

REVISITING SADDAM HUSSEIN'S POLITICAL LANGUAGE: THE SOURCES AND ROLES OF CONSPIRACY THEORIES

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There has been some debate among scholars about the political language of Saddam Hussein, president of Iraq from 1979 until his removal as a result of the US-led 2003 Iraq War, and of the symbolism used by him and his regime. Some of this debate adopts psychological approaches to explaining Saddam's behavior,¹ others instead argue that Saddam was driven by nation-building goals or the dynamics of minority regime consolidation within autocratic or neosultanistic rule² or that his actions show him as a victim of circumstance,³ while arguably the best works often go even further to seek out broad linkages between political language and political life.⁴ What most scholars ignore or greatly underemphasize, however, is the importance of conspiracism—the creation and discursive use of conspiracy theories—as a tool of Saddam's political language.

This article revisits the discussion of Saddam's political language to reopen the debate about the methods he employed and the ways in which he framed public debate, and argues that conspiracism was a core source and dynamic of his language and was linked into other dynamics of his political speech. Some conspiracy theories Saddam appears to have genuinely believed, especially those that set the context for, or helped him to justify, his August 2, 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Moreover, many would argue that he was the victim of an actual conspiracy when the US administration of George W. Bush used faulty intelligence concerning weapons of mass destruction in Iraq to justify the March 2003 invasion of the country. Other conspiracy theories appear less to be a narrative that Saddam actually believed, and more a tool used to justify his actions and to mobilize popular support for those actions. Important beyond the question of whether Saddam actually believed his own rhetoric is the fact of its impact: conspiracism not only shaped the Iraqi president's behavior, but influenced how his conduct was seen in Iraq and the region, ensuring an endurance and legacy in Saddam's words and deeds. The issue is important, therefore, not only in understanding Saddam's thinking and the logic guiding his

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behavior, but remains important because of the conspiracism that remains in Iraqi political discourse to the present day, in part as a result of the political legacy of Saddam Hussein. What follows is not meant to be inconsistent with nor contest other sources on Saddam's political language, but rather, is offered so as to challenge the lack of discussion and analysis within them, and more widely, to debate the sources and roles of conspiracism in Saddam's discourse and thus to begin filling a gap in scholarly understanding of the Saddam Hussein regime.

Definitional Issues

The first hurdle in mounting a central argument that Saddam's political language can be better understood with an appreciation of conspiracism is that of definitions. It is important to define what conspiracism is and, equally importantly, what it is not. A "conspiracy theory" is most simply defined as a narrative that "relates everything to a single subterranean Plot, promising a comfortingly totalizing allegory that leaves nothing to chance,"⁵ with characteristics that include "[p]oor evidence or lack of evidence, circular reasoning, repetition of unproven premises, and false dilemmas...."⁶ Such definitions contain some validity, yet they are not on their own satisfactory: a grand "Plot" is not the same as a conspiracy, and the propensity to reject as delusional the discourses of a conspiracy theorist risks ignoring the occasions when they have identified that a real conspiracy has, in fact, occurred. The "Plot," in other words, can be real and not just imagined, and in the more common situation where it is not real, the paranoia expressed in a conspiracy theory is important and need not be merely an irrational, delusional rant, since it can draw from, and signify, genuine and even reasonable political, economic or social concerns. The narrative style with which the "Plot" is explained, therefore, is important too. To be sure, the explanation presented by a conspiracy theorist must usually contain problems of evidence, reasoning or premises, as characteristics,⁷ but further, almost always is a counter-discourse of some sort; that is, a discourse seeking to challenge the orthodox or dominant explanation for an event. Even when states and leaders such as Saddam are the narrators of a conspiracy theory, there will be a plot as theme, usually unproven and sometimes false assertion, and an underlying aim of countering another discourse.

Given the pejorative inference in conspiracy theory, a term such as conspiracism is useful in moving beyond it and in capturing the breadth of where conspiracy theories come from and how they are used. The term "conspiracism," originally employed by Frank Mintz⁸ in the 1980s and then more widely utilized by Daniel Pipes,⁹ implies a broader dynamic than a "conspiracy theory." It can include not only the development of a conspiracy theory to explain an event or set of events, but also the use of conspiracy rhetoric much more widely, including the deliberate

(mis)use of a conspiracy theory in which the narrator does not believe or agree. Moreover, the narrator need not merely be a disenfranchised fringe-dweller, but could be the state, a political leader, a political, social or business elite, or others both disenfranchised and not.

It is important also to define conspiracism by articulating what it is *not*. First, it is not political paranoia, even though the differences are at times subtle. Political paranoia is an insufficiently-substantiated or excessively-focused suspicion by someone that an individual or entity is conspiring against him or her; a concern sometimes demonstrated or exacerbated by a preoccupation with loyalty in others or a propensity of seeing hidden messages or meanings in the language or actions of others.¹⁰ Not only are these behaviors more heavily a psychopathological trait than conspiracism need be, but most important, not all paranoia involves the narration of a conspiracy theory—think of a politician obsessed with loyalty out of a fear of being removed by party colleagues—and not all conspiracy theories have as a theme or meaning a paranoid basis—think of conspiracism as entertainment or propaganda. Second and on a similar note, conspiracism is not “agency panic” either.¹¹ While agency panic, as an individual or community’s sense of reduced power as a result of large and powerful governmental and societal organizations, accounts for some conspiracism, it is inadequate in explaining the use of conspiracy rhetoric by a strong autocratic ruler such as Saddam Hussein. To be sure, the Iraqi societal conspiracism that might derive in part from the reach and brutishness of Saddam’s regime could be explained in such terms, but not the conspiracism that Saddam mouthed about the United States, his neighbors, or his perceived enemies within Iraq. Finally on this point, conspiracism is not “political alienation,” even if this, too, sometimes accounts for the language of conspiracists. Political alienation, meaning people’s estrangement from the political system,¹² can have the same origins or impacts as conspiracism, for example by influencing popular perceptions of the state or its legitimacy or by supporting a withdrawal by individuals from the political process. It can even be argued that it is a precondition of conspiracism by societal units and individuals outside of the state. However like paranoia and agency panic, it offers little explanation of conspiracism by a leader and leadership; if anything, state conspiracism and propaganda can produce alienation and thus be a source of it¹³ and, of course, oftentimes alienation of individuals and other societal units is the aim of the authoritarian or autocratic state.

The Context of the Debate

In the case of Saddam’s Iraq, the literature has explored in some detail and with some success what conspiracism is not, as well as discussing aspects of political discourse related to conspiracism. One of the better books on political language

in Saddam's Iraq is Ofra Bengio's *Saddam's Word*,¹⁴ which explains the roles of political "code words" and "value-loaded" language as a process by which the regime demarcates acceptable and unacceptable terms, filters social discourse, and provides to society conventions on what is permissible or not.¹⁵ Ultimately, words divide everything into "black and white" and are "a smoke screen between the facts they purport to refer to and the impression they seek to create."¹⁶ The arguments made in Jerry Long's *Saddam's War of Words*¹⁷ are not dissimilar, even if the aim of the book is very different to Bengio's: Long looks at how Saddam and his regime invoked religion during the 1990-91 Gulf crisis and conflict, and in so doing, makes a number of observations about political language. His principal arguments are that religion was used by the secular Iraqi regime and Saddam in particular to mobilize support and to "justify policies, delegitimize others' policies, and respond to others' religious attacks."¹⁸ Linked as an outcome to this dynamic, according to Long, is a set of changes in Iraq, including a new debate after 1991 about whether the use of religious rhetoric and discourse in such ways was appropriate and what ought indeed to be the role of religion. In this sense, Saddam opened a political debate that is still being contested today. Also of importance is the fact that Long's is one of the few works to reference conspiracism a number of times, though there are brief mentions in a couple of other works.¹⁹ He does this not so much directly—though he does a couple of times²⁰—as through the examples of Saddam using conspiracist explanations for historical events and their impacts, or in adopting conspiracist tones in appealing for support from Iraqis and the Arab street.²¹ Makiya invariably would agree with Bengio's emphasis on authoritarianism and violence, given his emphasis on viewing the Saddam regime's use of language as a means to assert its authority and to promote societal fear of its power and violence. He cites propaganda as mind-numbing but deliberately so: as something that makes ordinary Iraqis both cynical yet, because of the distortion of reality on such a scale, also unthinkingly gullible.²² Other studies approach Saddam's politics by looking at totalitarian violence through the prism of symbols and public art,²³ seeing them as methods of regime maintenance, or make brief mention of conspiracism and propaganda for particular insights into the president's thinking on specific events.²⁴

The ultimate fact from a survey of the literature is that there is a paucity of scholarly work on conspiracism in Saddam's Iraq, but a wealth of related and relevant material covering political language, imagery, propaganda, and state-society relations. The discussion that follows lays out two key arguments, and makes several points in the process. The first argument is that Saddam's rhetoric was, in some cases, based on the fact that conspiracies do sometimes actually occur. Iraq has had its share of conspiracies in the past, while other conspiracies in or against the region have influenced Iraqi perceptions as well. Moreover, various forms of plotting and scheming are a normal element of political conduct—although as noted, a plot or

scheme is not always the same as a conspiracy—and in an especially repressive and mistrustful regime such as Saddam's, this fact also partially explains a proclivity towards genuinely-believed conspiracy theories by Saddam and other regime elites. This is only part of the explanation, however. The second set of arguments takes up the examples of the deliberate use and misuse of conspiracist language by Saddam, and in so doing, posits that this language played a role in mobilizing mass support, alienating opposition actors, and “crowding out” alternative explanations less favorable to the regime. However this is more than a new set of examples to support existing arguments by Bengio, Long and others, as the specific utility of conspiracy theories, in contrast to other forms of state rhetoric, are demonstrated and explained. The first step, however, is to outline some examples of Saddam's use of conspiracy theories.

Conspiracist Discourses in Saddam's Political Language

It was events in the 1980s, 1990s and up to the end of his rule that supplied the greatest amount and frequency of conspiracism by Saddam himself, perhaps not surprisingly given the threats to his regime from the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War, the 1990-91 Gulf War, the 1990-2003 sanctions and, of course, the 2003 war that finally removed him from power. Throughout this time there were numerous cases where Saddam appears to have been promoting a conspiracist explanation out of expediency or opportunism, but equally he seems to have believed a number of the conspiracy theories he narrated to be true. To Saddam and his regime, while Iraq was a beneficiary of US policy during the Iran-Iraq War, the two states had had a mixed relationship over the previous couple of decades, with Washington concerned at the potential for the Iraqi regime to act as a force of radicalism in the region and because of its large military. There was, as a result, still a strong element of mistrust underlying the relationship with Washington, even when the US began cautiously to court Iraq more seriously in the mid-1980s.²⁵ Iraqi suspicions were increased when the Iran-Contra Affair became a public scandal in 1987, showing that the US had supplied arms and equipment to Iran.

The most significant crisis for Saddam's regime, and arguably its greatest existential threat until that time, was the January-February 1991 war with the US and its allies in response to the August 2, 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. By virtue of both Iraq's historical interactions with external powers, and the perception by Saddam (and many Iraqis and Arabs elsewhere) that the US role in the Middle East was and remains a neo-colonial extension of earlier European colonial interventionism, the US response to the invasion of Kuwait and the war of early 1991 were viewed by many from a conspiracist perspective. The crisis and war was initiated by Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, yet the reasons for the invasion received

little attention in the West (and a great deal more in the Arab world). Two main grievances are notable. The first and most important were those centered on oil. Iraq accused Kuwait of stealing oil by horizontally drilling from the Rumaila oil field near the two states' border²⁶ and by exceeding its OPEC quota to keep prices suppressed.²⁷ Saddam was not just concerned that Kuwait was being deceitful, but felt that there was a wider conspiracy under way. In a July 17, 1990 Revolution Day speech, only a fortnight before the invasion of his neighbor, Saddam talked about a "grand conspiracy" between the Arab Gulf states and the West to keep oil prices low.²⁸ His view seems to have been confirmed by an Iraqi intelligence intercept in July 1990—just before a Saudi-sponsored meeting of the Gulf states on the issue—that suggested a Saudi-Qatari conspiracy to support low prices.²⁹ Not only does this constitute a conspiracy theory that was likely true and genuinely believed by Saddam, but a Western ignorance and lack of interest in the issue likely added weight to Saddam's view that something sinister was afoot. Feeding Saddam's conspiracism was a second concern, which was strategic in nature. He felt that in fighting Iran at great cost for eight years, the beneficiaries of the conflict had included states such as Kuwait that were located near Iran and which had large Shi'a populations. Not only did he perceive the Kuwaiti royals as ungrateful for Iraq's sacrifices against Iran, but he suspected that they were colluding to keep Iraq strategically vulnerable and weak. The Kuwaiti refusal to lease to Iraq Warba and Bubiyan islands³⁰—located at the mouth of the Shatt al-Arab waterway, the border between Iran and Iraq—was seen by Saddam as a deliberately harmful act. Furthermore, some argue that the US gave Saddam an implied approval to invade Kuwait at a meeting between the US ambassador April Glaspie and the Iraqi president on July 25, 1990, so that Washington would then have a reason to go to war with Iraq and rein it in as a regional power.

Later, after the invasion of Kuwait when the US drew attention to Iraq's human rights record and the nature of the regime in an attempt to demonize Saddam, this perceived double standard would come to dominate accusations that the US was selective, even hypocritical, in its dealings with the Arab world, the accusation being that the US had happily supported Iraq in its war with Iran, while courting Iraq for trade purposes, but that it had then changed its approach opportunistically when Saddam over-stepped what was acceptable to the US by invading Kuwait. From this perspective, the US call for Saddam to withdraw from Kuwait was equated with a US goal of retaining colonially-designated regional borders so as to divide the Arab world and keep it weak.³¹ Saddam's first major speech after the invasion of Kuwait and the US military deployment to the region was packed with conspiratorial explanations and symbolism. He claimed that the emirs of the Gulf (a reference to the Kuwaiti royal family in particular) were "servants of the foreigner and Zionism" who had sought support from non-Muslim imperialist forces against

Iraq.³² This rhetoric, like much around the time, was laden with arguments that plots were actively being hatched against Iraq and, indeed, the Arab people more generally, by both Arab elites and external powers. Another similar, even richer, example from late in the 1991 war is worth citing at greater length:

...some Arabs and...many foreigners...could not remember what Zionism and US imperialism have done against Iraq, beginning with the Iran-gate plot or the Iran-Contra scandal in 1986 until the first months of 1990, when the plot against Iraq reached its dangerous phases; when US and Western media began to prepare for the Israeli aggression against us, but which we confronted in the statement of 8 April 1990; when the Americans cut off bread from Iraq and cancelled the grain deal concluded with the US companies in the third month of the same year...and when they raised the slogan of an economic, technological, and scientific boycott of Iraq and worked to make Europe and Japan do the same...³³

Whether or not Saddam believed his own rhetoric in this case, it is interesting to note his linkage of the situation to a wider historical narrative—and the use of this argument to claim sympathy and legitimacy from society and the region as the war entered its sixth week. Oil, not surprisingly, also was important in Saddam's mind throughout and after the war. He would later claim that oil was at the core of the 1991 war, and specifically that the conflict had been part of an attempt by the US to deprive the Arabs of a fair price for their oil.³⁴ This reflected a popular view at the time on the Arab street that the Western military response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was a disproportionate one, and that Saddam had become too ambitious for Western tastes: the occupation of Kuwait roughly doubled the oil reserves controlled by Saddam Hussein—giving him about 20 percent of the world's proven oil reserves—plus Kuwaiti assets abroad, especially in the West and conservatively worth US\$130 billion at the time, would have fallen under his control had they not been frozen by the international community.³⁵

The economic sanctions that were retained against Iraq from the beginning of the 1990 crisis through to Saddam's removal in 2003 were further fuel to Saddam's sometimes conspiracist rhetoric. The duration and severity of the sanctions against Iraq—even if they were softened somewhat after 1996 due to humanitarian concerns—was widely criticized by Saddam, others in the Middle East, and many Western observers, both for their impact on ordinary Iraqis and for the double standard of applying sanctions to Iraq but not Israel and some other states.³⁶ That said, the Iraqi regime arguably played up the impacts of the sanctions,³⁷ including in a conspiracist context. The 2003 US-led war against Iraq, not surprisingly, also proved a source of conspiracy theories, many of which continue to be believed by Iraqis and others, and the manner of Saddam's language suggests that he believed much of the conspiracist rhetoric that he used in 2002 and 2003. His language at the

time was rich in conspiracism, as it had been at previous times when the regime faced external threats, as against Iran in the 1980s and against the US in 1991 and smaller crises in 1993 and 1998. In a public broadcast at the start of hostilities in 2003 Saddam used almost the same language as he had in the 1990-91 conflict, arguing that “[George W. Bush] carried out his criminal act—with those who cooperated with him—and...added with his accomplices to the series of shameless crimes against Iraq...,” after which he called on the populace to defend Iraq “[f]or your sake, the sake of our glorious nation, the sake of the banners of jihad and its religion, precious values....”³⁸ Saddam’s language and linguistic codes, including both Arabism and Islamic symbolism but also a conspiracist explanatory underpinning, were framed in this way so as to mount a positive call to the various Iraqi groups and sects to join in mounting opposition to the conspiracy being alleged by Saddam.

In light of both the history of modern Iraq, and the paranoid nature of Saddam’s regime, it should not be a surprise that Saddam sometimes would narrate conspiracy theories that he believed to be true. Equally, however, much of his conspiracist discourse was adopted out of political utility and expediency—as much of his other rhetoric was—rather than as an explanation that he genuinely believed. The explanations for Saddam’s conspiracist language therefore can broadly be grouped into two categories of elucidation: the first is conspiracy theories genuinely believed and narrated by Saddam, and the second is conspiracism as various forms of propaganda. Within this second explanation, there are three dynamics worth noting, specifically conspiracism as support-building for regime maintenance, conspiracism as state “crowding out” of social discourse, and conspiracism as inverse-relevance logic in state-society communication.

Explaining Saddam’s Conspiracism

The first reason for the use of conspiracy theories by Saddam—that they were elucidated because they were genuinely believed—is perhaps the most obvious explanation, but it is also the most difficult to incontrovertibly prove from speeches and media sources. At least some of Saddam’s conspiracist discourse, however, is likely to have been truly believed by him. It is a fact that conspiracies, plots and other crafty strategic and tactical behavior occurs as an actuality of political competition in all political systems and in related acts of political agency. For actors engaging in political conduct, whether in formal politics specifically or in political activity in the broadest sense of the term, it is quite normal, and certainly not a case of delusion, paranoia or conspiracism, to assume that real or potential foes are Machiavellian in their behavior,³⁹ to seek to pre-empt them in that technique, and to act as though there are very real and genuine threats from others.⁴⁰ The Middle East in modern times has been the arena for a range of real or likely conspiracies, and has suffered

from a number of historical grievances. The region was a victim of colonialism under the Ottomans and then European powers, and then in the post-independence period was a battleground of major power rivalry. Real conspiracies occurred in the region over this period, whether involving external powers or other actors instead. Conspiracists, including Saddam, are influenced in their thinking by this history, and the impact of history has the effects of facilitating, popularizing, and legitimizing conspiracies as political explanations among societal groups.

Shaping and influencing the views of Saddam and Iraqis have been several particular historical dynamics. One of the most obvious is Iraq's own experience under European colonization: not only the reality and perception of Iraqi humiliation from the subjugation and suzerainty of the British in particular, but also the impacts from the colonial and nominally-post-independence periods on later Iraqi politics. The colonial experience impacted on the meaning of Iraq as a state, arguably commencing a process of state building,⁴¹ and specifically, created Sunni dominance over other groups, helped foster some of the Ba'athist conflict with communists in the 1950s and 1960s, and contributed to the construction and shaping of other oppositional groups and forces.⁴² The ways in which such historical dynamics later informed the thinking of minority Sunni elites, especially given the fierce authoritarianism of Iraqi politics under Saddam, should be obvious. That said, other events related to colonial dynamics are important as well. The overthrow of Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadeq in neighboring Iran in 1953 was not popular in Iraq: despite the long animosity between the Persian and Arab worlds, the reinstatement of the Shah after the overthrow of Mossadeq was seen as having parallels in the earlier British creation of an Iraqi monarchy. The Iraqi monarchy never played a national and societal consolidation role,⁴³ and was widely unpopular; something that Saddam played on in his rhetoric on "imperialism" old and new, and in reference to Iraqi uprisings against the British,⁴⁴ even if his regime was ultimately a "presidential monarchy" in its nature.⁴⁵

As mentioned, the political threats faced or imagined by Saddam were significant in part because his regime was a minority one, controlled by the Sunni Arab minority (though other groups were given more social and economic opportunities than in some other states) and with the elite relationship with society strained by social fragmentation and mistrust. However there is another aspect to this dynamic. While autocratic leaders such as Saddam can be, or perceived themselves to be, a target of conspiracy theories from the societies over which they rule, they can also figure in a conspiracy discourse about the roles of external parties or other actors in society. The rule of Saddam Hussein highlights this dynamic, where while Iraqis developed plenty of conspiracy theories with Saddam himself as the central nefarious conspirator, in many others it was he who was conspired against, wittingly or unwittingly. Both types of conspiracy theories saw the Iraqi people as the victim.

An example of a popular conspiracy theory along these lines is one that asserts that Saddam was created and maintained as leader of Iraq by the US.⁴⁶ This is a version of the perception, common not just in Iraq but in other Middle Eastern states, that external powers intervened in Iraq to deliberately create a minority government. In the case of this particular conspiracy theory, the idea is expanded to include the foreign power sustaining the government. Such theories are, of course, based in part on suspicion towards outside powers, but they derive authority also from the lack of legitimacy enjoyed by the regime and its leader. In the case of Saddam, therefore, they also symbolize a lack of trust in or support for the president and suspicion about his motives,⁴⁷ as well as perhaps a sense of bewilderment at the longevity of his repressive and unpopular rule. In turn, such a mood would have made Saddam feel further isolated from elements of society, and further at risk from oppositional forces.

The other sources of conspiracism in Saddam's Iraq were not the result of it deriving from his own beliefs, but from him adopting it as a deliberate political tool. Saddam routinely used conspiracism as a form of propaganda, and both propaganda and the conspiracism sometimes found within it were an instrument of his political rule. This is acknowledged by Bengio, Long, Makiya and others. Bengio discusses not propaganda per se but related linguistic tools such as slogans and rhetoric, finding them to be part of the regime's reiteration of its ideology,⁴⁸ and this in turn a justification for its violence⁴⁹ and its authoritarianism⁵⁰ (she uses the term "totalitarianism"⁵¹). Arguably she focuses excessively on the more conventional approaches to the regime's rhetoric, arguing that political language under Saddam shifted to part of a totalization of discourse, towards regime maintenance and the suppression of the population, but not investigating in any detail the sources of more unusual regime dialogue such as conspiracism. Long is of a similar style in attributing propagandistic language to the broader content of Ba'athist ideology and the need for regime renewal and reinvention in the face of external military threats such as the 1990-91 Gulf War. He is fairly conventional in his interpretation of language as a tool of regime maintenance, but where he cites material of both conspiracist and propagandist natures, it is easy enough to attribute to him the plausible argument that conspiracism, as a form of propaganda and an idiom with "potency," suited the regime's survival tactics and was a way of it seeking advantage at a time of immense pressure.⁵²

The additional element to this in the Iraqi case arguably is the need for Saddam's regime to promote among Iraqis a single, nation-state nationalism—a mononationalism—to overcome the strength of local, sectarian and ethnic identities. This is, of course, why Saddam, seemingly paradoxically, promoted Iraqi nationalism despite the Ba'athist ideology of pan-Arabism, and why others such as the Syrian regime, also a minority Ba'athist government, has done likewise. In the case of Iraq,

however, also important were the specific threats faced by the regime, including three major wars and the economic sanctions after 1990. Mobilizing mass support, or at least mass tolerance of the regime, involved deflecting blame for Iraqis' situation away from Saddam and his elite and toward external powers, and thus a conspiracy theory is one of the most useful rhetorical tools for harvesting popular support in times of conflict or external threat. A conspiracy theory offers an element of plausibility, whether because of Iraq's history or the specific claims of hypocrisy being leveled by the regime, it is difficult or impossible to disprove, and it has at least a veneer of internal cohesion and logical consistency. It also can use the power of inference to make assertions in the absence of absolute proof.⁵³ This attempt to bind societal forces together and make them compliant with the leader is a common tactic of leaderships of opaque, neopatrimonial systems such as was Saddam's.⁵⁴

The idea of conspiracism as propaganda and as a legitimacy-building tactic are solid ones, yet too great a focus on the conventional political dynamics of Ba'athist legitimization, autocratic lies and self-justifications, and even the possible anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism behind Saddam and his regime risks masking some of the more sophisticated strategies that can be attached to conspiracism as a linguistic tool of authoritarian regimes. To be sure, the conventional explanations have their validity, but conspiracism is important as well.

One strategy is that conspiracism can act as a way for the state to "crowd out" other discourses in society, including counter-explanations to its own, in effect coming to monopolize public space and public discourse. Lisa Wedeen has made this argument well in the case of Syria,⁵⁵ but it applies with equal potency to Saddam's Iraq. This crowding out may be as crude as the state seeking to monopolize the public space available for the analysis of events and the debate about ideas, or in a more subtle guise, it may have a crowding-out effect of building a dominant or orthodox state narrative in the public arena. The state's authority is enhanced by the ubiquity of its narratives, in other words. If a state discourse becomes the orthodox one, then alternative ideas or theories are more easily derided as ramblings, or as insufficiently constructed, or even as themselves constituting a plot or counter-conspiracy. Ironic as it may seem, that a counter-narrative to a state's conspiracy theory could itself be labeled a conspiracy theory, this in fact is a common tactic of conspiracists, with counter-arguments used to reinforce the logic of the original conspiracy theory. Crudely, the line of argument is along the line that: if you don't believe our explanation, then either you are part of a plot or, if not, the plotters have convinced you of their lies.

Another idea related to this is the use of state conspiracist narratives to disorientate people. As noted earlier, Makiya has made an argument along these lines when talking about how Iraqis under Saddam were made both cynical and gullible. According to this argument, by disorientating people, state conspiracism is able to reduce their

capacity for independent action counter to that desired by the state.⁵⁶ Conspiracist rhetoric that omits specific details, for example, leaves it to the imagination of the reader or listener to decide what the exact details were of an event.⁵⁷ Better still if people cannot agree in their interpretations of such events. Similarly, partial facts and half-truths serve the same purpose: a conspiracy theory is even easier to concoct where the details are only selectively or partially presented, making the construction of any convincing counter-argument very difficult. There are multiple examples of this from the Arab world, and Saddam's rhetoric discussed earlier and containing deceptive or ambiguous factual foundations arguably falls into this category. Such language has a reinforcing effect at two separate levels: one is where state misinformation creates an environment in which people falsely repeat what they have been told, either because they believe it or, more likely, as an expression of allegiance with the state. The other is where people respond by creating and articulating their own conspiracy theories or other such counter-factual discourses as a response to those presented by the state. The former serves the state well, in creating a veneer of submission or compliance. The latter may seem to be a challenge to the state, but in fact need not always be. If the state narrative is dominant, or if there are so many different discourses so as to confuse people, or if counter-narratives are weak in logic because of problems in their factual basis (even if the state's conspiracism is weak too), then the regime has little to fear. Its position remains strong, or at least not under serious challenge, which is, after all, the main goal behind the regime's rhetoric, both conspiracist and otherwise.

A final style of state conspiracism, related to its role as symbolism but also separate enough to warrant specific attention, is its role as a form of inverse-relevance rhetoric. For example, during periods of political or economic change a state will almost invariably retain the rhetoric of earlier state ideologies, often language for a mass audience, where it reflects the view of the street and where the masses constitute a traditional base of support for the regime. Yet as well, the regime will continue with earlier rhetoric charging that conspiracies exist against these ideologies, even as the state is transforming or shifting away from them. This oratorical style acts as a way of distracting attention from the regime as the agent or source of change: in short, it serves as a way of imagining that nothing is changing and that the regime is trying to defend the status quo, when in fact, this is not the case. The use of such rhetoric has been common in cases where an authoritarian, post-populist⁵⁸ state such as Saddam's Iraq sought to implement economic reform programs on a less-than-enthusiastic populace. This language often is accompanied by the state offering frightening scenarios of what might happen if other actors were allowed too close to decision-making processes, or if the regime were not present to protect society from the external forces pushing for change. When combined with repression and cooptation of those who might challenge such rhetoric, it is quite

effective as a mechanism of promoting popular quietism or acquiescence. When believed by the population, this sort of inverse-relevance misinformation shields the state and its elite, while if not believed, it is still useful as a way for people to justify to themselves their conformity with the state⁵⁹ and to avoid being seen as a conspiratorial or other threat by the regime.

More bluntly, some of the physical symbolism of Saddam's Iraq served a similar counter-factual or counter-relevance role. Counter-factual "victories" were constructed to neutralize "conspiracies" and criticisms of past failures by a supposedly all-powerful regime.⁶⁰ Saddam presenting his 1991 military defeat as a victory is a clear example of this, when upon withdrawing his forces from Kuwait he said: "Shout for victory, O brothers; shout for your victory and the victory of all honourable people, O Iraqis. You have fought thirty countries...."⁶¹ The use of religious terminology by a secular leader—as Long notes, for example, with speeches during the war that were peppered with Quranic lines⁶²—reinforces the counter-factual basis of this style of rhetoric. It also can be argued that these "victories" are represented or implied physically as well as being stated verbally, for example in the portrayals of Saddam in public art. The adornment of the president in military dress in posters is an obvious case in point, with the meaning of martial prowess laid out sharply.⁶³ Recall that military skill is an important component (albeit one of many) of successful neopatrimonial rule.⁶⁴ This is little different to the ways in which political rule and authority was framed and explained to the Iraqi public by Saddam's regime. As Bengio notes, the absence of democracy was explained by framing it as a hypocritical American construct and positioning that against a truer and more humane form of paternalistic rule under Saddam. Bengio cites an article saying "Let them [the Americans] enjoy their democracy...but we are content to have...a Muslim seeker of justice, Saddam Hussein...."⁶⁵ While this type of language constitutes rhetoric or at most propaganda rather than conspiracism, when it strays into the realm of myth-making⁶⁶ and especially when it is framed in a polarizing or othering style, it serves the same purpose.

Moreover, images of Saddam dressed in traditional Kurdish clothing, or praying at Mecca, or riding a white horse with all the Shi'a symbolism attached to such an image, all served not only to make him ubiquitous and to appeal to a variety of Iraqis, but also to create an artificial image of his ideology and the practicalities of his rule. This type of imagery enhances the cult of personality that dominated politics in Iraq, and made conspiracism an easy next step, since conspiracism is simply an extension of this: it is artificial realities framed and narrated by the state, typically for the same purposes as physical imagery such as public art. When this imagery is superimposed over political language such as conspiracism, its purpose in supporting these constructed, artificial images of the state and especially the leader are clear. Saddam directly implied as much, once stating that there is a "need

of the human being to look beyond what lies between his hands, or to the 'spirit' of what is visible... It explains why the human being sometimes turns his stone idols into 'spirits.'"⁶⁷

The Importance of Conspiracism: Saddam and After

The place of conspiracist language in Saddam's Iraq is important, most obviously for its role in shaping his perspectives and his conduct, but also for the role it played in making other conspiracism more common or acceptable, both among the Iraqi population and elsewhere in the region. While it is now a number of years since Saddam's removal from power, the impacts of his rule remain important in shaping and influencing political dynamics in contemporary Iraq.

The 2003 war itself spurred its own unique conspiracy theories, which to a large extent derived from the conspiratorial environment in Iraq created by Saddam's rule. For example, soon after the fall of Saddam's regime it was argued that he and his regime had made a secret deal with the US to lose the war (and, some argue, that he had been put into power in the first place by Washington).⁶⁸ Other conspiracy theories were of a similar nature: "Much of Iraq's military hardware was destroyed out of sight of television cameras, and Arab television stations have shown little footage of the wreckage, fuelling the speculation in many Arab minds that a deal was struck."⁶⁹ Still other conspiracy theories around the time claimed that the US knew where Saddam was hiding during 2003 but did not want to kill him,⁷⁰ and that the destruction of Saddam's statue in Paradise Square in Baghdad on April 9, 2003 had been staged by the US.⁷¹ Later conspiracy theories in the years following 2003 were similar in their drama, if different in what they were seeking to explain. The widespread claim that the US was and is conspiring against Iraqi Sunnis,⁷² or the more extreme claim that Saddam was not executed on December 30, 2006 but that a "double" took his place,⁷³ are examples of more recent conspiracy theories proposed by Iraqis.

Moreover, the Iraqi governments since Saddam's and many of the political elite engaged with it have had a conspiracist inclination. This is for a few reasons, most of which also explain conspiracism originating in recent years from social groups and forces as well. One, not surprisingly, is the intrigue and murkiness of Iraqi politics, and the complex and violent environment in which the new, disjointed Iraqi leadership has had to operate. Another is the political characteristics that many of those who are now Iraq's political elite developed by operating in secrecy against Saddam or under threat from his *mukhabarat*: they by necessity had to be, and got used to being, secretive and paranoid, goes the argument.⁷⁴ Finally, just as historical events have shaped conspiracist thinking in the Arab world, so too have new, current political fears. In the case of the Iraqi interim and transitional governments, there

were genuine inter-sectarian and even intra-sectarian fears driving elite thinking and concern, just as al-Maliki's government, also, at times perceived US links with Sunni tribal elements in a conspiracist light, to take just one example.⁷⁵ Iraqi newspapers and electronic media are no longer under the control of the Iraqi government,⁷⁶ but they, too, still adopt some conspiracist language at times, perhaps due to pressure from their reliance on government advertising.⁷⁷ Media conspiracism also may partly stem from anti-American sentiment and reflect grievances towards the US among their readers,⁷⁸ and partly may echo new sectarian perspectives within Iraq and the fears that various sects and ethnic groups hold about the others.⁷⁹ That such views are more likely to emerge in a political environment of weak states and fragmented politics,⁸⁰ where there is lacking a cohesive and unifying political ideology to bind society, link it to the state, and promote optimism, is important, not only as a sign of where such conspiracy theories came from during Saddam's rule, but as an indicator that, in the current environment in Iraq, conspiracism is likely to remain popular.

There are also regional impacts to Saddam's conspiracism, even if difficult to prove as a causal relationship. The presentation of the 1990-91 Gulf War as a deliberate Western plot against Iraq is, according to some views, supported by the meeting between Saddam and the US ambassador on July 25, 1990, as discussed earlier. Some conspiracists argue that her statement to Saddam that the US had "no opinion"⁸¹ on Iraqi border grievances towards Kuwait was an implied US approval to invade Kuwait, which then gave Washington a reason to go to war with Iraq and rein it in as a regional power.⁸² By narrating such a perspective, conspiracy theorists find new ways of reviving old grievances; in this case, that of artificial, foreign-imposed borders in the region and post-colonial interventionism by powers such as the US. The 2003 war and the removal of Saddam, given that it was a type of conspiracy⁸³ to remove Saddam from power and was an unpopular war in the Middle East and elsewhere, has had the effect of contributing to conspiracist explanations in other countries of the region. As an example, in mid- and late-2003, there was a sense that the war had gone smoothly and quickly for Washington and that the US might attack Syria shortly after, something that the Syrian media—essentially a voice for the Syrian Ba'athist regime—portrayed not just as US hostility but as Israeli scheming as well. One example worth quoting from the state-run *Tishrin* newspaper: "It is very clear that after Iraq, Israel is now playing all its cards to foment tension in the region.... Israel is not only exploiting the war on Iraq, but is also trying to carry out its plans of aggression against more than just one Arab and Islamic country [read: Syria]."⁸⁴ Not only did Saddam promote and spur conspiracy theories, then, but as arguably a victim of one, added to the volume of them circulating in the Middle East.

While Saddam and his pattern of rule set the tone for some of the conspiracism that currently flourishes in Iraq, and elsewhere in the region too, by no means can the impacts of his regime account for all of this discourse. It is but one source of a

widespread element of political language in the Middle East. However Saddam's roles in fostering societal and sectarian tensions, promoting suspicion towards the US, and enhancing the acceptability of a conspiracist tone in leadership language in Iraq cannot be ignored. Leaders since Saddam may have proven less forthright and less habitual in their use of conspiracy theories, but some of their language from time to time has been of a conspiracist nature, and certainly social groups and forces have regularly adopted both genuinely-held conspiracist explanations and expedient conspiracist misrepresentations for political purposes. Such a characteristic of post-Saddam Iraq is just as interesting, and arguably just as important, as it was during Saddam's long and eventful rule in Iraq.

Notes

1. One example is the excellent work by Efraim Karsh and Inari Rautsi, *Saddam Hussein: A Political Biography* (New York: The Free Press, 1991).
2. This is a common approach by political scientists; see as a few examples Amatzia Baram, "The Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait: Decision-making in Baghdad," in Amatzia Baram and Barry Rubin, eds., *Iraq's Road to War* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993); John Bulloch and Harvey Morris, *Saddam's War: The Origins of the Conflict and the International Response* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991); and Committee Against Repression and for Democratic Rights in Iraq (CARDRI), *Saddam's Iraq: Revolution or Reaction?* (London: Zed Books, 1989).
3. For example Jeffrey Record, *Hollow Victory: A Contrary View of the Gulf War* (McLean, VA: Brassey's Inc., 1993). Some other sources on Saddam as a "desperate gambler" or as a victim of regional or neoimperialist circumstance are to be found in Robert Springborg, "Origins of the Gulf Crisis," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 44:3 (December 1990), 221-235.
4. Three in particular, which are drawn on extensively in this article, are Samir al-Khalil (pseudonym for Kanan Makiya), *Republic of Fear: Saddam's Iraq* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989); Ofra Bengio, *Saddam's Word: Political Discourse in Iraq* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); and Jerry M. Long, *Saddam's War of Words: Politics, Religion, and the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004).
5. Svetlana Boym, "Conspiracy Theories and Literary Ethics: Umberto Eco, Danila Kiš and *The Protocols of Zion*," *Comparative Literature* 51:2 (Spring 1999), 97.
6. Shane Miller, "Conspiracy Theories: Public Arguments as Coded Social Critiques. A Rhetorical Analysis of the TWA Flight 800 Conspiracy Theories," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 39:1 (Summer 2002), 41.
7. *Ibid.*, 41.
8. See Frank P. Mintz, *The Liberty Lobby and the American Right: Race, Conspiracy, and Culture* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1985).
9. Daniel Pipes, *Conspiracy: How the Paranoid Style Flourishes and Where It Comes From* (New York: Free Press, 1997). Pipes also discusses the term briefly in his book *The Hidden Hand: Middle East Fears of Conspiracy* (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), 5, 27.
10. On political paranoia see Robert S. Robins and Jerrold M. Post, *Political Paranoia: The Psychopolitics of Hatred* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 3-4.
11. The term is Timothy Melley's; see his book *Empire of Conspiracy: The Culture of Paranoia in Postwar America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 7-16.
12. David C. Schwartz, *Political Alienation and Political Behaviour* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1973), 3.

13. This argument has been made in the case of the Soviet Union; see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times. Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), especially 21-24.
14. Bengio, *Saddam's Word*.
15. *Ibid.*, 9.
16. *Ibid.*, 10.
17. Long, *Saddam's War of Words*.
18. *Ibid.*, 5.
19. See as examples US News and World Report, *Triumph Without Victory: The History of the Persian Gulf War* (New York: Times Books, 1992), 20-22, 132-133; al-Khalil, *Republic of Fear*, 17-18, 55-58, 100-101; and Baram, "The Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait," 11-12.
20. Long, *Saddam's War of Words*, 20, 30.
21. *Ibid.* Examples include Long's discussion of Saddam's use of history (19, 21, 29) and populist rhetoric that often are linked to conspiracy theories (26-27, 165) to justify his positions.
22. Al-Khalil, *Republic of Fear*, 110-117 and especially 115-116.
23. Samir al-Khalil (pseudonym for Kanan Makiya), *The Monument: Art, Vulgarly and Responsibility in Iraq* (London: André Deutsch, 1991).
24. Bulloch and Morris, *Saddam's War*.
25. On the US-Iraqi relationship in the second half of the 1980s, see some of the issues discussed in Michael A. Palmer, *Guardians of the Gulf: A History of America's Expanding Role in the Persian Gulf, 1833-1992* (New York: The Free Press, 1992), 112-149.
26. Bulloch and Morris, *Saddam's War*, 100-101.
27. *Ibid.*, 13 and 22; and Dilip Hiro, *From Desert Shield to Desert Storm: The Second Gulf War* (London: Paladin, 1992), 83-84. Saddam was almost certainly right about Kuwait seeking low oil prices. Suppression of oil prices makes sense given the downstream investments Kuwait had made and its emphasis on profitability along the stages of vertical integration—on this see Hiro, *From Desert Shield to Desert Storm*, 113. Iraq, in contrast, earned most of its income from rents at the extraction stage, and so preferred to maximize the crude oil price.
28. See Long, *Saddam's War of Words*, 20.
29. Bulloch and Morris, *Saddam's War*, 143.
30. See *ibid.*, 8 and 24, and Long, *Saddam's War of Words*, 10-11 and 190.
31. On this point, there are examples and a brief discussion in Gerald Butt, *A Rock and a Hard Place: Origins of Arab-Western Conflict in the Middle East* (London: HarperCollins, 1994), 43-44.
32. Saddam Hussein, speech on Baghdad television, August 10, 1990, reprinted in *The New York Times*, August 11, 1990, quoted in Long, *Saddam's War of Words*, 30.
33. Saddam Hussein, speech on Baghdad radio, February 21, 1991, reprinted in Ian Bickerton and Michael Pearson et al., *43 Days: The Gulf War* (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1991), 233.
34. Joe Barnes and Amy Myers Jaffe, "The Persian Gulf and the Geopolitics of Oil," *Survival* 48:1 (Spring 2006), 148. For a discussion of the oil dimension of the 1990-91 Gulf crisis, see Ken Matthews, *The Gulf Conflict and International Relations* (London: Routledge, 1993), 191-204.
35. On these points see Hiro, *From Desert Shield to Desert Storm*, 113.
36. See as one example Geoff Simons, *The Scourging of Iraq: Sanctions, Law and Natural Justice* (London: Macmillan, 1998), and on the growth of opposition to the sanctions, including in the US, Jane Adas, "Iraq Sanctions Challenge," *The Washington Report on Middle Eastern Affairs* XVII:4 (June 1998), 113.
37. Robert Fisk, *The Great War for Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East* (London: The Fourth Estate, 2005), 866-868.
38. The text of Saddam's public broadcast is available online in "Husseins TV Ansprache, ausgestrahlt am 20. März, 2003" ("Hussein's TV Speech, Broadcast on 20 March 2003"), *Rhetorik.ch*, n.p., www.rhetorik.ch/Aktuell/husseinkriegsrede/hussein.html (accessed September 15, 2007).
39. Pipes, *The Hidden Hand*, 325.

40. Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 15, quoted in *ibid.*, 325.
41. Important here, according to Gareth Stansfield, is that however "artificial" many people may see the nation-state of Iraq as being, a century of experience as a state invariably shaped and transitioned Iraqi identity and nationalism—there was, as Stansfield notes, a strong Iraqi nationalism under Saddam that drew in part from the period of British control, and which continues to the present time, if somewhat undermined by events since 2003. See Gareth Stansfield, *Iraq: People, History, Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2007), especially 26–30, 33–36.
42. These arguments are presented and elucidated in Eric Davis and Nicolas Gavrielides, "Statecraft, Historical Memory, and Popular Culture in Iraq and Kuwait," in Eric Davis and Nicolas Gavrielides, eds., *Statecraft in the Middle East: Oil, Historical Memory, and Popular Culture* (Miami: Florida International University Press, 1991), 116–148.
43. Hanna Batatu, "Of the Diversity of Iraqis, the Incohesiveness of their Society, and their Progress in the Monarchic Period towards a Consolidated Political Structure," in Albert Hourani, Philip S. Khoury and Mary C. Wilson, eds., *The Modern Middle East: A Reader* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 518.
44. Bengio, *Saddam's Word*, 168–169.
45. Lisa Anderson, "Absolutism and the Resilience of Monarchy in the Middle East," *Political Science Quarterly* 106:1 (Spring 1991), 11.
46. Mark Juergensmeyer, "Dateline Baghdad: The Saddam Conspiracy Theory," *The Globalist*, September 29, 2004, n.p. www.theglobalist.com/DBWeb/StoryId.aspx?StoryId=4181 (accessed July 20, 2007).
47. This includes external, regional suspicion about Saddam's motives as well, but it is applicable to conspiracy theories from within Iraq just as equally. See for example the short discussion of this in the case of the 1990–91 Gulf War in Richard H. Curtiss, "Who Caused the War in the Gulf? Five Versions of History," *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* IX:10 (March 1991), 10–11.
48. Bengio, *Saddam's Word*, 49.
49. *Ibid.*, 51–53.
50. *Ibid.*, 57–68.
51. The term "totalitarianism" has been avoided here because it implies a regime penetration of virtually *all* aspects of ordinary life. In fact, in Saddam's Iraq there remained some areas of freedom and state non-intervention, for example in private conversation among close-knit groups and in many of the dealings of the private sector. While "authoritarianism" does not quite do justice to the degree of control exerted over Iraqis by Saddam's state and its apparatus, it is for these reasons preferable to "totalitarianism."
52. Long, *Saddam's War of Words*, 82.
53. Marilyn J. Young and Michael K. Launer, *Flights of Fancy, Flights of Doom: KAL007 and Soviet-American Rhetoric* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1988), 223–224.
54. This is not a controversial claim to make, however for further discussion of the point see James A. Bill and Robert Springborg, *Politics in the Middle East*, 3rd ed. (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman/Little, Brown, 1990), in particular 152–176.
55. Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 42.
56. *Ibid.*, 44–45.
57. *Ibid.*, 44.
58. The term "post-populist" is Raymond Hinnebusch's in reference to Hafiz al-Asad's Syria, but applies to Saddam's regime as well. On it see his book *Authoritarian Power and State Formation in Ba'thist Syria* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1990). I intend the term here to mean a regime that has moved away from its traditional bases of support, or they from it, such as trade unions and urban working classes, the rural peasantry, and in some cases intellectuals.
59. Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination*, 41.
60. *Ibid.*, 42.

61. Saddam Hussein, speech on Baghdad radio, February 26, 1991, reprinted in Bickerton and Pearson et al., *43 Days*, 233.
62. Long, *Saddam's War of Words*, 154.
63. Al-Khalil makes this point about public art in the context of war (in this case, the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War), in al-Khalil, *The Monument*, 10-18.
64. Bill and Springborg, *Politics in the Middle East*, 170-173.
65. From an article in *al-Qudsiyya*, January 21, 1992, cited in Bengio, *Saddam's Word*, 69.
66. As Bengio notes; see *Saddam's Word*, 77-79.
67. From an interview quoted in Amir Iskander, *Saddam Husain: Munadhilan wa Mufakiran wa Insanan* (Paris: Hachette, 1980), 320, cited in al-Khalil, *The Monument*, 33.
68. Mark Kagan, "After Iraq: Humiliations and Conspiracy Theories," *Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy* 31:5 (May 2003), 16.
69. Paul Taylor, "Baghdad's Easy Fall Fuels Arab Conspiracy Theories," *Reuters*, April 11, 2003, n.p., copy available at www.bulatlat.com/news/3-11/3-11-readertaylor.html (accessed April 13, 2007).
70. See Karin Hörner, "A Cultural Sense of Conspiracies?," paper prepared for the conference: Orientalism and Conspiracy: Workshop in Honour of Sadik al-Azm, at the Asia-Africa-Institute, University of Hamburg, Germany, June 24, 2005.
71. Paul Wood, "The Day Saddam's Statue Fell," *BBC News*, April 9, 2004, n.p. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3611869.stm (accessed April 13, 2007).
72. "Supporting Iraq's Sunni Arabs is National, Islamic Responsibility," *Al Quds Al Arabi*, February 9, 2007.
73. "Egypt: Saddam Conspiracy Proves a Bestseller," *adnkronosinternational*, n.p. www.adnki.com/index_2Level_English.php?cat=Politics&loid=8.0.384087301&par=0# (accessed April 13, 2007).
74. Sudarsan Raghavan, "Maliki's Impact Blunted by Own Party's Fears," *The Washington Post*, August 3, 2007.
75. *Ibid.*
76. Lionel Beehner, "Backgrounder: Iraq's Press: A Status Report," *Council on Foreign Relations*, May 2, 2006, n.p. www.cfr.org/publication/10574/#4 (accessed September 11, 2007).
77. *Ibid.*
78. Steven Stalinsky, "Middle East Conspiracy Theories," *The New York Sun*, September 11, 2007.
79. See the variety of Iraqi press affiliations noted in, for example "The New Iraqi Press—2003," *al-bab.com*, n.p. www.al-bab.com/arab/countries/iraq/press2003.htm (accessed September 11, 2007) and "World Newspapers and Magazines: Iraq," *Worldpress.org*, n.p. www.worldpress.org/newspapers/MIDEAST/Iraq.cfm (accessed September 11, 2007).
80. On the political and social changes in Iraq under Saddam, especially in the 1990s, see Adeed Dawisha, "'Identity' and Political Survival in Saddam's Iraq," *The Middle East Journal* 53:4 (Autumn 1999), 553-567.
81. Matthews, *The Gulf Conflict and International Relations*, 47.
82. Butt, *A Rock and a Hard Place*, 43-44.
83. Meant here not as a "conspiracy theory" or form of "conspiracism" but as a calculated agreement among external parties to create the circumstances that would justify a military invasion of Iraq and the removal of Saddam Hussein from power.
84. From *Tishrin*, n.d., n.p., quoted in "Arab Press Worried about Syria," *BBC Monitoring*, April 15, 2003. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2948989.stm (accessed September 12, 2007).