanity is very common"<sup>30</sup>. Ideas of America as a "Christian Sparta", as a covenanted nation embarking upon an Exodus towards a Destiny manifest -- first on the Mayflower, later to the Wild West, then world-wide -- expressed in religious and non-religious terms, is constant in local self-perception.<sup>31</sup> This yields the heady, militaristic ideological cocktail currently in place in Washington, in which are mixed, but not particularly well-shaken, Wolfowitz and Ashcroft (until recently), Pearl and Cheney -- the one element that solders them together and makes them act as one, apart from agreement on a natural theology of the market and the person of the President, seems to be the savage social-Darwinist suprematism they hold in common, the one revolving around the image of normative and the other on divine election, and sharing uncritical and unlimited support for Israel, also a country of the Elect, strong and isolated, far in excess of what may be perceived to be in the national interest of the US<sup>32</sup>.

### Salem, Mesopotamia

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<sup>30</sup> *Democracy in America*, ii:134

<sup>31</sup> Bellah, *The Broken Covenant*, pp. 24 ff. , ch. II, and passim; *Democracy in America*, i: 300-318

<sup>32</sup> See A. Callinicos, *The New Mandarins and American Power: The Bush Administration's Plans for the World*, Cambridge, 2004. For a particularly savage scenario: R. Perle and D.

This seems to be the right point at which to move on to Iraq, carried along by the swell of anti-Arab animosity and Islamophobia complementary to uncritical support to Israel, strategic, eschatological and communalist, and propelled by the sub-Schmittian strategic pastiche of Spengler produced by Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington. At the confluence of these trends lies the demonisation of Islam in much public discourse, though I do not for one moment believe, as many Arabs do, that the US is engaged in a neo-Crusade in the Arab World (though clearly some elements in the Administration and the military do, as in the case of Gen. Boykin), despite an ungainly statement by the President. The whole enterprise is carried forward with an air of strident small-town ostracism that characterises mass paranoias in the US and elsewhere. Yet the US is offering the Iraqis freedom and democracy, it being noted that pronouncements on the Arab World are not in the habit of including "justice" to the list of gifts proffered, which might if brought into view highlight the crucial question of Palestine, but also a profound racism that implicitly regards Arabs as subhuman.

Which freedom, and which democracy, are Iraqis and other Arabs supposed to be believe they are receiving under US patronage ? How might they, after the invasion, recompose their minds and wills, and think of themselves not as victims of collateral damage, military and political, left in the wake of US policies in the

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Frum, *The End of Evil. How to Win the War on Terror*, New

area, but as recipients of collateral advantage from the removal of the Baathist regime ? The collateral damage has over the years been very considerable: not only the chaotic conditions in Iraq after the invasion and the devastations of the embargo before (some 100,000 dead and prodigious social and economic devastation), nor only the massive loss of civilian life after the invasion (some 10,000<sup>33</sup>) or the devastation of Iraqi agriculture (in favour of agribusiness as well as due to salination resulting from the cessation of state maintenance) and the almost wilful manufacture of massive unemployment (about 2/3 of the labour force, due to the dissolution and stoppage of state enterprises)<sup>34</sup>. This is added in the public mind to the consequences of Israeli depredations, to support for repressive and retrogressive Arab regimes, but also until quite recently to sustained American patronage of reactionary social milieus and Islamic political movements, which continues in Iraq with full force.

This is a story not unlike that of Dr. Frankenstein, starting with what one might call the cultural plank of the Truman Doctrine, with the use of islamist political forces as bulwarks against what, without the requisite very large pinch of salt, was taken for Communism in the Middle East, and which dealt, very deliberately, massive blows to secular and otherwise progressive forces in the Arab world. It continued in the US-Saudi enterprise of setting up the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (in 1967) and the ultra-

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York, 2004

<sup>33</sup> *New York Times*, 29 October, 2004; *The Nation*, 15 November 2004, *The Economist*, 6 November 2004

<sup>34</sup> *Harper's Magazine*, December 2004, p. 18

conservative Islamic propaganda subsequently spread worldwide, and support in lands not too far away for the very godly regime of Ziaul Haq in Pakistan and for fundamentalist forces in Afghanistan, together with Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and, to some extent, Sadat's Egypt, all favoured allies of the US. The consequences are well-known and need no reminders, except to recall that the Afghan engagement of the US produced thousands of transnational, murderous cavemen who have plagued the world, starting with the Arab World. The subversion in the same context of Arab (and Iranian) democratic regimes in the 1940s and 1950s by the CIA and its predecessor organism the SIS are well known and very well remembered.

Now for possible collateral advantage, and I do not need here to go into talismanic prescriptions of democracy as cure for all ills, for I prefer to be concrete. The Puritan communalist model of democracy, today wedded to a libertarian model of multiculturalism and to economic neo-liberalism, is the one on offer. It is much in keeping with what, while reading Tocqueville, I tried to disengage above, the nation as a community of communities rather than a civic assembly of citizens -- a model of democracy which, along with many other matters already mentioned, is often cited with horror by European authors wary of American self-ascriptions of universal

political values, and eager to distinguish Europe from America<sup>35</sup>. The model on offer is clearly at variance with Arab and European notions, traditions and experiences of democracy, in short of democratic "values" outside America, more attuned to the centrality of citizenship than to the communalisation of individuals, and more inspired by models of French republicanism than the federalist or confederalist (so-called consociational) communalism of communities of birth and of pressure or special interest groups.

This communalist notion now being offered as exemplary is reflected in the communalist conception devised for future Iraqi polity, first in the Provisional Ruling Council (PRC), and later by the composition of the cabinet now in place and by local Iraqi and international commentary on the situation in Iraq and by the configuration to which the elections of January 2005 are supposed to give institutional form. This, according to a benign reading of the American multiculturalist Shangri-La, fosters diversity and equality and so forth. Iraqi polity is conceived in this way as composed of an oligarchic coalition of communal -- sectarian and ethnic -- forces and worthies, for the most part long-resident abroad, who find their party-political affiliations smothered by their affiliation of blood. Thus the surreal spectacle of Communists figuring on the Council and in the cabinet as Shi`ites, or secular liberals figuring as Sunnites along with tribal chieftains, and so forth, as if the country were being politically and socially engineered along a model of internal

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<sup>35</sup> One might cite, almost at random, S. Kauffmann and T. de Montbrial, both in *Le Monde*, respectively 6 and 14 June, 2003

fragmentation which will lead, at best, to a cold civil peace, at worst to civil war, after the image of Balkanisation or Lebanisation, which is clearly not a formula appropriate for nation-building.

This is underlined Bremer's praise, fanciful, implausible but most unfortunately probably genuine, for the Lebanese model. This is of course clearly heedless of Tocqueville's preference for a power "so constituted as to represent the majority without necessarily being a slave of its passions"<sup>36</sup>. More real an indicator of the consequences of such communalisation is the spectacle of mobile telephone contracts for Iraq having been awarded by the occupation authority to three separate companies, not competing with each other over national territory but rather each covering the territory of a potentially independent political entity, based on blood or religious affiliation -- Kurdish, Sunni and Shiite.

This adaptation of American communalism – based on the image of a community of virtue and value, reduced in this case as in the case of American conservatism to religion – is very well expressed in the opinions of one Noah Feldman. A young professor of Law at New York University, Feldman had been touted in the immediate aftermath of the occupation by the occupation authorities as a framer of the new Iraqi constitution, and acted as consultant to the occupation authorities soon after they thought the better of this. He is the author of a book<sup>37</sup> which, drawing concrete consequence from American communalism (including Jewish

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<sup>36</sup> *Democracy in America*, i:261

<sup>37</sup> N. Feldman, *After Jihad. America and the Struggle for Islamic Democracy*, New York, 2003

communalism conceived in a neo-conservative mould, of which the "left-wing" multiculturalist version is represented by Richard Walzer), speaks of a specifically "Islamic" democracy into which the projected Iraqi body-politic should be made to fit.

Without begging the question of whether it would be any more meaningful to speak of an "Islamic democracy" than of Karl Marx's "yellow logarithm" or of Jewish chemistry, the very common argument there presented is that, Iraq being a "Muslim country", ostensibly Muslim values must be its principles of government – thus, on analogy with Jewish principles and the Jewish state, Muslim halakhic principles should apply, as should "Islamic equality" and "Islamic liberty". The penal code of Iraq must accommodate barbarous punishments and retrogressive social mores (including those regarding women), as they are ostensibly in accord with "Muslim principles". That such "principles" are more in accord with Muslim fundamentalist reclamations than with social realities does not seem to matter, for the implicit analogy remains that of the unreflected rapture of "American values", from which a Muslim analogy is generously drawn. Such propositions are also in accord with the polemical notions of Islam widely disseminated in the United States, and which gain particular salience as they form part of evangelist imaginings of the End<sup>38</sup> -- imaginings well stated by

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<sup>38</sup> P. Boyer, "The Middle East in Modern American Popular Prophetic Beliefs", in A. Amanat and M. Bernhardtsson (eds.), *Imagining the End: Visions of Apocalypse from the Ancient Middle East to Modern America*, London 2002, pp. 312-335, and Z. Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism*, Cambridge, 2004, ch. 7

Reformation notion of Islam, eloquently restated in the ultimate chapter of the *Life of Mohamed* by the New England Minister and erudite George Bush, a book which was first published in New York in 1832 and which went into more than a dozen editions in subsequent decades.

There is no denying the diverse composition of Iraq, as of any other country, nor the fact, now harnessed to its own purposes by American policy, that in his last years Saddam Hussein did encourage the retribalisation of politics, starting with his own community of blood, his sons and maternal cousins, and nurtured a severe social conservatism associated with memories of tribalism, particularly after 1991. This the US is perpetuating resolutely, along with her by now long-familiar support for religious political forces, now compounded by the spawning of very radical Islamist forces resulting from American wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. It is worth remembering that sectarianism -- the transformation of religious or ethnic communities into political parties -- is a new political phenomenon, and that Iraqi polity like most Arab polities had been engaged for decades in a largely successful process of forming citizens, of neutralising social groups of blood as political actors, and that Jacobin methods have historically always been an essential part of all such processes. Yet there is no truth to the proposition that Iraq had been "ruled by Sunnis" who persecuted Kurds and Shiites. Under Saddam Hussein, all Iraqis were in equitable measure recipients of state repression, including the so-called "Sunni triangle", which was particularly targeted.

A few salient facts would highlight the argument being made, that the sectarian and ethnic parameters of Iraqi polity are a very recent phenomenon, dating from the 1990s. Iraqi Arabs were not responsible for the division of Kurdish territories among Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria: this was the doing of the Treaty of Sèvres, at a time when Kurds lacked any national consciousness, but were a rural population, some of whose notables were well-integrated into various national polities: Iraq had for instance two Kurdish prime ministers under the royalist regime, and Ahmad Mukhtar Baban was the all-powerful Director of the Royal court, while the second president of Turkey, Ismet İnönü, was of urban Kurdish stock. Moreover, the proportion of Kurds in the Iraqi officer corps was greater than their proportion in the population (the first military coup in Iraq was led by a Kurdish officer), and Kurds were generally well-integrated into political parties, particularly the Communist party, the largest political party in Iraq until its destruction by the Baathists in the early 1960s.

Shiites for their part were all-important in the Iraqi Communist part, and the major Iraqi political parties had Shiite leaders: the Independence party led by Muhammad mahdi Kubbah, the Popular Front by Muhammad Rida Shibili, the Liberal party by Saad al-Saleh. Shiites were very important in the 1920 nationalist uprising against Britain. No political movements were constituted in Iraq on sectarian grounds before the da`wa party sponsored by Iran, and the present state of political organisations set up by chanceries in Washington and London. At the social level, intermarriage was very common, and Arabic was the national

language. Finally, talk of "majority" and "minority" in Iraq is hopelessly confused, and conditioned by political engineering. This novelty is not the least so as there is no statistical base on which assertions of relative population weights are made. The last decennial census took place in 1997, but no Iraqi census questionnaire contained information on religious or sectarian affiliation, and for those who estimate the Shiites to constitute a majority there are others who estimate this not to be the case<sup>39</sup>. In any case, it is woefully wrong to assume that being a Muslim leads naturally to having Islamist tastes in politics: even in countries where Islamist forces were actively sponsored by government, such as Pakistan, Algeria and Jordan, no more than some 30 % of the electorate voted for Islamist political groups.

Nevertheless, no-one can belie a surge of atavism by some of the most primitive and retrogressive social forces and ties amidst the predictable chaos resulting from deliberate state-collapse, indeed of somalisation, and its collateral social and economic collapse that accompanied the advent of the occupation forces, who are to most Iraqis inflammatory by their very presence, not least because of a natural patriotism which Americans generally prize so much in themselves. But this is the case also because the occupation brought in its train conditions of unemployment, of infrastructural dysfunction, of the atrophy of public services, of rampant lawlessness. This was aided by trigger-happy and nervous US troops who have sometimes, like Saddam Hussein before them and like

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<sup>39</sup> Khairuddin Haseeb, *Mustaqbal al-`Iraq* [The Future of Iraq], Beirut

Israel still, resorted to collective punishment, like the uprooting of trees and destruction the houses and indeed of entire cities (Fallujah stands out as an example), rendering homeless the families of suspected enemies<sup>40</sup>. They also brought insecurity and lawlessness (except for US and oil installations, and even then not very successfully -- insecurity of which Mr. Wolfowitz had personal experience, and which clearly cannot be provided by the US expeditionary force, which is using private security companies<sup>41</sup>). This is the same insecurity that constrained President Bush to visit his troops in Iraq almost furtively, flying in at the dead of night, in November 2003. The plight of Iraqi women who have to veil themselves in these circumstances after decades of progress should also be noted here -- Iraq is the one developing country that had completely eradicated illiteracy by 1981.

But emergency action, following lines of least resistance, is no excuse for the perverse notion of representation adopted, for dissolving civility into community, for eliminating the civic in favour of blood, not even if this appears in the heat of the moment as a way of cutting corners and losses, as had been done by Saddam Hussein before. This communalisation of Iraq, this casting of Baghdad after the image of Salem and of Harlem, had long been in some derisory measure premeditated, not only with the American communalist model in mind, but also according to half-baked ideas

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2004, p. 131

<sup>40</sup> S. Antoon in *Al-Ahram weekly*, 6-12 November 2003

about Arabs being primitive and exotic tribals and religious fanatics (hitherto preferred allies of the US), sublimated as "communities": ideas of sheer nonsense, misleadingly abetted by the Iraqi National Council hovering in antechambers of the Pentagon, in concert with some academics, prior to the invasion and thereafter, pandering to uninformed prejudices in Washington, and placed for a while in the trusty hands of a person (Mr. Khalilzad) whose experience, apart from neoconservative milieux in Chicago and Washington, is confined to tribes and pipelines in Afghanistan<sup>42</sup>. Afghanistan and Iraq are in no way comparable, though among ruling circles in Washington they might well be thought to be indistinguishable, both being "out there".

Such ideas appeared all the more credible in an Administration whose State Department, marginalised for the occasion, counted a mere 54 competent Arabists in 2003<sup>43</sup>, experienced ones having been pushed aside in favour of pro-Israeli personnell in previous years. Be that as it may, it is clear that the communalisation of Iraq as reflected in the constitution of its new polity, and in the unleashing of untrammelled and ferocious sectarian conflicts (now, under US auspices, taking on electoral

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<sup>41</sup> T. Catan and S. Filder, "The military can't provide security", <http://amsterdam.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-1-0309/msg00169.html>

<sup>42</sup> Washington Report, <http://www.wrmea.com>, 17 April 2003

<sup>43</sup> E. Djerijian et al., *Changing Minds, Winning Peace*, Report of the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy of for the Arab and Muslim World submitted to the Committee on Appropriations, Washington D.C., 2003, p. 27

salience), is directly in keeping with such ideas as are being propounded, with various nuances, by tired triumphalist scholars and eager, untried younger ones, who concur on the communalisation of the country on the assumption that an "Islamic" polity would be the appropriate one in this war against modernity and modernism waged under the title of the Greater Middle East<sup>44</sup>., the Iraqi equivalent of evangelical attempts to roll back the 19th and 20th centuries in the United States. Hence the predilection of the occupation authorities in Iraq for more than flirtatious relations with the conservative Shiite clergy, including in an attitude of Shiite ultramontanist foreign, Persian clerics, and their acquiescence to the abolition of the fairly modernist Law of Personal Status and its replacement by a bundle of communalist laws run by clergymen, Muslim and Christian. Such is the impulse to eradicate any notion of an Iraqi body-national that an Iranian cleric, Sistani, is being solicited by the US to play a foundational role in the political reconstitution of the country.

The idea that the Middle East is a communitarian "mosaic" is a resilient one, one that marries a supposed anachronism of the life in the Middle East to external political wills to fragment their bodies-national. Israel is a good model here of a nation of blood and atavistic notions of identity. This of course invites the thought, incongruent to those not wishing to reflect clearly, that she is thereby an anachronistic historical phenomenon, as was shown with

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<sup>44</sup> See P. Waldman, "A Historian's Take on Islam Steers U. S. in terrorism Fight", *Wall Street Journal*, 3 February 2004; Feldman, *After Jihad*

eloquence by Tony Judt<sup>45</sup>. Hankering after the revival of the Ottoman millet system of communal self government is not only anachronistic, an "arabesque" just arrived and in need of "fancy foot-work" and "bazaar-oriented politics"<sup>46</sup> (after the manner of the Iranian revolution of 1979). It ignores the fact that memories of the millet system as might persist in the Middle East, including Iraq, and as celebrated by outside commentators and policy-makers, are those of its terminal phase of degeneration in the 19th century, when it became dysfunctional, but kept deliberately alive by foreign powers seeking footholds in the area and seeking to prevent its national integration, and by reactionary clerical circles, now again engineered back into life in Iraq. The only remnant of this in the course of the 20th century was Lebanon, whose communalism led to a devastating civil war of proportions which were, in relative terms, greater than that of Spain before the triumph of General Franco.

That the occupation authorities were systematically unprepared, sometimes running around like a headless chicken, is common knowledge. One German newspaper has referred to the preference in Washington for thinking in terms of "complexity-reduction"<sup>47</sup>, to which one might more concretely add the private and public use and abuse of intelligence already politicised, ignoring inconvenient advice and information, with barely a

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<sup>45</sup> Tony Judt, "Israel: The Alternative", in *New York Review of Books*, 23 October, 2003

<sup>46</sup> M. Friedman, in the *International Herald Tribune*, 20 December 2004

<sup>47</sup> M. Siemons, "Prisma 11.9", in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 14 July, 2003

thought given to the political aspects of the war and its consequences. In the spaces of this disorientation enter more focussed, rapacious operators. I do not wish to speak of well-known matters such as Halliburton subsidiaries, ultimately needing to subcontract to local operators, particularly those connected to members and families of the PRC and its descendant, the provisional council of ministers<sup>48</sup>, and two examples will suffice here. The first is the insidious confiscation of Iraq's national culture -- and I mean national, not tribal culture -- with the plunder of her antiquities and libraries under the nose of American tanks parked outside museums and of American bases adjacent to archeological sites. All indices signal that amidst generalised chaos and random vandalism, plunder took place to order by persons who knew what they were looking for. There may indeed have been some internal involvement, but the world market in antiquities is not run from Baghdad, but from London and New York. And though it would be unwise to point fingers in murky waters such as this, much has been said in this connection about the American Council for Cultural Policy. This is a conglomerate of former museum directors, lawyers with checquered careers and art dealers, who had lobbied the Pentagon against what they call "retentionist" antiquity policies in Iraq, Egypt and elsewhere, high-mindedly pleading conservationst expertise (certainty not lacking in Iraq or in Egypt), and seeking to change relevant US and international legislation such that looted

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<sup>48</sup> *al-Sharq al-awsat*, 9 November 2003

objects might be legitimately imported to the US if a local court chose not to recognise Iraqi or other legislation<sup>49</sup>.

Unedifying stuff, indeed, not least because this took place in the wake of the Enron affair and of attempts to tighten up controls over business dealings and to ensure a greater degree of fairness and transparency. It is very much hoped that Iraq Revenue Watch set up by the Open Society Institute, or recent work by the Center for Public Integrity, will help render what is fit for America, apart from democracy, fit for others, and that an eye be kept on the second example, one of very many that might be mentioned in this regard. This is the lobbying and consultancy group for Iraq business called New Bridge Strategies, whose boss, President Bush's former campaign director in 1988 and in 2000, says of himself in advertising his firm that "being affiliated with the President for nine years of my life, I know a lot of people who are part of the administration"<sup>50</sup>.

Such facts and, inevitably, tales of buccaneering under the flag, of patriotism and profit, of the marriage of God and Mammon, unedifying as they may be, yet leave apparently unscathed the sense of American mission, and do not much encourage Iraqis or Arabs in general to have confidence in the aims and the means of the US. One Arab admirer of the US, who describes himself privately as "something of a neoconservative", has recently

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<sup>49</sup>[http://www.wsws.org/articles/2003/apr2003/loot-at19\\_prn.shtml](http://www.wsws.org/articles/2003/apr2003/loot-at19_prn.shtml); <http://www.sundayherald.com/32895>; *The Economist*, 24 May 2003, p. 43; *Business Week* online, 17 April 2003

urged America, whose democracy he says is a "universal programme", to enracinate her civilisation of law and science the world over. But he almost despairingly repeats his worry that Americans are not truly aware of this universality<sup>51</sup>. My concern is that the disjunction between self-proclamation and policies in place, occupied as it is with disorientation and greed, might make the image projected of America a favoured argument against democracy. Iraq does not need mullahs and Messiahs, but professionals. For this to be possible the US must realise that it is very exceptional, and by no means the norm. A long line from Tocqueville through Seymour Martin Lipset and Daniel Bell to the ultra-Atlanticist London weekly *The Economist* even<sup>52</sup>, have emphasised her peculiarity. Clearly, a certain sense of reality, and a certain maturity spirit are required, large enough to have the wisdom to think multilaterally, as many senior US politicians and public figures have recently been urging: what I have in mind is meaningful multilateralism, beyond pious statements or "coalitions of the willing" as exist, beyond the bandwagon jingle of grateful clients embedded in the expeditionary force, like the British or the Japanese. Such multilateralism requires that the US be prepared to cede unilateral control of Iraq -- cede control, not only the *de facto* sovereignty acquired by conquest. Only so might collateral advantage be realised, and hostility to the US managed. And this presupposes a real willingness to consider what might be

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<sup>50</sup> *Fortune*, October 27, 2003, p. 28

<sup>51</sup> Mallat, *al-Dimuqratiyya fi Amerika*, pp. 26, 109, 175-7, 179

appropriate or inappropriate to a situation outside the US in their own terms. Such a willingness would render unthinkable matters such as peremptorily nominating to the presidency of the US Institute for Peace a fevered anti-Arab and anti-Muslim person, or to the US ambassadorship at the UNESCO a person whose background is in political advocacy, voter mobilisation and the training of candidates for the Republican Party<sup>53</sup>, or the nomination of Alberto Gonzales, notorious for his views on torture (and Abou Ghuraib comes to mind right away), or indeed the President habitually addressing the world, which differs in values and political vocabularies from the desiderata of American public discourses, as if he were addressing a local audience.

This is the kind of determined and glib removal from reality which gives the impression of autism, and the fear that 9/11 might have caused a derangement of terrifying proportions, feeding anti-Americanism and indeed generating it where it is still "lite". What is being enjoined upon the Americans is not pure reason and enlightenment, but an invitation to eschew irrationality and to acquire a sense of impending catastrophe if the US persists in unilateralism and in flaunting international legality. 120,000 military personnel in Iraq and \$ 89 billion alone cannot do the job. Long-gone are the days when, as Tocqueville said in a remarkable passage, native Americans had the misfortune of receiving at once

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<sup>52</sup> 8 November, 2003

<sup>53</sup> E. Sciolino in *International Herald Tribune*, 30 September 2003

knowledge and oppression from the same hand"<sup>54</sup>. The world cannot be recast according to this eschatological self-image, reiterated in Tocqueville's expression as "perpetual ... self-applause", commenting on which he said there were certain truths the Americans could learn only from strangers or from experience<sup>55</sup>. Not the whole world can be made exceptional, and most of us non-Americans, Europeans and Arabs alike, would rather settle for humbler aspirations.

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<sup>54</sup> *Democracy in America*, i 343 ff.

<sup>55</sup> *Democracy in America*, i:265