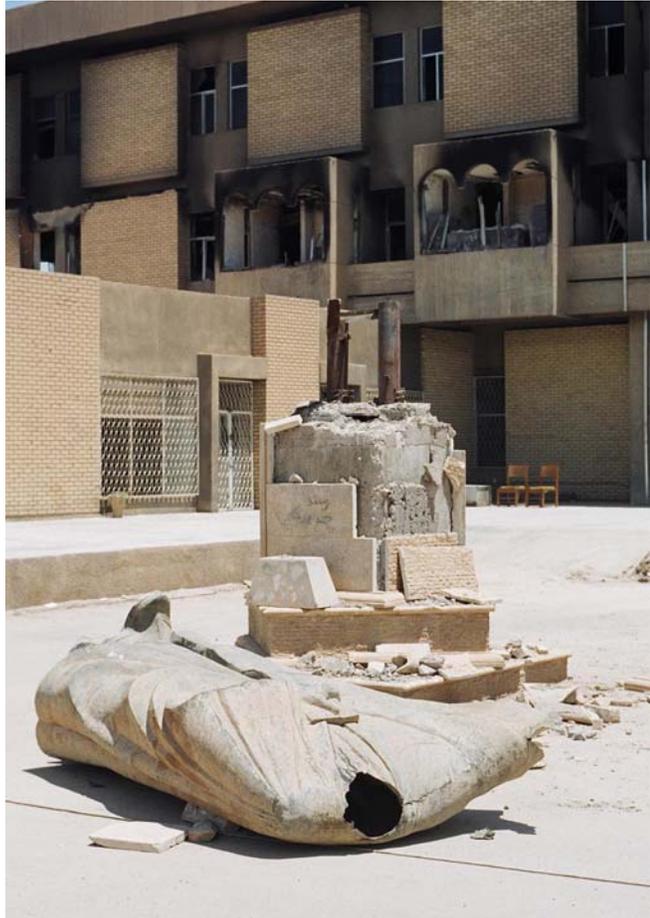


Opening the Doors:
Intellectual Life and
Academic Conditions in Post-War Baghdad



Headless statue of Saddam Hussein portrayed in academic garb in the courtyard of the National Library and Archives

A Report of the Iraqi Observatory
15 July 2003

Keith Watenpaugh • Edouard Méténier • Jens Hanssen • Hala Fattah

©The Iraqi Observatory

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

1.1 Mission Context	2
1.2 Purpose and Organization of the Report	3
1.3 Method	3
1.4 Group Members	4
1.5 The Iraqi Observatory	4
1.7 Acknowledgements	4
Additional Information	4
Authors' Contact Information	5

2. Material and Organizational Conditions of Baghdad's Academic, Cultural and Intellectual Resources

2.1 Summary	6
2.2 Universities	6
2.2.1 Baghdad University	8
2.2.2 al-Mustansiriyya University	10
2.2.3 al-Nahrayn University	10
2.2.4 Recommendations	10
2.3 Scientific and Scholarly Societies	10
2.3.1 Bayt al-Hikma	11
2.3.2 Iraqi Academy of Sciences	11
2.3.3 Recommendations	12
2.4 Libraries and Archives	13
2.4.1 National Library and Archives	13
2.4.2 Ministry of Religious Endowments (al-Awqaf) Library	15
2.4.3 al-Qadiriyya Mosque, Library and Soup Kitchen Complex	16
2.4.4 Recommendations	16
Additional Information	17

3. Academic and Intellectual Life in Contemporary Baghdad

3.1 Summary	18
3.2 Academic Life under the Baath	18
3.2.1 Recommendations	20
3.3 De-Baathification and the Academy	21
3.3.1 Recommendations	23
3.4 Newspapers, the Internet, Coffeehouses and Civil Society	23
3.4.1 Recommendations	25
Additional Information	25

4. Relations between the Iraqi Academic and Intellectual Community and the Coalition Provisional Authority

4.1 Introduction	26
4.2 Higher Education	26
4.3 Culture	28
4.4 Recommendations	29
Additional Information	29

1.1 Mission Context

Word began to trickle out of Baghdad in mid-April 2003 that the Iraqi National Library and Archives and the library of the Ministry of Holy Endowments and Religious Affairs (al-Awqaf) had been burned and looted during the paroxysm of aggravated mayhem that followed the collapse of the Baathist regime. Soon, it became clear that in addition to the damage to those libraries, universities, research centers and private institutions had also been harmed or destroyed, and that additional elements of Iraq's rich cultural heritage in the form of historic buildings, musical archives and contemporary art were at risk. These were moments of deep and profound sadness that ultimately gave way to conversations about ways to work to rebuild and restore what had been lost.

As these conversations continued, several of us – primarily a group of historians of the contemporary Middle East – decided to travel to Baghdad to catalog the extent of the damage to institutions of higher learning and cultural production. We also intended to record the needs of Iraq's academic and intellectual community as it rebuilds itself in the face of a generation of brutish rule by Saddam Hussein, a decade of debilitating U.N. sanctions, a brief and humiliating war, and an open-ended American-led military occupation.

American soldiers patrol the campus of Baghdad University



We assigned ourselves three specific objectives:

The renewal and enhancement of contacts with colleagues inside the Iraqi academic community, especially in the humanities and social science, while at the same time gauging their status and professional welfare;

The assessment, with the guidance of our Iraqi colleagues, of the material condition of libraries, archives, universities and research centers;

The establishment of bases for future cooperation between international and Iraqi academic communities, institutions and professional associations.

This is the report of our findings following a 9-day visit to Baghdad (22-30 June 2003), perhaps the most violent week in terms of Iraqi and coalition casualties since the “end” of the war on May 1. We found ourselves aided in that task by a remarkable collection of fellow historians, professors from other disciplines, librarians, bibliophiles and religious leaders. A suggestion of what should happen next by one of these, the historian ‘Imad al-Jawahiri, provides the title and the spirit of this report. And despite the fact that conditions in Iraq proved much worse than anticipated – especially in terms of security and the competence of the American-dominated occupation administration, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) – we took comfort in the words of yet another historian, Kamal Muzhar Ahmad,

that “it is the responsibility of the historian to be always optimistic.”

Any discussions of intellectual activity in Iraq, from academic freedom to student exchange programs must be understood in light of the fact that the country and its people are under military occupation and lack a sovereign government. The presence of 168,000 foreign troops, a general lack of public security and services, and a rapidly shifting political terrain has created a volatile and politicized context for Iraq's cultural heritage, universities, libraries, and

research centers. Further, heirs of an intensively centralized state, the institutional bases of intellectual and academic life in Iraq now depend upon the American authorities for funds and security; and that aid is predicated first and foremost upon American ideological and strategic interests. Consequently, our Iraqi colleagues face a dilemma: the American presence, which represents access to the outside world, redevelopment funds and the promise of a truly autonomous, rigorous academic environment comes at the cost of a military occupation and the modalities and demands of an American foreign and domestic policy which external observers and Iraqis alike increasingly consider colonialism. How institutions outside of Iraq – colleges, universities, professional societies and donors – respond to this dilemma will contribute to the very warp and weft of Iraq’s intellectual community and its relations with the rest of the world for decades to come.

1.2 Purpose and Organization of the Report

This report is built on three themes:

A description of the current material and organizational condition of Iraq’s intellectual and academic community;

An assessment of the prevailing conditions of Iraqi cultural and intellectual life;

A characterization of the ongoing relationships between the Iraqi academic and intellectual community and the occupation forces/structures of governance.

Each section or sub-section ends with is a series of suggestions based on our observations and tempered by our experience as university professionals and years of living and conducting research in several Middle Eastern countries.

We intend this report for the international academic community writ large. We hope it can be used as a starting point for policy discussions at colleges, universities, and professional organizations worldwide – especially as American universities begin to vie for multi-million dollar USAID reconstruction grants. We also encourage those working to establish academic exchange programs or those looking to offer their expertise in fields as diverse as book preserva-

tion to university management to see it as a resource and a guide.

We conceived this work in the spirit of complete transparency and collegial discourse. It includes judgments and assessments that may not be shared by all members of the group, but rather represent a consensus opinion. Our conclusions are based on a rapid assessment of the situation, often less than forthcoming answers from CPA officials and occasional obfuscation by Iraqi bureaucrats, and thus, may not be complete. The report should be seen as a beginning and a road map for later groups.

Subsequent to the publication of this report – still a work in progress – members of the group will be adding detailed appendices, corrections, maps, digital video clips and updates. Hypertext links to relevant reports and documents appear as entries at the end of chapters.

1.3 Method

As noted in a recent International Crisis Group report, “Baghdad: A Race Against the Clock” (11 June 2003), “Baghdad is a city in distress, chaos and ferment.” There is no general landline telephone service, and satellite phones are unreliable; we often just dropped in on people during their office hours or at their homes. Others came and spent time with us at our hotel. In addition, with daytime temperatures reaching highs of 45°-50° C (113°-122° F) – compounded by the lack of electricity and air-conditioning – our working days were foreshortened to a few hours each morning, and the early evening. The 23:00 civilian curfew made nighttime meetings difficult, especially as most Iraqis want to be home by dusk (20:00). Nevertheless, we were able to meet with dozens of local academics, intellectuals, artists, and bureaucrats as well as foreign diplomats, representatives from the UN Development Program, UNESCO and officials of the CPA. Before our departure from Amman, we also met with Iraqis who had taken refuge in Jordan, NGO workers recently returned from Baghdad, as well as representatives of foundations and the local and foreign academic community.

There was no set questionnaire or “talking points;” rather conversations in Arabic, English and French tended to flow freely from topic to topic. Most were friendly and collegial although others were not. Iraqis of all strata were willing

to speak in a frank and open manner. They evidenced little concern over criticizing either the former regime or the current authority. CPA officials tended to be less forthcoming.

In addition to these more formal meetings, we also visited universities, libraries, academic and research institutes, coffeehouses frequented by writers and artists, book dealers, and important historic Islamic and Ottoman sites.

1.4 Group Members

Hala Fattah graduated from UCLA (1986) with a Ph.D. in Modern Middle East History. She specializes in the history of modern Iraq. Now an independent scholar living in Jordan, she is the author of *The Politics of Regional Trade in Iraq, Arabia and the Gulf, 1745-1900* (Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 1997), several articles on Iraqi intellectuals in the 18th and 19th centuries, reformist Islam and the contours of the pre-modern Iraqi state.

Jens Hanssen (Oxford, D.Phil. History, 2001) is Assistant Professor of Middle Eastern and Mediterranean History at the University of Toronto, Canada. Oxford University Press is publishing his forthcoming book on 19th and 20th century Beirut. He has written on memory and reconstruction in post-war Lebanon and recently co-edited a book on "Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire" (2002).

Edouard Méténier, *Professeur agrégé d'histoire*, is currently conducting research on late 18th to early-20th-century Iraqi social and intellectual history. Attached to the Université de Provence / IREMAM, he is also a research fellow of the Institut Français du Proche-Orient - Damas. This was his third visit to Iraq since 2001; he lived in Baghdad from November 2001 to May 2002.

Keith D. Watenpaugh (Ph.D. Modern Middle East History, UCLA 1999) is Assistant Professor of History at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, New York. He also serves as Associate Director of the college's Center for Peace and Global Studies and is an Affiliate in Research of the Harvard University Center for Middle East Studies. He has written extensively on the origins of the Baath Party, Arab Nationalism, and European colonialism in the Levant. This was his second research visit to Iraq in six months.

1.5 The Iraqi Observatory

To maintain the momentum and follow-up on the connections and findings of this report, the authors, in concert with other Middle East specialist and Iraqi colleagues have begun to form the Iraqi Observatory (IO). Associates of the IO will make subsequent visits to Baghdad and other cities, continue to focus on issues of academic freedom and ethics against the backdrop of both the occupation and the emergence of new structures of power, and produce critical and engaged writing on the situation as it unfolds in Iraq. For more information, please contact the authors of this report.

1.7 Acknowledgements

Several groups and individuals made our visit possible. We thank Professor Lisa Anderson, President, Middle East Studies Association and Dean, School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University for providing us with MESA's imprimatur. Logistical support came from Jim Jennings of Conscience International, and Gregor B. M. Meiering of the Near East Regional Office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung provided a generous last-minute mini-grant. We also thank the Departments of History and Near and Middle East Civilizations of the University of Toronto, Le Moyne College's Center for Peace and Global Studies, J. Barron Boyd, Director, and the Institut Français du Proche-Orient, Christian Décobert, Director.

The authors are solely responsible for the descriptions, analyses and conclusions of this report. Their findings do not necessarily represent the opinions of these organizations and groups. Any support should not be interpreted as an endorsement of the report or its conclusions.

Additional Information

International Crisis Group, "Baghdad: A Race Against the Clock" (11 June 2003)

<http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/showreport.cfm?reportid=1000>

Authors' Contact Information

Hala Fattah

Post Office Box 5263
Amman
Jordan

Cell: 00 962-6-079-5630-977

Tel: 00 962-6-593-1915

email: hmf@index.com.jo

Jens Hanssen

Department of History
University of Toronto
100 St. George St
Toronto, ONT M5S 3G3
Canada

Tel: 001 416 978 3143

email: jens.hanssen@utoronto.ca

Edouard Méténier

Institut Français du Proche Orient
Section des Etudes Médiévales, Modernes et
Arabes
P.O. Box 344
Damascus, Syria

Tél.: [963-11] 333 02 14

Fax.: [963-11] 332 78 87

email: edouard.metenier@laposte.net

Keith D. Watenpaugh

Center for Peace and Global Studies
Le Moyne College
1419 Salt Springs Road
Syracuse NY 13214 USA

Tel: 1 (315) 445-4477

email: watenpkd@lemoyne.edu

<http://www.lemoyne.edu/history/waten.html>

2. Material and Organizational Conditions of Baghdad's Academic, Cultural and Intellectual Resources

2.1 Summary

Iraqis have borrowed from a story in *The Thousand and One Nights* the name "Ali Baba" to describe the loosely organized groups of looters who took advantage of the power vacuum created by the collapse of the Baathist regime to steal among other things, appliances, building materials, communication devices, electrical transformers, computers, and books. While most of this looting has abated, some looters have moved on to disassembling entire buildings brick by brick. This is certainly the case for the late-Ottoman Qushla located near Suq al-Saray and the Mandate-era former Ministry of Defence complex at Bab al-Muazzam. Ali Baba is an apt, if not ironic, euphemism: he stole from thieves. Similarly the looting was mostly directed against state institutions, though not only those associated with the Baath Party; in very limited instances, private homes and businesses also fell victim. In several cases, arson accompanied the looting. Stories, some verging on "urban legends," are in wide circulation that *agents provocateurs* of uncertain origin set these fires. We have no evidence that this is the case; nor however, is there evidence that efforts are underway to investigate/dispel these reports.

Almost all state institutions, universities, libraries and research institutes were harmed, although in some cases the looting and destruction was limited to the theft of computers and other easily replaceable items. Looters and vandals damaged classroom environments and research spaces; even in places not physically destroyed, they stole chairs, tables, blackboards, windows and doors. Items of unique value are gone. And not just old Ottoman archives, historic manuscripts, books and documents, but also student records and transcripts - the mundane trappings of everyday life in a modern educational system.

Iraq's structures of teaching, learning and research not only suffered substantially after the war, but continue to face the cumulative effects of two decades of mismanagement, Baathist cultural politics, and regime paranoia. This has accelerated since the early 1990s when the state took extreme austerity measures as a response to UN sanctions and the fall in oil revenues. As a

consequence many of these institutions are frozen in terms of development somewhere in the late 1980s. For these, the looting was just a last humiliating act in a longer process of erosion that transformed what was perhaps the most elaborate and well-developed higher educational and research system in the Arab world into a pale shadow of its former self.

This chapter provides a snapshot of current material and organizational conditions at the capital's universities, libraries and research facilities; a subsequent section will address specifically academic life at these institutions, the way in which the higher education structures of Iraq were corrupted by the party elite and security apparatus, and how the current program of de-Baathification is affecting the university system.

2.2 Universities

The group surveyed conditions at three campuses in the capital: Baghdad University, primarily the Bab al-Muazzam Campus, al-Mustansiriyya University, and al-Nahrayn (Two Rivers) University, formerly Saddam University. The universities share many of the problems brought by the war and its aftermath, namely safety issues, unreliable water and electricity and transportation. Moreover, these institutions still face fundamental problems from before the fall of the regime, namely, being cut off from all substantive international contact for much of the last two decades. In real terms, this meant a suspension of subscriptions to academic journals, library acquisition, and travel abroad for faculty members and students. Most fundamentally, freedom of thought and expression and academic independence, were severely limited throughout the period.

A drastic fall in state investments in universities after 1990 made the pre-war situation worse. It was determined at the time that as it was impossible for the state to continue to fully fund universities and maintain a level of quality, it would create a multi-tiered and hierarchical university system. This new system neglected the established universities in Baghdad and provincial centers to the benefit of ad hoc elite institutions like Saddam University. Colleges of law, technology and medicine were founded along the same lines and lavished with resources with the

intent of supplying the state with a loyal class of highly educated and competent technocrats.

In terms of the most pressing needs, universities, students and their families have organized buses and carpools for transportation. Moreover, the low level of student and faculty absenteeism impressed us at a time of rampant insecurity. Nevertheless, due to actual or imagined threats to personal safety women faculty members and students have found it increasingly difficult to come to school. This structural disadvantage far more than the much-vaunted Islamist profile at the universities may impair the access to higher education that Iraqi women faculty and students have traditionally enjoyed. During the several hours we spent on the campuses in Baghdad, there seemed to be little difference between the immediate ante bellum period and now in terms of religious or social pressure on women. While women have held positions of prominence in Iraqi higher education and female students make-up at least 50% of the student population, female faculty members expressed concern that this role has changed for the worse over the last decade and they openly worry that it may continue to decline.

All universities have undergone sweeping changes in administration at the behest of the CPA in the middle of the academic year: coalition officials dismissed the presidents of universities and deans of faculties as well as most of the heads of departments. Where CPA interference has been minimal, faculty elections have been smooth and consensual. As in other sectors of society, the CPA's heavy-handed purges of the universities' rank and file lies at the heart of academic discontent (see below). Many of those faculty who have been removed from their teaching posts have been able to make informal arrangements with their colleges to continue

teaching as "volunteers" without a salary - such a solution, however, can not continue indefinitely, and the start of the next academic year will be a decisive test.

Education advisors associated with the CPA have also indicated that new admissions procedures will be in place for the Fall term as part of a broader reform of educational structures.

Students at Baghdad's al-Mustansiriyya University



Despite the onerous circumstances, including the lack of tables and chairs, examination booklets and even chalk, the normal rhythm of the academic year is beginning to return to the city's campuses. Students, excited and happy to be at school, had set up for themselves makeshift cafeterias where young men and women gathered, talked, debated and enjoyed the company of one another. The students were all well dressed - a major accomplishment in the heat and without running water. Their professors complained about them in ways comparable to what we say about our own undergraduates, suggesting a certain normalcy was taking shape. The resourcefulness and adaptability of Iraqi faculty and students was readily in evidence.

2.2.1 Baghdad University

Baghdad University (founded in 1957) is one of the oldest secular institutions of higher learning in Iraq. The Walter Gropius-designed main campus – al-Jadriyya – is on a peninsula formed by a bend in the Tigris River and suffered minimal damage during the war, but was looted afterwards. Its liberal arts-oriented branch campus at Bab al-Muazzam is closer to the urban core. Approximately 80,000 undergraduates and graduates attend both campuses. In mid-May, the American administrator for higher education in Iraq, Dr. Andrew “Drew” Erdmann, choreographed the election of a new university president in a raucous opening session. The new president, Dr. Sami al-Muzaffar, is a biochemist by training, a Baathist refusenik and one of the most respected scholars on campus. The Americans had vetted the credentials of new administrators before or shortly after the election. Classes resumed thereafter on a limited schedule and at the time we were in Iraq students were about to sit for their final exams.

The Bab al-Muazzam campus is a collection of buildings interspersed between small landscaped gardens. The entrance of the campus – like all campuses – is heavily guarded by US military forces, some of them patrolling the alley along which faculties are spread. The main library as well as some of the departmental libraries have been devastated by looting and in some cases, fire. Soot blackens offices and some still smell of smoke. Thieves had taken furniture, air conditioners and electrical appliances from the History department's offices. We had conversations with faculty and students in darkened and over-heated rooms, due to the lack of electricity. Nevertheless, members of the teaching and

administrative staff were optimistic and forward-looking.

With the exception of a few comments on misunderstandings, deliberate or accidental, between the American authorities and the faculty of the Bab al-Muazzam campus, most of the professors and deans we spoke to were willing to leave the past behind them, and to embark on something new and hopefully, better. A recurring complaint was an inability to make contact with the CPA officials in charge of the universities.

A striking feature of the Bab al-Muazzam campus is the “battle” taking place on the walls and public spaces between rival student organizations. These new groups, which would have been illegal in the old system, have coalesced around various interests both political and religious and a whole range of rapidly evolving ideologies. Perhaps fearing the radicalization and religious polarization which has gripped al-Mustansiriyya University, a secular student organization has taken to displaying signs like the this:

The campus central library at al-Jadriyya is mostly intact, with losses at the utmost of 10% of

Poster Reads: “Yes to Freedom! Yes to Development! Yes to Scientific Progress” and is signed by the “Renaissance of the Cultured University Students



the total collection. Yet, like all libraries in Iraq, it is woefully out of date, with the collection of new books and periodicals ceasing almost entirely after 1990. While al-Jadriyya's central library escaped destruction, the same does not hold for the Bab al-Muazzam campus' Wazirriyya central library, which contained the Fine Arts, Humanities and Literature collections and has been looted and burned. Several depart-

mental libraries, which often housed copies of doctoral dissertations, have been destroyed.

Following a quick survey of the Department of Music in Baghdad University's Faculty of Fine Arts, it was determined that at least 1,000 music records (vinyl disks), 5,000 tapes, dozens of record players, 30 pianos and hundreds of books were stolen from the Musical Arts Department, including Opera, Baroque and Iraqi recordings. Most recordings were stored in the Iza'at al-Sha'b (People's Radio) building which was bombed during the US attack on Baghdad, and/or at Uday Hussein's "private station" Iza'at Sawt al-Shabab (Voice of Youth Radio.) The holdings of both institutions have been stolen and catalogues only exist in the form of M.A. theses like that completed just six months ago by Ms. Zeinab Subhi on 1950s radio in Iraq. She has assumed responsibility for the library of the Iraqi Broadcasting Station.

2.2.2 Al-Mustansiriyya University

Al-Mustansiriyya University is named for the al-Mustansiriyya Madrasa, a beautifully restored 13th century Islamic college set on the banks of the Tigris. The modern university, founded in the 1960s as a private institution and later nationalized, today operates mainly from its new campus to the northeast of central Baghdad. It offers graduate and doctoral degrees in most arts and sciences. Seemingly more overtly politicized than Baghdad University, local media reports that the school has been the site of student-on-student violence and the assassination of a dean. The climate of openness has resulted in the emergence of a profusion of student groups. Again, hall walls are covered with announcements calling for the formation of new student associations, political opposition to the American occupation and in some cases, denouncing faculty as Baathists, or as this poster implies, un-Islamic.

At the university, we met with the Dean of the College of Education, Professor Jirjis, a geographer, as well as members of the History faculty. Like the discussion with the members of the faculty at Baghdad Uni-

versity, first and foremost, these educators were concerned for the safety of their students and the creation of safe and healthy working environments, especially as the students take their final exams. When asked what they needed as scholars and teachers in the future, Dr. Musa Muhammad Tuwayrish, a professor of International Relations responded, Iraq is "a drowning man in need of oxygen, all else comes second." We encountered this response often; the immediate needs relating to material, security and transportation conditions are so great that it is difficult to think beyond just the mere day-to-day. However, in the course of the same conversation, two of the younger faculty members, Dr. Salih al-Akili, an assistant professor of Modern European History, and Dr. Firdaws 'Abd al-Rahman, an assistant professor of Ottoman History, expressed a very specific sense of what they needed, namely internet communication, faculty exchange programs, and support to conduct research abroad.

These needs were reinforced during a conversation with Dr. Tahir Muhammad al-Bakka', the newly-elected president of the university, a historian who wrote his doctoral dissertation on the early Pahlavi Dynasty in Iran (and in so doing

Posters on wall at al-Mustansiriyya: (l) a poster from the al-Hawza al-'Ilmiyya and (r) from a rival group, the Society of Free Muslim Students



made an oblique criticism of Saddam's regime) and a former high-ranking member of the Baath party who has escaped de-Baathification.

Bakka' confirmed that plans were underway to restore services to the school and he had just received an approximately \$30,000 disbursement from the CPA to meet immediate needs and begin maintenance. He is an energetic and enthusiastic advocate for his school.

The library facilities at al-Mustansiriyya have been destroyed as have the offices housing the university's central records administration.

2.2.3 Al-Nahrayn University

The former Saddam University – founded in the mid-1990s as response to the embargo – is located next to the al-Jadiriyya campus of Baghdad University. It has proven controversial among academics because it was carved out of its older neighbor and drained it of its best faculty and students. Students faced high admission standards, tough entrance interviews and a rigorous curriculum. Graduates had to work for the government for a fixed term. Unlike Baghdad University, whose expansion seems unchecked, al-Nahrayn has a student body of only 2,500. Seeking to avoid the pathologies of large state schools, the university's classes are small and there is a low teacher-student ratio. The school's new president, Dr. Mahmud Hayawi Hamash, a medical doctor, hopes that as it is redeveloped, the school can remain an elite institution.

2.2.4 Recommendations

1) The modernization and restocking of university library holdings and teaching facilities should take the highest priority along side the reconstitution of institutions such as the National Museum or the National Library and Archives.

Rationale: Investment in the human capital of Iraq and the country's future is urgent, university libraries have a pre-eminent role to play in that process.

2) A centralized international organization of collegiate/university librarians should be formed immediately to work directly with Iraqi university departmental and central librarians to coordinate major acquisitions and to handle donations.

Rationale: The creation of a centrally organized body under a UNESCO umbrella, for example, would guarantee a multilateral approach and

would help to reduce redundant efforts, acquire efficiencies of scale and ensure the responsiveness of the CPA.

3) Free, uncensored, unfiltered and unlimited internet and www access should be introduced to Iraqi university campuses.

Rationale: Unfettered access to the tools or information technology is a guarantor of liberal values and the best and most efficient means of integrating Iraqi academia into global networks of intellectual exchange.

4) Adequate security measures must be taken not only to secure the campuses, but also to maintain equal access by female students, staff and faculty.

Rationale: Guaranteeing physical access to campus by women will help prevent any further erosion of their status.

2.3 Scientific and Scholarly Societies

We visited two of Iraq's leading academic institutions, Bayt al-Hikma (House of Wisdom) and the Iraqi Academy of Sciences. Despite the fact that both institutions share many functions and associates, Bayt al-Hikma falls under the control of the administrator for culture, the Italian diplomat Ambassador Pietro Cordone, while the Academy has been placed in Erdmann's education portfolio. In the pre-war period, both institutions came under tight control by the regime's now-disestablished Presidential Office. Affiliation with either place carried with it special privileges and stipends and thus the regime often employed these institutional forms as conduits for rewards to those most loyal. The institutions suffered heavy losses during the looting. The Bayt al-Hikma's library was looted; gone too are artifacts from its small museum. The Academy of Sciences suffered less, however its remarkable library has had some of its most precious books systematically removed. Still, both institutions will be well suited after significant investments in infrastructure to host international conferences, workshops and symposia, and to serve as a nexus between the Iraqi and international academic communities.

A list of other institutions not visited will appear in a later appendix.

2.3.1 Bayt al-Hikma (House of Wisdom)

Located at the northern end of Baghdad's historic core between the Tigris and the old Ministry of Defence complex, Bayt al-Hikma has taken its name from a translation/research institute founded by the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mun in 832 CE that was famous for its translations of Greek philosophical texts into Arabic. The modern Bayt al-Hikma was established in 1995 by the Presidential Office itself. As originally conceived, this Bayt al-Hikma functioned as a research center, with lecture facilities, publications, a library and museum. The faculty associates of Bayt al-Hikma were drawn from the various universities in Baghdad and divided according to discipline. Junior researchers received stipends and office space at the institute. It produced several journals, including a monthly general interest cultural magazine, the *Majallat al-Hikma* as well as useful editions/translations of sources and documents in foreign languages.

Before the fall of the regime, the Bayt al-Hikma acquired the reputation of being intimately tied to the elite inner-circles of power. Doctoral dissertations and other scholarly work attributed to members of Saddam Hussein's family were ghost-written by faculty affiliates. More generally, the Bayt al-Hikma served as a center for the production of regime-sanctioned knowledge and political orthodoxy. It was surprising then that of all the institutions in Baghdad, it has been among the first to receive money for redevelopment from the CPA. The staff have begun repairing and repainting one wing of the complex with a \$17,000 grant from Ambassador Cordone's predecessor, the American diplomat John Limbert. New computers were in evidence as were chairs and tables. When asked about why his office had moved quickly on behalf of Bayt al-Hikma, Cordone, replied that it had been "cleansed" of high-ranking Baathists, estimating that 75 people had been removed. He also noted that a new international board of trustees for the institute was being formed to oversee its redevelopment. Despite Cordone's support, the future of Bayt al-Hikma is problematic: Erdmann anticipates that for ideological reasons it may be allowed to "wither away."

We asked the chair of the history program of Bayt al-Hikma, the Medievalist Dr. Abdul-Jaffar al-Naji about the connections with the *ancien régime*. He admitted that these were complex and shaped by the repressive nature of the

Baathists. However, in an interesting turn, he used words like "re-establish" and "re-institute" to describe the ongoing work of the institution. These were not references to the pre-war efforts of Bayt al-Hikma, but rather to the original 9th Century version thereof. This style of conscious anachronism was a central practice of Baathist nationalist historicist thought and it is significant that this institution has fallen back into that pattern. Consistent with its "forerunner," the center was refocusing efforts on translation, organizing a conference of Orientalists in November on the civilization of Wadi al-Rafidain (Mesopotamia) and publishing a multi-volume work on the history of Ashurnasirpal's Babylon. Again, this focus on the pre-Islamic "Arab" past of Mesopotamia – the "restoration" of Babylon being the most prominent example of the phenomenon – was a key element of the nationalist meta-narratives employed by the regime and invented and defended by faculty from the Bayt al-Hikma. During our two visits, we noted a cautiousness, defensiveness and lack of openness on the part of most of the faculty at Bayt al-Hikma.

2.3.2 al-Majma' al-'Ilmi al-'Iraqi: The Iraqi Academy of Sciences

Unlike Bayt al-Hikma, which dates only from the last decade, the Academy of Sciences is the oldest institution of its kind in Iraq. Founded under the Hashemites in 1948 and modeled on the Cairene and Damascene Academies, it draws together fellows from various disciplines, including Modern and Ancient Middle Eastern Languages, History, Social Sciences and Physical Sciences. Faculty associates and researchers were given office space, research support and library access. The building complex, designed by noted Iraqi architect Rifaat Chadirji, is located in the city's Waziriyya district. In addition to a main, multi-storied building, outbuildings house conference rooms, additional office and storage space and a print shop. The facilities were looted, though not burned, and for the most part damage to the building seems superficial. The Academy also housed an extensive and comprehensive library. The library's collection is especially strong in language, literature, history and the humanities and has benefited from the donation of entire personal collections, like those of noted Iraqi historians Ahmad Sousa and Abbas al-Azzawi. Gone are microform copies of manuscripts and periodicals as well as the older books in Arabic, Ottoman and Persian. According to the Academy's remarkable head librarian

Ms. Juwan Mahmud, these books were not looted, but rather taken by someone with expertise in language and literature for safekeeping and that when the situation stabilizes, “they will be returned.” Mahmud did not know who this was, nor had she had any contact with this person. She has graciously provided us with a summary of current holdings and a translation will appear in an appendix in the following weeks.

We met with the faculty and staff of the Academy of Sciences twice. On the first visit, the Academy’s general secretary, Dr. Ahmad Matlub, a well-known literary critic and Arabic language specialist, received us. We noticed that the staff had taken measures to secure the remains of the library and control access to the stacks. By the second visit, it was clear that staff had begun clearing away debris and cleaning in earnest. The relationship of the Academy to the CPA had only been determined a few days before our arrival. As stipulated above, it falls under the jurisdiction of Erdmann. Its uncertain status has meant that it had yet to enjoy the kind of financial support that Bayt al-Hikma has received; likewise, prior to our leaving Erdmann had not visited the institution, though he was in close contact with its director, Dr. Hayawi, also president of al-Nahrayn University.

Without clear support until this point, the residual leadership of the Academy, which has also witnessed the removal of several individuals on political grounds, has not begun to make plans beyond basic repairs. Due to its respected position in Iraqi society, as well as its solid pre-Baathist tradition of scholarly excellence, the Academy will certainly regain its status as the leading scholarly/ professional body in the country. In the past, the academy supported the systematic study of Syriac and Kurdish language and literature. Consequently, it may be able to provide a venue for greater cooperation between intellectuals representing the different components of the Iraqi national community. Seeking to build connections with the West, Dr. Hayawi has extended a formal invitation to the Middle East Studies Association to hold a joint meeting at the Academy in the coming months.

2.3.3 Recommendations

1) *International scholarly and professional organizations should immediately create struc-*

tural, professional and personal links with their colleagues at both institutions.

Rationale: While questions remain about the long-term viability of the Bayt al-Hikma, both institutions are structurally competent to make and maintain such links.

2) *The Middle East Studies Association and similar groups should respond quickly to invitations like that provided by Dr. Hayawi to hold joint conferences and symposia.*

Rationale: This kind of exchange will ensure that Iraqi and non-Iraqi academic and intellectual relationships are based on professional dignity, probity, equality and collegiality. Moreover, quickly reintegrating intellectuals who are committed to a liberal vision of society at both institutions will reinforce their standing and strengthen the bases of modern and secular civil society.

3) *The international academic community should be willing to help introduce the affiliated faculty of the Academy of Sciences and Bayt al-Hikma to contemporary research in all fields, but most especially in fields once considered off limits by the Baathist apparatus. This includes, but is not limited to the fields of Islamic Studies, Women and Gender, Truth and Reconciliation, Media and Society, and Human Rights Jurisprudence.*

Rationale: Introducing these fields will aid in the articulation of new and vital research agendas at both institutions and again harness the human capital at each as engines for the creation of civil society.

4) *The restoration and modernization of the printing facilities at the Academy of Sciences should be undertaken as soon as possible.*

Rationale: Before the war the Academy of Science was one of Iraq’s primary sources of independent scholarly books, translations and edited volumes. A modest investment in their printing facilities would suffice for the resumption of publishing. It could be used to publish Iraqi academic journals and together with other presses, licensed to reprint copyrighted textbooks and other urgently needed materials.

2.4 Libraries and Archives

An initial and comprehensive investigation of the conditions at several library and manuscript collections was conducted in late-May 2003 by Nabil al-Takriti, a Ph.D. candidate in History at the University of Chicago who has family ties to Iraq and has done research and NGO work there in the past. The report is available at the website of the Middle East Librarians' Association's Committee on Iraqi Libraries. Mr. al-Takriti's report provided a starting point for many of our investigations, and in some cases, we were able to confirm his initial findings. A subsequent appendix will update Mr. al-Takriti's work.

The focus of our efforts was the documentation of the status of the National Library and Archives, the Awqaf library, the Qadiriyya Library and the university libraries. We also were interested in the pre-war program of archival centralization, which brought historic documents from provincial collections to the capital. An additional concern was an examination of the role of non-state actors in the rescue of elements of the library's collection, primarily that of a Shiite faction from Sadr/Revolution City, a suburb of Baghdad. This group claims to act in the name of al-Hawza al-^lIlmiyya, or college of Shiite clerics of Najaf.

Baghdad book dealers report the availability for sale of books and manuscripts from all of the looted libraries and collections. Visiting the famous Friday book market at Al-Mutanabbi Street, we confirmed this fact, although the permanent bookshops have not – it seems – been implicated. Nevertheless, many of the book dealers have systematically removed any identifying markings – stamps, library cards, first pages and interior pages – that indicate the original provenance of the books.

2.4.1 The National Library and Archive

The building that once housed the National Library and Archives is located on Rashid Street opposite the Mandate-era buildings of the old Ministry of Defence. The modern three-storied structure has four wings built around a central courtyard. It included library stacks, reading rooms, microform reading equipment, bindery, photocopying offices, laser printers and photography labs. For a précis on its holdings see the previous report of group member Edouard Méténier at the MELCOM website. We met twice with library staff, including the current director, Mr. Kamil Jawad Ashur. On the second occa-

sion, we made a complete visual survey of the building's interior itself. We should note that the "Hawza" has added their own guards, complete with a semblance of a uniform of black shirts, slacks and beards, to the library – perhaps not trusting the library staff to adequately care for what is left, or to monitor events at the library and their interests therein.

According to library employees and representatives of the "Hawza," the library fell victim to two separate arson attacks. During the first attack, while the Americans were at the gates of Baghdad, looters took most of the high-ticket items like photocopiers, computers, scanners and office equipment. A small fire broke-out in the building at that time, perhaps to cover the tracks of the looters. In a point that is still unclear, Ashur noted that employees moved books from the off-limits collection – perhaps both rare and politically sensitive books – to what he termed a "secret safe location" before the hostilities. He refused to disclose the location to us; noting, quite rightly that it would then "no longer be a secret." When asked if the CPA knew of the location of this cache of books, he assured us they did. In our conversation with Ashur, he estimated that 50% of the library's collection burned. Later discoveries cast doubt on the amount destroyed, and actual numbers may be an order of magnitude less than estimated. He was unwilling to share with us how he reached this figure and there are no records whatsoever of what is stored in various remote locations.

Ashur confirmed that among the items packed and stored before the war were newspapers, periodicals and Ottoman archival materials including *tapu* (cadastral) registers, *sijils* (court proceedings) and *firman*s (imperial decrees.) He thinks that around 350 *tapu* documents and no more than one half of the 1500 *sijil* records remain. He also confirmed that over the last five or six years the central authorities moved the entire Ottoman collection of Mosul and about half of the Ottoman collection of Basra to Baghdad. The complete lack of precision and the fact that stories often shifted and amounts of books and other materials ranged so widely from day to day, led us again to doubt the overall veracity of the employees' accounts of what occurred and moreover their competence as library administrators.

Nothing prepared us for the sheer horror of the interior of the library. All that remains in the

main wing are piles of ash that had been books. The heat in the entry hall of the library had been so intense that it had begun to melt the ceramic floor tiles. Much of the structure had lost integrity from the heat and the cement walls crumbled at the touch. Those areas not directly burned, perhaps half the building, are covered in an oily soot which has provided a useful medium for graffiti. Scattered throughout the library is the phrase "Death to Saddam the Apostate" and signed by the "Hawza," suggesting that they saw

Interior of National Library Reference Room



their intervention on behalf of the library as a combination of civic duty, religious activism and a blow against the memory of the regime.

Iraqi engineers and representatives from Cordone's office inspected the building and pronounced it unusable. The ambassador informed us that he hopes to be able to use the officers' club building at al-Balat al-Malki as a temporary storage location while a new structure is built. Plans for this move are tentative. There are no immediate plans to rebuild the library, and the future employment status of the library employees is unclear.

After the first conflagration, and shortly before a more devastating fire broke out representatives

of the Haqq Mosque in the renamed Sadr City, under the leadership of their media-savvy sheikh al-Sayyid Abdul-Mun'im al-Mussawi entered the library and welded shut a steel fire door on the ground floor, sealing off an entire wing. Ashur estimated that 30% of the collection "mostly books" was inside. Again, it is hard to check the accuracy of his figures. Meanwhile young men using commandeered trucks transported a large portion of the books that could not be secured at the library to their mosque where they are currently stored.

Mahmud al-Sheikh Hajim the senior caretaker of the collection claims they are in possession of 300,000 volumes. Cordone told us that al-Mussawi had promised to return 350,000 books. Both of these numbers struck us as high. During a visit to al-Haqq Mosque, we estimated that the books occupied approx. 150-200 cubic meters. We also found more than fifty, 50-liter sacks of archival materials from the Mandate through the Revolution of 1958, and confirmed earlier

press reports of the presence of books in Hebrew, some with handwritten commentaries. Hajim did not allow us to copy down or photograph title pages of any of the books.

The building where the books are stored is safe, and only Hajim has a key and he must first receive approval from one of his superiors before opening the door. The mosque is never deserted. While the room is not ventilated, and interior temperatures were much higher than those outside, the lack of humidity would indicate that the books are not in any immediate danger of deterioration.

had in fact been safeguarded, he had been told,

Hajim provided us with no information as to the modalities of how they plan to return the books to the library. However, our sense was that they planned to do so once *they* were certain the books would be safe and under Iraqi control. Al-Mussawi has been in contact with Cordone and the latter expressed a real fondness and respect for the former, a signal perhaps that they have arrived at an agreement of some kind.

2.4.2 The Ministry of Religious Endowments (al-Awqaf) Library

The shocking pictures of the Al-Awqaf Ministry in flames first appeared on Arab television stations during the war. When we arrived in Baghdad, we confirmed that fire had destroyed the building housing the library and archives of the al-Awqaf. In order to update al-Takriti's earlier report, we interviewed al-Sheikh Husayn Al-Shami, a leading Shiite reformist cleric now responsible for the al-Awqaf at the institution's temporary location in Munir al-Qadi's house on the corniche in al-Azamiyya.

Al-Shami was personally unaware of the issues concerning the library and he relied on his employees for information on what had happened. He stipulated that the library staff had been able to rescue a portion of the library's total holdings, but was vague as to how much was secure and behind locked doors. Valuable items

A "Hawza" Sheikh among the books stored at the Haqq Mosque



but he had also learned that 50% of the publications were burned or looted. He was more loquacious when asked about his vision for the future of the library. In his view, the library itself would be rebuilt and employ modern forms of cataloging and information technology. Once completed, the safeguarded manuscripts would be made available to researchers. When asked about the two major libraries at the Shiite shrine cities, he informed us that they were safe.

The deputy head of the library, Mr. Muhibb al-Din Yassin informed us that the only catalog of the manuscripts in the al-Awqaf collection was prepared by Dr. °Abdallah al-Jaburi in the 1970's. Since then, the three great manuscript

collections (Sadr, Ta'i and Suhrawardi), which altogether numbered around 980 manuscripts were added to the library, but were never fully cataloged. Until the full collection is professionally cataloged, it will be impossible to obtain a comprehensive picture of what was lost in the looting or in the preceding decades.

2.4.3 Al-Qadiriyya Mosque, Library and Soup Kitchen Complex

Located in the Bab al-Sheikh neighborhood, the al-Qadiriyya holds the earthly remains of ʿAbd al-Qadir al-Gaylani, founder of the Qadiriyya order of Sufis. The Qadiriyya is one of the most important orders in the Islamic world and it is extremely popular in South Asia. Before the war, thousands of pilgrims from India and Pakistan would visit each year and Saddam Hussein made the shrine complex into a showcase of his regime's support for Islam. Consequently, the old complex underwent a major, vulgar and still unfinished expansion. This phenomenon of state-sponsored restoration was not limited to the al-Qadiriyya, but took shape throughout Iraq. The Shiite shrines of al-Kazimayn, Samarra, Najaf and Kerbala, the last two having been severely damaged in the 1991 uprising, were all "restored;" and in Baghdad, the shrines of Al-Hallaj, Ma'ruf al-Karkhi, and Sultan Ali also underwent a process of forced renovation. Several Christian churches, most notably the ancient churches of Mosul have likewise been compelled to undergo reconstruction, and like the al-Qadiriyya, these projects were not completed before the war.

While visiting the complex, we were received warmly by the *mutawalli* (executor), the elegant al-Sayyid ʿAbd al-Rahman al-Gaylani, 16th successor to Sheikh ʿAbd al-Qadir. Holding a degree in political science from George Washington University, the *mutawalli* noted that no officials from the CPA, save a representative of the US military had visited him, and wryly observed that when the British created Iraq they first offered the crown to his ancestor, rather than the Hashemite Faysal. In line with this sentiment, he advocates a return of the monarchy to Iraq. He emphasized the need for security and hoped that once resumed they could begin serving meals to the poor at the mosque's 900-year old soup kitchen. Prior to the war they had served 1500

meals a day and were now down to less than 100.

It was at the al-Qadiriyya that the group had its most pleasant surprise. The large research library at the mosque appeared unscathed and secure. Built from various private collections mainly from Gaylani family members, the library opened in 1954. According to Mr. Nuri al-Mufti, who has worked as librarian at the al-Qadiriyya for the better part of four decades, the collection includes 65,000 publications and 2,000 manuscripts, many of which were stored for safe keeping prior to hostilities.

In an important correction to the story told to Mr. al-Takriti, the *mutawalli*, the shrine wardens and the library's director all denied that boxes containing manuscripts from the al-Awqaf library were moved to the al-Qadiriyya complex, casting further doubt on the credibility of al-Awqaf employees.

2.4.4 Recommendations

1) International efforts should be undertaken to aid Iraqi library professionals in cataloguing by both card and digital systems the lost and remaining stocks of books and materials. However, by no means should such an effort take priority over the restoration of university libraries.

Rationale: As noted in the report, current holdings are not in jeopardy of further deterioration or pilfering. Likewise, there are no permanent facilities available to house either the National Library and Archives or al-Awqaf; and their staff are in a state of reorganization. Until permanent structures built, such efforts would have little lasting effect. Only after a thorough cataloging has taken place, should efforts like those made to restore the Sarajevo library begin.

2) Foreign library professionals, especially those from Arab countries should work to establish professional training programs for Iraqi librarians.

Rationale: Very few of the people directing or caring for libraries in Iraq now are trained librarians. A case in point is Ms. Juwan Mahmud of the Academy of Sciences. While dedicated to her job and the institution, she has an advanced degree in English. For the most part library

staffs have not received training in modern library techniques, cataloging, or conservation. A model program along these lines has begun at the National Museum.

3) *Interpol and the US FBI should begin to track and work to return stolen books and manuscripts like they are doing for artifacts stolen from the museum or archaeological sites.*

Rationale: Traffic in manuscripts and books is taking place openly. Just as ancient artifacts have been placed on international watch lists, so too should these items. Efforts to produce a catalogue of identifying markings are underway by MELA members, however additional forensic methods may be needed to identify "cleansed" books.

4) *Iraqis should be able to return looted books to a central facility without fear of prosecution. Under no circumstances should rewards be offered for the return of books before current collections have been completely secured.*

Rationale: National pride combined with community outrage has led many Iraqis to return looted materials. This has included books. The announcement of a general amnesty may lead to more books being returned, especially if it becomes apparent that criminal investigations will take place to recover stolen materials.

5) *The former Ottoman barracks, the Qushla, with the attached governor's palace or the old Ministry of Defense complex should be considered as the new permanent location for the National Library and Archives or other culturally oriented activities.*

Rationale: Both of these structures have a long history in Baghdad and are visual reminders of the city's Ottoman and Hashemite past. Owned by the state, the CPA has made no effort to protect either site and looters are taking them apart with impunity, so much so that they are in danger of collapse. These buildings could be easily adapted to modern use, while at the same time anchor the city's main historic district.

6) *Every effort should be made to prevent the holdings of the National Library and Archives and the al-Awqaf from becoming subject to conflict between non-state actors like the Sadr City-Hawza or other groups and an emergent Iraqi state.*

Rationale: Various ad hoc groups have successfully integrated themselves into several spheres of Islamic high culture and administration in the city. Until now they have been cooperative and generous in their aid, however, it is unclear how they will relate to a future Iraqi government. Conflict is unlikely, but the CPA and other bodies should monitor the situation.

7) *European, North American and Middle Eastern national archives should launch initiatives to microfilm government documents relating to Iraq.*

Rationale: These initiatives would make up in a very limited way the losses incurred by Iraq's national archives and help Iraqi researchers - beyond the privileged few who will be able to travel to Washington, London, Paris or Istanbul - to re-examine their modern history *in situ*.

8) *Structural engineers should conduct a study on the water groundswell that is threatening the al-Qadiriyya complex and endangering the library and ossuary.*

Rationale: The al-Qadiriyya is built on very high groundwater levels. The water is literally bubbling onto the surface because the war has damaged the previous drainage system set up by a British company in the 1950s.

Additional Information:

Middle East Librarians Association Committee on Iraqi Libraries

<http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/mela/melairaq.html>

Middle East Library Committee

<http://www.ex.ac.uk/MELCOM/index.htm>

3. Academic and Intellectual Life in Contemporary Baghdad

3.1 Summary

Baghdad is a city alive to debate, discussion and intellectual exploration. The removal of the old regime eliminated the ideological checks and networks of surveillance which prevented free expression; likewise, the most pernicious forms of oppression – the language of self-censorship and the act of internal policing – are ebbing away and Iraqis of all strata are testing for themselves the very limits of free speech and thought. To even the most jaded observer these are revolutionary times in the capital. It would be tempting but wrong to make analogies to Berlin in the moments after the fall of the Wall or Prague and Budapest following the collapse of Soviet hegemony. Unlike the citizens of those cities, Baghdadis live under foreign occupation and lack the rudimentary structures of public safety and urban life itself; while Iraq is freer than it has been in recent memory, that sense of freedom is tempered by a palpable trepidation and a lack of confidence in the future.

Boys hawking armfuls of dozens of newspapers fill the streets. Political graffiti cover the walls of public buildings and dueling banners festoon old statues or the kitschy public art of the *ancien régime*. Groups have renamed squares and entire neighborhoods after beloved figures from the past like ‘Abd al-Karim Qasim or the murdered Shiite cleric Sheikh Muhammad al-Sadr. With this grand and anarchic project of iconoclasm, Baghdadis are laying claim to the public spaces

Graffiti in Sadr City that reads “The Baath is the dunghill of history”



of their city and in so doing re-inscribing on its face new layers of meaning and making new memories.

However there are reasons to be concerned that this openness and vitality may vanish in the face of increased insecurity, media controls and the failure to resume support for the arts. Further, it is far too early to get a broad sense of what kinds of research – primarily in the humanities and social sciences – would now be undertaken by Iraqi scholars. Where we did get a picture of projects under preparation, Bayt al-Hikma for example, the research agenda described was not a departure from the past, but rather conceived within the narrow formulaic restrictions of Baathist thought. Architects now freed from the often-capricious demands of the president and his staff envision Baghdad as a canvass on which to experiment with regionalism and new environmental and technological innovations.

Nonetheless, as the occupation of the country continues, especially if it becomes more heavy-handed in the face of organized resistance, public discourse, which until now has not pivoted on anti-Americanism, may increasingly lose its multidimensionality and autonomy and grow polarized, sterile, colorless and monolithic.

3.2 Academic Life under the Baath

As university professionals we were keen to learn what challenges our colleagues had faced in the past. A series of conversations with Iraqi academics, primarily Alya Sousa, ‘Imad al-Jawhiri, Hussam al-Rawi al-Rifai^c, Kamal Muzhar Ahmad, Issam Khafaji and Farouq Darweesh provided the raw material for this section. Each possesses different origins and professional trajectories, but all were gracious, honest and forthcoming in their conversations with us. Sousa is an American University in Beirut-trained historian, whose father Ahmad Sousa, along with ‘Abd al-Azziz Douri and Majid Khadduri, were the leading historians of a previous generation. She has written on the inter-war period and left the Department of History at the University of Baghdad in the early 1990s. Jawahiri, a specialist of

contemporary Arab intellectual and social history, who did both his undergraduate and graduate work in Iraq, is distinguished among his colleagues as one of the few who refused to join the Baath. Hussam al-Rawi, a champion of architectural regionalism and historic preservation, is an urbane English-trained architect. He has served in various administrative positions at Baghdad University and was expelled due to his rank within the Baath Party structure in May 2003. Among his most recent and celebrated commissions is the mosque-tomb complex of one of the three founders of the Baath itself, Michel °Aflaq, who died in Baghdad in 1989. Kamal Muzhar is one of the most respected historians in Iraq. Now retired he still supervises Ph.D. students and conducts graduate seminars at Baghdad University. Issam Khafaji and Farouq Darweesh fled Iraq in 1979 and have now returned as advisors to the CPA's Ministry of Higher Education. Khafaji, a leading Iraqi dissident has taught both in the US and Europe, most recently at the University of Amsterdam. Darweesh, an engineer, was a former administrator at Baghdad University. He has taken leave from Cal Poly Pomona to work in Baghdad.

Each emphasized a pattern of systematic abuses and corruption of higher education and scholarly research by the state apparatus; they also related anecdotes about acts of individual cronyism and the mental and physical abuse of professors by members of the ruling elite. At the same time, they conveyed the sense that there were no inherent flaws to the system of higher education or professional development *per se*. Rather social forces exterior to the universities had robbed the institutions of their prestige, vitality, rigor and overall excellence. Under Saddam Hussein, says Kamal Muzhar, "quantity came before quality, and the best professors were thrown out. In the old regime no one was put in the right place." Jawahiri likened the influence of the party on the academy to that of a washing machine: it mechanically washed away undesirable people and ideas.

Baathist policies towards higher education in Iraq have shifted tremendously over the last 32 years. For example, Kamal Muzhar recalls that while the first systematic purges of Communist faculty took place in 1968, he insists that until 1979 university professors elected their own directors, chairs and deans. The exiles Khafaji and Darweesh concurred that the situation had become truly unbearable only by 1979. Others

point to the mid-1980s as the point that the system broke down altogether, with the near collapse of scholarly exchange after the state made travel abroad difficult and contingent upon ranking membership in the party. Before this time, Iraqi academics enjoyed the right to travel abroad to conferences and meetings, and in many cases, the state subsidized their expenses. Still, the security apparatus often considered those who did spend time abroad suspect and they could face harassment and interrogation on their return. The reduction in freedom to travel had its cognate in the abandonment of the tradition of earning at least one higher degree at a school in Europe or North America. An older generation of Iraqi academics remember a time when they could study freely in other Arab states, the US and Europe and enjoyed free tuition and liberal stipends from the government.

Where most Iraqis who completed graduate work before 1979 did so abroad, very few studied overseas in the period 1980-1991 and after the Gulf War, almost no one did. The few who traveled enjoyed close ties to the ruling elite. For the humanities and social sciences, this has been especially detrimental: foreign language acquisition has been poor and exposure to contemporary research almost nonexistent. Jawahiri emphasized this last point, noting that an entire generation of junior professors have spent no time abroad, have never attended international conferences or have not built connections with colleagues outside of Iraq: "They must go abroad for their Ph.D.s so that they can be exposed to new systems and methods, and thereby acquire prestige and be good professors." Along these same lines, and in a sentiment shared by Sousa, Jawahiri was particularly eager to host international conferences and to have his students participate in scholarly gatherings abroad.

Jawahiri also provided us with insight into the structure of faculty development in the academy and how the state used systems of rewards and punishments to induce and ensure loyalty. Iraqi universities employed a tiered system of faculty advancement accompanied by a kind of tenure that guarantees employment but not necessarily rank. Ideally, movement from lecturer to assistant professor to professor was based on successful teaching and the review of research and publications by external evaluators. Jawahiri noted that the regime made it increasingly easy for party members to move through the ranks. Salaries, which were low even by academic stan-

dards, were tied to rank. When one became an administrator or chair, salaries increased steeply. Membership in institutions such as the Iraqi Academy of Sciences carried with it additional stipends and there were often opportunities to teach a heavier load for additional pay. Nevertheless, access to these upper ranks and perquisites often came at the price of party membership.

Sousa, who left the university out of frustration in the early 1990s and worked with the UN until the most recent invasion, looks back fondly on her career in the academy and notes that until it became untenable after the mid-1980s, women professors received a great deal of support for their research and development. Her experience highlights the fact that state policy encouraged women's access to higher education and faculty positions. Not only was this in line with Baathist tenets of secular equality, but also was a pragmatic response to the demographic realities created by the slaughter of large numbers of young Iraqi men in the Iran-Iraq war. She also suggested that there was some degree of freedom in historical research on contemporary historical topics, but this was limited in scope due to the closed nature of most Interior Ministry and other state archives, and in an intriguing footnote she mentioned that until he was executed by Saddam Hussein in 1989, Fadil Barak al-Takriti, an academic himself and head of the intelligence services, had begun to allow some limited access to more recent state documents.

The issues of academic corruption aside, al-Rawi conveyed to us the potential for arbitrary horror inherent to the old system. Luay Hussein, one of Saddam Hussein's most favored nephews failed a required engineering course because of attendance problems. Al-Rawi, as head of the engineering section at the time had to inform the nephew of this fact. In retribution, young toughs from Luay's entourage severely beat and maimed the professor who gave Luay the failing grade and later tried to ambush al-Rawi himself on the street. When the president's office learned of the occurrence, a staged, videotaped beating of Luay's accomplices was produced and shown to the faculty at Baghdad University as a kind of apology. Nevertheless, al-Rawi was not renewed as head of engineering. The story highlights the vulnerable position of Iraqi academics in the period before the war. Those in the arts and humanities were especially at risk, as they did not necessarily share with their colleagues in

the sciences an obviously pragmatic value to the state. Historians were in constant danger, as the state placed a premium on the maintenance of an ideologically "correct" portrayal of the past.

Most if not all Iraqi historians and other academics with international reputations – and without the kinds of connections enjoyed by some of the above – have left the country over the last three-decades to assume better paying or less restrictive positions in the Arab Gulf, Jordan, Libya, Yemen and the West. Prominent examples are the returned exiles Khafaji and Darweesh, or the Ottomanist, Sayyar Al-Jamil. This phenomenon is by no means limited to Iraq but is an omnipresent fact of intellectual life in the Arab world.

3.2.1 Recommendations

1) Fair, open and transparent mechanisms should be used to reinstate or compensate academics who were denied opportunities or expelled for political or ideological reasons over the last 30 years.

Rationale: This measure is the first logical step in addressing the systematic corruption of Iraqi academia. It would also have the potential to bring back to Iraq a vast reserve of much needed human capital.

2) Women in academia should be encouraged to compete for senior administrative and leadership position and measures ensuring equal access and diversity must be established.

Rationale: Few if any women have been elected to leadership roles in the series of post-war elections held on the various campuses.

3) The process for filling new positions or vacancies at all levels of the academy should be open and transparent and meet minimum standards of due process and equal opportunity.

Rationale: This would open the system to the largest possible pool of human resources and prevent much of the cronyism and nepotism that drove the old system.

4) Senior faculty sabbaticals, junior faculty research leave, graduate student support and undergraduate study abroad programs should be resumed as soon as possible.

Rationale: All of the Iraqi academics we met demanded these kinds of programs. The regularization and normalization of forms of exchange will provide the basis of the ultimate reintegration of Iraqi academics with the rest of the world.

5) *Faculty should develop their own standards of self-management, and design procedures for faculty advancement and rank and tenure.*

Rationale: The university system suffered most when non-university professionals manipulated the system for their own ends. Faculty self-management would help to preclude a recurrence of this phenomenon.

6) *Rotating visiting professorships for non-Iraqis – preferably in the 1-3 month range – in the humanities and social sciences should be immediately established at all of Iraq’s universities.*

Rationale: This again was a consistent request from the Iraqi academics we met. In particular, there is a great demand for the teaching of non-Iraqi history.

3.3 De-Baathification and the Academy

On the larger impact of De-Baathification, please refer again to the ICG’s report.

We found that there are two parallel processes of de-Baathification at work at Iraqi universities and scholarly institutions. The first and very public process has followed a series of official orders unilaterally promulgated by the CPA and its chief administrator, L. Paul Bremer. No court has tested the legality of these acts and its implementation has been haphazard and in some cases arbitrary. The second and more grass-roots process of de-Baathification has been undertaken by Iraqis themselves in both formal and informal ways: elections, petitions and in a few cases threats of physical violence.

Based on our analysis of discussions with relevant CPA officials, the American edict on De-Baathification is predicated on a false analogy between Baathism and Nazism. This analogy has been promoted most heavily by Iraqi exiles in the United States like Brandeis University professor Kanan Makiya. In 1945, the allies intended De-Nazification to inoculate the German people against any revival of fascism. In 2003, the American hope is that elimination of high-

ranking members of the Baath from positions in the public sector will prevent the recrudescence of authoritarianism in Iraq. The analogy between the Nazis and the Baath – especially in terms of rank and file members – fails on its face: likening the Nazis to the Baath either undervalues the sheer horror and inhumanity that the former visited upon the world or exaggerates the global reach and influence of the latter.

In principle, De-Baathification recognizes the irrefutable fact that the party saturated the lived experience of Iraqis, denied them basic human rights and insinuated itself in all aspects of the production of knowledge, art and culture. However, the structures of authoritarianism are not unique to Baathism and thus merely eliminating Baathists will not keep Iraq free. Any liberal, pluralist reform of Iraq will require more than just the elimination of Baathist ideology. We contend that the best way to prevent the reestablishment of the authoritarian structures the Baath created and benefited from is the formation and strengthening of viable institutions of civil society, of which academia is a central element.

The ruling that most directly impacts upon the university and allied systems is CPA *Order Number 1: De-Baathification of Iraqi Society* which appeared in the 17 June 2003 edition of the *al-Waqi’ al-Iraqiyya*, the official gazette of Iraq. Section 2 reads:

Full members of the Baath Party holding ranks of...Regional Command Member,...Branch Member...Section Member,...and Group Member... are hereby removed from their positions and banned from future employment in the public sector.

The CPA implementation of this process has been inconsistent at best. The CPA has removed most senior university officials. This includes the former president of Baghdad University, Mahmud al-Rawi, a second circle member of the party. Beyond the top ranks and in the middle there is a great deal of difference in treatment. Bremer has reserved to himself the right to waive the ban and has done so, especially in high profile cases of individuals associated with the National Museum like Dr. Moayad Damerji, or the aforementioned president of al-Mustansiriyya University, Bakka’. In both cases, their utility to the administration in terms of competence and public relations merited the exoneration. In no way do we mean to disparage Damerji or Bakka’ as competent Iraqi public servants, but rather to

note the selective, seemingly arbitrary and non-transparent implementation of the ban. Those who have fallen through the cracks are professors like Hussam al-Rawi; while well respected and beloved of his students and colleagues, he has neither an international support network nor obvious utility to the new order. By the same token in using party rank as the main criterion, individuals who were not high ranking members or even members at all, but who consciously made use of the pernicious nature of the former regime to their own ends can escape notice. Consequently, De-Baathification has the potential to be a source of tremendous injustice, resentment and distrust.

Our prediction is that most professors who have lost their positions in the university system who want to return will be allowed to do so at some point, perhaps following an official enquiry and renunciation of party membership, though it is unlikely they will ever be permitted to resume positions of leadership.

The other form of De-Baathification is much less formal. Hussam al-Rawi related the story of Dr. Ahmad al-Hadithi, a Pennsylvania State University trained ovine-bovine veterinarian and Dean of the College of Veterinary Sciences at Baghdad University. Originally from the village of Haditha on the Euphrates, and intensely and personally loyal to Saddam Hussein himself for having lifted his family from poverty, Dr. al-Hadithi was renowned as an informant and demagogue. Within days of the collapse of the regime graffiti appeared on the walls of the Veterinary College announcing "Death to Dr. Ahmad; the little Saddam!" Fearing for his personal safety, al-Hadithi has not returned to campus. Dramas like this have played out on each of the campuses in Baghdad. As noted previously, it may have led to the murder of a dean at al-Mustansiriyya. Nevertheless, this kind of ad hoc cleansing is also dangerous and open to abuse by those seeking personal vengeance or political advantage. It could create a cycle of revenge and easily spiral out of control. Still, what we saw at the universities was not merely cases of disgruntled undergraduates and an extreme and irreversible form of student evaluation, rather our sense is that when professors have been ostracized it has been undertaken in a judicious and moderate fashion. In fact, the reverse scenario is more often the case: Students have held rallies or petition drives on behalf of terminated professors.

The process of De-Baathification left us with more questions than answers. De-Baathification, as used by the CPA is a monolithic term and influenced by the Cold War ethos and Eurocentrism which dominates the thinking of its analysts; it fails to grasp the fact that Baathism in its Takriti-mode relied far less upon bureaucratic mechanisms of domination and reified ideologies and more on tribal ties, filial networks and ethnic perquisites. It needs to be deconstructed both as an American policy and as a long-term Iraqi goal. How can a massive, diverse elite with entrenched ties and large, multi-tiered networks of patronage be replaced with something more "civilian" and less "Stalinist?" How can a new social and political elite be reconstructed through outside pressure in the space of a few months? Will the vilification of the Baathists have the reverse effect of promoting exemplars of the former regime to the status of national heroes?

Where perhaps the analogy to the De-Nazification of Germany is most apt is the long-term. While the modalities of the Cold War and the Soviet threat led the Western Allies to rehabilitate large numbers of former Nazis, and moreover to never de-Nazify whole categories of the German public sector like universities, real de-Nazification came in the late 1960s as younger Germans, caught up in the spirit of those times completed the task. The true test of De-Baathification is not whether a handful of party hacks are prevented from resuming their posts, but rather if Iraqis can create for themselves a robust civil society.

Recommendations:

1) Current De-Baathification programs should cease; short of a cessation, it should be held in abeyance until a self-regulating and Iraqi-controlled system, which guarantees due process, can be developed.

Rationale: The current program of De-Baathification is of uncertain value and dubious legality. The basic goals of De-Baathification can be reached through less drastic and more professional and legal means.

2) An aggressive Truth and Reconciliation process, perhaps on the model of systems used in Argentina, South Africa and Chile, should replace De-Baathification and be integrated into

plans for academic redevelopment/reform and extended throughout Iraqi society.

Rationale: The well-established modalities of Truth and Reconciliation would enjoy a warm reception in higher education circles and have tremendous impact; the process must employ international norms of openness and due process. Regardless, any attempt to implement Truth and Reconciliation must take shape in accordance with Iraqi social forms and not merely be extracted from other examples. Nor should it operate in lieu of formal criminal investigations or procedures.

3.4 Newspapers, Coffeehouses, and Civil Society

While it is difficult to arrive at an accurate total, at least 75 new independent newspapers and journals have begun publication in Baghdad. This number stands in stark contrast to the pre-war situation where the state controlled the press and there were just a handful of newspapers. While it is unlikely that the market can sustain this number of new journals, and indeed several papers have already disappeared, the quantity that will remain will provide an unprecedented and vital space of discourse and exchange. For the moment, the Iraqi press is the freest press in the Arab world and the only obvious restrictions come in the form of CPA orders banning incitement, advocating the return of Baathism or promoting ethnic or religious hate.

The papers range greatly in quality and coverage. Many of the papers are associated with emergent or traditional political groups like the Communists, liberals and the Kurdish parties; others are purely commercial ventures. What all papers share is a relative lack of advertising copy, suggesting that either their publishers have deep pockets or they are receiving subventions or most likely, both. Three new dailies have emerged as front-runners in the Baghdad market: *al-Zaman*, *al-Takhi*, and *al-Sabah*. Of these *al-Zaman* (Time) is by far the most slick, and with *al-Sabah* (Morning), the only paper that publishes in full color. *Al-Zaman's* editorial offices are headquartered in London, where usually half of the journal is prepared. The front and rear faces are completed in Baghdad. The paper's professional layout is mirrored in the elitist topics it covers and its cost, 750 I.D.s (\$.50). The week we visited Baghdad, the paper presented a series of articles on Foucault and Barthes as well

as a history of Iraq and Arab nationalism that championed Gamal 'Abd al-Nasser and 'Abd al-Karim Qassim. This elevated discourse aside, the paper is not above printing images of scantily-clad western models and movie starlets on its last pages. *Al-Zaman's* publisher, Saad Bazaz has claimed that the paper is neutral with regards to Iraqi party politics, but it is certainly right of center. *Al-Takhi* (Fraternity), on the other hand is a sober and serious paper. Founded in the 1960s, it continued to publish through the Baathist period. The paper has connections to the Kurdish Democratic Party and shares its website. *Al-Sabah* is the most pro-CPA paper and the one with the least obvious links to any political party.

Despite the new openness of the period, the newspapers have yet to carve out distinctive identities for themselves. In many cases, they only reflect pre-war disputes among exilic communities and ideas about Arab nationalism that were *au courant* in the 1960s. This is both a function of the lack of politics, *per se*, in Iraq and the fact that an older generation of Iraqi journalist dominates journalism. Certainly, as political forms become more resolved in the country, and print-capitalisms takes root, the newspapers that survive will evolve accordingly.

Concerned about a lack of a functioning library in the capital that could collect these papers, we received assurances from the French Embassy that it will be possible within a year to forward newspapers they have collected to the Institut Français du Proche Orient in Amman, Jordan. They would constitute a veritable treasure trove for the study of emergent civil society.

The newspapers of Baghdad seemed staid in contrast to the potential of the web. The plethora of weblogs like that of the "Baghdad Blogger" reveals how younger Iraqis are using the web as a medium for discourse. Any analysis of emerging trends in Iraqi thought must chart the on-line dimensions of public discourse. Currently, access to the web is growing at an exponential rate in Baghdad, with cyber cafes connected via satellite links springing up throughout the capital's middle-class districts.

Despite obvious security problems and the lack of electricity, Baghdad's coffeehouses have again become sites of vigorous discussion and fellowship. This is especially the case at the Shabbandar Café at the northern gate of the Suq.

Located on the street of the booksellers, the café attracts an artistic and literary crowd, especially on Fridays. Places like Shahbandar provide a valuable space for creating intellectual networks. With the collapse of telephony and the disestablishment of state-controlled syndicates and unions, cafés and other “third spaces” are becoming a fundamental part of new intellectual connections. And while cafés are exclusively male spaces, we noted a remarkable diversity of clientele in terms of age and social background at Shahbandar.

Young artists and older writers and intellectuals gathered at the Shahbandar Café



Like Beirut and Aleppo, Baghdad has long been known for its salons, called *nadi*, *majlis* or *mun-tada*. This tradition, far from having been erased by the old regime, persisted. However, this survival often came at the price of cooptation, as was the case for with the city’s musical *maqam* of Friday evenings. Others survived through a conscious effort at self-censorship and by limiting themselves to politically innocuous topics like representational art, traditional crafts and classical poetry. In this category are the salons of Mrs. Widad al-Urfali in Mansour and Mrs. Amal Yasin Al-Khudayri in her late father’s Ottoman-era courtyard house on the banks of the Tigris near Bab al-Sharqi. In addition religious and linguistic minorities established clubs and hosted talks and cultural evenings. Among these are the Assyro-Chaldean Nadi al-Babil or the Armenian-Iraqi General Benevolent Union. Despite their non-academic character, they were undoubtedly part of Baghdad’s intellectual life. Art galleries and exhibition openings also played a great role, especially Qassem Sibti’s al-Hiwar gallery. Sibti recently added a cafe and garden

to the gallery rooms. In the overgrown garden, younger journalists, writers, critics and artists meet and engage in conversation and debate.

Whether or how quickly these institutions can resume their role in the life of the capital is still an open question. The status of Mrs. Urfali’s and Mrs. Khudayri’s salons are in doubt: Urfali’s salon has been taken over by the Iraqi National Accord as its headquarters, and Khudayri’s house was ravaged during the events which followed the war. Still, while we were there, other clubs resumed their meetings, including the Nadi al-Babil, where National Museum curator Donny George delivered a speech on the state of the museum in *Assyrian* to a packed house. The al-Hiwar gallery was crowded and alive.

Among the more important initiatives we noted were:

The “Al-Mada” project which was launched by Fakhri Karim, an Iraqi communist in the late 1980’s and 1990’s. Fleeing Baghdad, Karim founded a publishing house and cultural center first in Beirut and then in Damascus. The publishing house has become one

of the most important in the Arab Middle East. In the aftermath of the war, Karim returned to Iraq and is now using a house on Abu Nuwas street as a base for the al-Mada center’s activities. Beside publishing books and a monthly review, he intends to begin a local daily newspaper, organize conferences and various cultural activities. Karim plans to open branches in other areas of Baghdad, as well as in the provinces.

The National Committee for the Preservation of Iraqi Cultural Goods, which was founded by a group of college students and recent graduates. They have embarked upon a “consciousness raising” campaign to alert people to the vulnerability of Iraq’s historical heritage, and to the ways to protect it. Their effectiveness is clearly limited by the material conditions prevailing in Baghdad, and they have faced tremendous problems in maintaining momentum.

The Association for Culture and Environment, an NGO begun by the well-respected physician, Dr. ‘Abd al-Hadi al-Khalili. Unlike the Committee for the Preservation, this association re-

cruits mainly among the older generation, primarily university professors.

The emergence of a free press, spread of internet technology and the vigorous use of informal settings for the exchange of ideas suggest that Baghdadis are laying the foundation of civil society. Nevertheless, these forms are taking shape in the face of an increasingly turbulent political milieu. How, or even if this nascent civil society can withstand the formation of a new Iraqi government is an open question. Traditionally institutions like the above are among the first to fall victim to state concerns about security and political stability.

3.4.1 Recommendations:

1) *The newspapers, journals and magazines of Iraq must be collected and archived.*

Rationale: These are the building blocks of a New Iraqi History.

2) *Foreign institutions of civil society should identify potential partners in Iraq and begin to build relationships and exchange programs rather than impose preexisting Western NGOs.*

Rationale: Salons, clubs, art galleries, and Iraqi NGOs constitute the basis of civil society. That such institutions are taking shape in Iraq is the most encouraging sign that a truly democratic and independent future is possible. Iraqi-based initiatives have a higher probability of success. Likewise, in partnering with these institutions, Iraqis will be exposed to functioning, viable and

successful examples of civil society and begin to place a higher value on these kinds of projects.

3) *The historical urban fabric from the al-Mustansiriyya Madrasa to the remains of the Abbasid citadel should be turned into a cultural space for Iraqis. UNESCO and ICOMOS should protect this zone as a world heritage site and Iraqi urban planners should begin to think about ways to reclaim this space for the people. The mandate-era former Ministry of Defense compound should likewise become a cultural center.*

Rationale: The historic urban fabric of the city has been neglected in the past two decades. Modest efforts to preserve and develop this area began before the war, but have suffered from a lack of funding. The development of these areas as open, public places will help the formation of new and vital spaces of gathering and sociability, promote tourism and function as a pedestrian zone whose symbolism is untainted by the Baathist regime and could be used to help instill a sense of Arab-Ottoman heritage, national identity and pride.

Additional Information:

Website for *al-Zaman*
<http://www.azzaman.com/>

Website for *al-Takhi*
<http://www.birayeti-xebat.net/>

The "Baghdad Blogger"
http://dear_raed.blogspot.com/

4. Relations between the Iraqi Academic and Intellectual Community and the Coalition Provisional Authority

4.1 Introduction

The CPA has lost much of the support and goodwill it enjoyed after the overthrow of the old regime. Its perceived inability to manage the basic needs of everyday life in the capital - public safety, electricity, water, telephone, and gasoline - is the main cause of that loss. However, rarely did our contacts express virulent anti-Americanism (the occupation is not considered an international or coalition effort by most Iraqis). Nevertheless, confidence in the CPA is quickly dissipating.

In an observation shared by foreign NGO workers, we noticed a mounting frustration even among members of the large educated Iraqi middle class who had been willing to give the Americans the benefit of the doubt, and who saw the occupation as a tremendous opportunity. For some this frustration has the potential to transform into a radicalized antipathy towards the American presence and their reform efforts and, moreover, contribute recruits for the increasingly organized paramilitary resistance.

Adding to the sense of frustration and disempowerment is the perception that the CPA is institutionally indifferent to the needs of Iraqis. The aura of indifference is perpetuated by the lack of mechanisms for Iraqis of all strata to communicate effectively with the CPA. Presumably with more Iraqi control of the state, this problem will resolve itself, however, the CPA's choice of Saddam Hussein's former palace as the base of its operations sends at the very least confusing and mixed signals to the Iraqi people.

Generally meetings between Iraqis and the CPA take place at the Iraqi national conference center, located opposite the Rashid Hotel and behind a series of US Army checkpoints. Civilian officials of the CPA - and the military personnel who accompany them - usually wear body armor and carry side arms when out of the Presidential Palace compound.

While this policy was being relaxed while we were there, with the upsurge in violence against the military in Baghdad proper and at the universities, it is unclear how much further or if at all, this policy will change. Such a distancing cannot help but reinforce the stereotypes and misperceptions held by all sides.

4.2 Higher Education and the CPA

Without independent budgets or endowments and with the presence of US military personnel and weapons on their campuses the universities of Iraq have been placed in a subordinate and dependent position. The same holds for other research and cultural institutions. The United States, as dominant partner in the CPA is using its preeminent position to control the shape of higher education, taking an active stance towards staffing, curriculum and admissions.

However, the American agenda for Iraq's universities is not an unqualified commitment to the development of a system of higher education that will serve as a basis for civil society. Rather counter-terrorism and non-proliferation drive American efforts. The appointment of Andrew (Drew) Erdmann, Ph.D., as the CPA's "advisor" to the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education clearly reflects this agenda. Far from being a mere adviser, Erdmann is the *de facto* head of Iraq's university system with the ultimate power to veto appointments and set budgets. He answers first to L. Paul Bremer and then the Pentagon. Ac-

American armored personnel carrier on the grounds of Saddam Hussein's former palace, now CPA headquarters



ording to his official US State Department biography, he is a member of the “Secretary of State’s Policy Planning Staff, where he was responsible for counterterrorism (sic), homeland security, and Central Asian policy.” He did graduate work in History at Harvard and recently defended a doctoral dissertation entitled, “Americans’ search for ‘victory’ in the twentieth century” (2000). Before joining the US State Department, he held fellowships at various policy think tanks like Harvard’s Olin Center. He is not from the State Department’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, which traditionally administers US government-supported foreign exchange and education programs including Fulbright. In addition, he appears to neither have formal preparation in Middle Eastern History and Politics nor speak Arabic. Moreover, he has no training in university management or practical leadership experience in the administration of large public institutions of higher learning.

Erdmann, who is scheduled to remain in Baghdad at least until October, does not seem to command the respect of the few Iraqi academics and intellectuals with whom we spoke who have met him.

During a 24 June meeting, and after assuring us that the CPA was committed to letting the Iraqis control their own destiny as soon as possible, Erdmann outlined what he called the “bedrock principles” of America’s plan for post-Saddam higher education in Iraq. First, Iraq’s universities are to become autonomous entities. It is unclear if this means the complete privatization of higher education, but it does open the door for independent international boards of trustees. He suggested that the Ministry of Higher Education may eventually be abolished and universities “floated.” Presumably this would insulate Iraqi academia from the country’s political structure, while at the same time provide additional opportunities for control and oversight by non-Iraqis. Second, communication and exchange would be expanded and was explained as a key tenet of American “Public Diplomacy” in Iraq. “Public diplomacy” is a euphemism for highly coordinated pro-American propaganda that has gained wider use since the aftermath of 9/11. It connects the origins of terrorism with the conclusion that anti-Americanism is built on an incomplete or stereotypical understanding of American government and society. Third, De-Baathification, as discussed earlier, would act to eliminate authoritarian tendencies from the uni-

versities. And fourth, the Iraqi scientific community would be “normalized.” The term normalize in this context means monitoring the research agenda for Iraqi nuclear engineers, biologists and chemists capable of aiding in the production of “Weapons of Mass Destruction.” According to Erdmann this is part of finishing the processes of disarming Iraq and a prophylactic measure to keep impoverished Iraqi scientists from selling their expertise to terrorists or governments hostile to the US.

In a *prima facie* sense, Iraqi academics advocated each of these principles. However there are reasons to be concerned that the planned implementation of the reforms will reinforce and perpetuate the subordinate condition of Iraqi higher education. Further, the US is placing itself, with planned USAID higher education sub-contracts to American universities, in a position to dominate Iraqi educational structures for the foreseeable future. The inescapable fact is that Iraqis did not design the “bedrock principles” as a formula for reform, but rather they derive from a plan drawn up before the occupation of the country in Washington. Most fundamentally, the USAID contracts are not a response to Iraqi initiatives: they are based on remote assessments by state department officials in consultation with representatives of the Iraqi exile community.

Iraqis, having to deal with the trauma of occupation, the challenges of survival, and the possibilities of an impending civil war have had little time to devote to large-scale educational initiatives. Seeming to fail to recognize this, Erdmann has adopted the position that the Iraqi academic community is unable to identify initiatives, plan strategies for reform, or budget as a consequence of a “basic lack of competence” and Baathism. This struck us as an unfair, inaccurate and hasty generalization; it is also a convenient position that infantilizes Iraqis and justifies a heavy-handed American intervention in the Iraqi academic scene.

This is the crux of the dilemma we outlined in the introduction. In the current formulation, aid, development and reform all first must pass through the prism of American national interests in Iraq and the Middle East. Similarly, if the security situation in Iraq deteriorates and the American occupation continues, reform programs closely allied to these American interests will prove problematic and a focus for resistance. This fact should be part of the thinking of insti-

tutions seeking to cooperate with US government initiatives in Iraq. These organizations should be conscious of the fact while they may consider themselves as distinct from the US government, disinterested and benevolent, Iraqis will conflate them with the occupation and see them as complicit actors in the forwarding of American interests.

In addition to secular higher education, Erdmann has inherited control of three religiously affiliated institutions: the Saddam Islamic University, al-Fiqh University and Babylon College. Islamic University and al-Fiqh were semiprivate institutions; the former was founded with help from Kuwait at the time of the Iran-Iraq war as an initiative to support Sunni education. After the war with Kuwait, its external support vanished and it acquired the Saddam sobriquet. It is unlikely that the institution will continue to exist and several Iraqis we spoke with speculated that its functions would be folded into the Sharia Faculty at Baghdad University. Al-Fiqh is a Shiite-centered institution. Babylon College is a private ecumenical Christian school which serves both the Chaldean and Assyrian communities. Erdmann was unable to articulate a clear policy on these institutions. Finally, just days prior to our meeting he was informed that the Iraqi Academy now fell under his control; he assured us that it would receive a budget.

Accompanying Erdmann to the 26 June meeting was Lt. Col. Stephan Curda, a reservist who, in civilian life, is a specialist in Information Technology and distance learning at the University of West Florida. While the US Army's role in the overall management of higher education is unclear, the presence of Curda and various military officers at other meetings held with CPA officials made visible how closely the US Army monitors the civilian administrators and their actions. Curda's background highlights an underlying American emphasis on technology and science in the redevelopment of Iraqi academia.

At the meeting was the aforementioned returned exile Professor Farouk Darweesh in his capacity as advisor to Erdmann.

We contend that the CPA should recognize the professional dignity, vitality and resourcefulness of Iraqi intellectuals and academics and empower them to chart their own path, rather than implement vague policies in a non-transparent

way for the sake of a nebulous "counter-terrorism" agenda.

4.3 Culture and the CPA

Libraries, Museums and the Bayt al-Hikma all fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture and its senior advisor, the Italian diplomat, Ambassador Pietro Cordone. Cordone came out of retirement to replace the American diplomat John Limbert. An Arabist by training, he has served at many Middle Eastern posts. Quite elderly, he will leave Iraq by August. Near the end of our visit, we met with Cordone, his assistant, Mr. Fergus Muir, Head of Architecture Branch, British Department of Culture, Media and Sport, and Colonel A.J. Kessel of the Special Functions Team of the U.S. Army 352nd Civil Affairs Command. Colonel Kessel had been one of the first Americans on the scene of the burned National Library.

The conversation with Cordone revolved primarily around the state of post-war cultural affairs and what specific measure were being undertaken. Cordone emphasized that they were in the process of reorganizing the Ministry of Culture following a removal of 40%-60% of its high-ranking staff. Simultaneously, his office is encouraging the formation of independent boards of directors and/or trustees for the various institutions. In principle, this is parallel to the "floating" of the university system and anticipates the growth of private funding and endowments. He also made clear that his intention was to systematically link the Iraqi cultural heritage sector with international NGOs. One example he gave was coordinating with the Italian NGO Un Ponte Per, in restoring and preserving parts of Old Baghdad. He spoke of reviving one of two studies conducted in the 1990s on the rehabilitation of Baghdad's late Ottoman core that includes the 19th-century Qushla, governor's mansion, post office and secondary school.

Cordone seemed committed to building on cultural initiatives and cooperative agreements that had begun before the war. This course of action privileges European initiatives inasmuch as forms of diplomatic and cultural contact between the United States and Iraq were non-existent in the pre-war period. No doubt, this has led to conflict between CPA's Culture and Higher Education offices – which share the same room in the Saddam Hussein's Presidential Palace complex.

4.4 Recommendations

1) *American Universities should refrain from competing for US AID Higher Education grants until the military occupation of Iraq ends and an independent and sovereign government exists in Iraq. That said, institutions should make an effort to build contacts and offer expertise to the Iraqi academic community on an informal basis in preparation for that moment.*

Rationale: In addition to reasons outlined above, as long as US military forces occupy Iraqi university campuses and Iraqis do not have sovereign control of their institutions, they remain in an inherently unequal and subordinate position. Embarking upon any project that is directly sponsored by the government of occupation under those circumstances would reinforce that position of inequality. Other paths of support should and must be taken.

2) *The US Department of Defense should consider replacing Dr. Andrew Erdmann with an Arabic-speaking qualified university professional who has experience in Middle Eastern History and Society and training in university management and faculty self-governance.*

Rationale: Erdmann is surely a good analyst and historian of the US. His appointment, however, is a wasted opportunity. The Iraqis could benefit from someone expert in how universities can and should be run, who understands better the history and culture of the region and who does not perceive Iraqi professionals through the lens of counterterrorism and nonproliferation.

3) *No move to privatize Iraq's public higher education system should be undertaken unilaterally by the CPA, nor should there be any impediments to the establishment of private institutions of higher learning.*

Rationale: Public, low cost higher education and post-secondary training is a deeply rooted part of Iraqi society and a formula for development that enjoyed tremendous success until the 1990s. Any decision of such magnitude must be undertaken by Iraqis themselves. We note that the recent student demonstrations in Tehran began as a protest against privatization schemes of Iranian universities. However, private institutions of higher learning have a long history in the Middle East and could find a ready constituency in Iraq.

4) *The CPA should move as quickly as possible to guarantee independent sources of revenue for the university systems.*

Rationale: It was noted by several of our interlocutors that universities had their own financial resources granted to them before the war, but that those funds were frozen with all other Iraqi bank accounts. Consequently, the CPA placed itself as the only source of current funding for salaries and general budgets. Without independent budgets, universities will remain in a dependent relationship. Earmarking Iraq's oil revenues for the development of its cultural heritage, educational systems, medical and social services could help dispel the belief that the US is in Iraq to rob it of its natural resources.

5) *Foreign governments, if they have not already done so should place a priority on cultural affairs in their diplomatic missions to Iraq. This should be buttressed by ongoing multilateral approaches including close cooperation with UN programs and organizations such as UNDP and UNESCO, as well as direct cooperation with the Iraqis in ways that can bypass the CPA.*

Rationale: This form of cultural and educational development tends not to produce the kinds of unequal and dependent relationships envisioned in current CPA planning. Furthermore, in internationalizing approaches to development problems in Iraq, the problematic close association of US interests with progressive initiatives is reduced.

Additional Information:

Official Biography of Andrew Erdmann, Ph.D.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/pil/13437.htm>