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The Reciprocal Connection Between Ba'athist War Monuments and Iraqi Collective Identity

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Cultures of Dissent Resistance, Revolt and Revolution in the Middle East

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Introduction

With their relative recent emergence in theoretical approaches, the neologisms 'collective memory' and 'collective identity' have proven to be key concepts, employed through various fields of literature. However, Gillis noted the inconsistent use of both concepts due to their subjective nature and defined both notions by building on Anderson's highly influential work of *Imagined Communities*, who argues that a nation is socially constructed and as an imagined political community (3-4). Indeed, Gillis defines identity and memory as politically and socially constructed and marks its fluidity by its continuous reconstruction (ibid.) When looking at the small field of literature analysing collective identity in Iraq, most of it has focused the dictatorial demeanour of Saddam Hussein and his political construct of a collective identity or rendered an Iraqi collective identity impracticable due to its 'inherent' sectarian divides (e.g. Baram; Bengio; Dawisha). However, given the constructivist definition of a reciprocal nature, collective identity is not only politically constructed but also socially. This arises questions of how the civic constructed element of collective identity in Iraq is carried out and is positioned in relation to the enforced political construct.

Though monuments and buildings may be material objects, they serve as spatial coordinates of identity through evoking particular types of meanings (Osborne 6). Even more so, according to Roy, "monuments aim to encapsulate a constructed collective memory." (58) In the 1980s, Iraq and specifically Baghdad experienced an architectural burst under the Ba'ath Party and its newly founded president, Saddam. Among many other constructions, the two monuments Victory Arch and Martyr's Memorial were built, both in commemoration of the Iran-Iraq war that was waged during that time. However, the nature of commemoration differs as the former was built to celebrate the triumph of the war whilst the latter mourns the martyrs of the war. In addition, similarly to the collective identity of Iraq, the Victory Arch, which has been emphasised to convey Saddam's political construction, has been studied more often than the Martyr's Memorial. It is exactly this seemingly opposite pair of monuments that represent the intricate balance of the construction of collective identity. By deconstructing and analysing the monuments' symbolisms, this thesis argues that to understand the complexity of Iraqi collective identity, not only a state authorised triumphalist rhetoric of nationalism should be taken into account, but also the complex ways in which they entangle with more intimate and affective registers of memory and social imaginaries. A careful analysis of these two war monuments in Baghdad also shows that the patriotic narrative of victory is only half the story.

The analysis will be conducted in an interdisciplinary fashion of collective identity and war commemoration studies combined with political and affective realms.
This will be structured in three chapters to assert the thesis stated above. Initially, Iraq's historical and political context of the monuments be analysed in the first chapter to uncover recurrent themes in the monuments as well as the Iran-Iraq war. Afterwards, the chapter will introduce both monuments shortly before discussing their symbolism in the ensuing chapters. The subsequent chapters are divided in themes, deliberately chosen to convey the seemingly opposing political and social bearings in the construction of collective identity and the monuments themselves. Triumphalism is the theme selected for the second chapter to relay the authorised victorious rhetoric of nationalism employed by the Ba'athist state. Following this, the second section will analyse the recurrent symbolism of this theme in the monuments, before and after the Ba'athist regime. The final chapter carries the social and affective bearings of the more intimate production of collective identity and is designated the theme of mourning. The second part will scrutinise the monuments to detect the representations of this theme. The conclusion will then recapitulate the findings of this thesis.

1. Iraq's Historical and Political Context of the Monuments During the Iran-Iraq War

Whilst the analysis of the monuments and their surrounding themes' impact on the collective identity and memory of Iraq is at the core of this thesis, the political and historical contexts are an integral part in enhancing this analysis. In fact, studying the historical and political context is also a means to uncover and recognise recurrent themes in the design choices for the monuments. In addition to analysing semiotic choices in monuments, Aboushnnouga and Machin argue that the social circumstances that lie behind the monument are crucial to understand how monuments were shaped and formed by social and political conditions and to therefore avoid a disconnected analysis (77; 100). In other words, in order to understand the context and importance of the Martyr's Memorial and the Victory Arch monuments and what they denote, we must first delve into Iraq's historical and political background to lay the groundwork for further analysis of the themes and monuments. This chapter strives to this by firstly looking into the historical context of the Iran-Iraq war and Saddam's Ba'athist rule by (1) initially looking at the Ba'athist regime and the Iran-Iraq war; (2) then looking into how Iraq's collective identity during the Iran-Iraq war has been examined by different authors; (3) and lastly will introduce both monuments shortly before delving into their symbolism in the subsequent chapters.

1.1 The Ba'athist Regime and the Iran-Iraq War

It is often asserted that the Iran-Iraq war officially began on 22 September 1980 when Iraq invaded southern Iranian territory and executed airstrikes. However, in line with the constructivist nature of this thesis, it is important to look at the ideological and political context in Iraq that put this motion in action: the main agent of this being the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party in Iraq.

The Ba'ath Party was inherently secular and allowed some freedom of religion, though it rendered Islam as the state religion. In line with this socialist nature of the Ba'ath Party, the regime drew its legitimacy heavily from its Arab nationalist ideology and revolutionary idiosyncrasy. However, the regime reached its position as ruling party not through a civilian revolution, but through a military coup in 1968. Saddam Hussein played a pivotal part in this coup and became the subsequent president of

Iraq in 1979 after serving as vice chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council, the highest legislative and executive body in Iraq (Khoury 20). When the Islamic Revolution took place in the same year, it was initially praised by the Ba'athist regime and regarded as a prospect for the resurrection of collaboration between the new rulers of Iran and Iraq (Karsh 13). This alliance was previously not possible as Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi opposed the Ba'athist anti-imperialistic rhetoric by cooperating with the Western world (ibid.) With the dethronement of the Shah and the attributed branding of the Shah as an enemy of Iran as well, the Ba'athist regime had grounds for hope. However, this optimism was short-lived since the newly founded Iranian regime did not reciprocate this sentiment as their main goal was to advance Islam, which was viewed incompatible with the Ba'ath Party's secular and social nature. Saddam was viewed as a "main obstacle to the advance of Islam in the region" and Khomeini started encouraging Iraqis to revolt against Saddam (Karsh 9). According to Karsh this encouragement was employed because of two reasons: firstly, with the make up of the Iraqi population consisted of 60 per cent Shi'ites whereas the Sunni minority was ruling, Iran implemented this narrative to urge Iraqis to organise a similar revolution in Iraq. Secondly, the Iranian government viewed Iraq as an obstruction to their goal of regional hegemony as during the time, Iraq's position was perhaps the largest and most powerful Arab country (12-13).

After subduing underground Shi'ite revolutionary organisations in Iraq, Iranian diplomatic withdrawals, border conflicts and the perceived threat from both sides growing exponentially, Iraq launched an attack with the intention of a 'demonstration' rather than a long-term war (Chubin & Tripp 56). Iraq attempted a ceasefire offer just six days after invading, exhibiting their belief in a short-lived display of power. When this offer was refused by Iran and hostilities broke out between Iran and Iraq, Saddam expanded a nationalistic and triumphalist war rhetoric and created narratives to render the war acceptable for Iraqis (Karsh 66-67). One of the purposes of this rhetoric was to insulate the Iraqi public from the effects of the war (ibid.) Exemplifying this insulation was the rise of the public spending in Iraq, from $21 billion in 1980 to $29.5 billion in 1982, of which the chief part was spent on civilian imports to prevent commodity shortages (Karsh & Rautsi 153). However, the Iran-Iraq war was fought longer than anticipated, resulting in a long war of 'survival' with several coup attempts, executions of military leaders, removals in the Ba'ath Party, mass executions of Kurdish resistance and alternations between vigorous fighting and standstills along the borders before Iran agreed to a ceasefire in 1988, ending this war without a clear victor (Khoury 29; Chubin & Tripp 57-61). In fact, the war resulted in tremendous Iraqi casualties estimated between 105,000 and 200,000 and a crippling economy with foreign debt of $50 to $82 billion U.S. dollars worsened by the labour shortage (Hiro 205; Khoury 34).

Lamentably, the Iran-Iraq war was only the start of the impending doom of Iraq. The Iran-Iraq war was continued by Saddam's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, which prompted the U.S. and Britain-lead invasion in 1991 and was followed by a longstanding and extensive UN embargo. Eventually, the U.S. led an invasion in Iraq conform their 'war on terror', simultaneously resulting in the end of the Ba'athist regime or more specifically, it ended Saddam's Ba'athist rule. It is precisely his ruling and psychological and material footprint in the state that seemed to have left a bitter taste for the successive Iraqi government. The new Iraqi government, under Shi'ite ruling, seems to have been adamant on distancing themselves from Saddam and the Ba'athist regime – not only politically but also historically and culturally. An embodiment of this goal is the assembly of a government body in 2005 called the Committee to Remove the Remains of the Ba'ath Party and to Consider Building New Monuments and Murals to eradicate manifested remnants of that era (Semple). However, Antoon took notice of that none of the members were historians, artists or experts on a relevant field, which should have been required for such a sensitive undertaking ("Bending History" 257).

1.2 Iraq's Collective Identity during the Iran-Iraq War

In order to place this thesis and the use of collective identity in constructing or deconstructing these monuments, it is crucial to look at literature written about Iraqi collective identity, although not much literature has been produced about collective identity and commemoration in the Middle East, Iraq in particular. Many scholars have argued that since its establishment, Iraq as a nation-state is artificial, which places the focus of most literature on Iraq's identity to sectarian divides, often in combination with an emphasis on the leadership of Saddam (Lukitz 5-6).

Kubba for instance, has focused on this sectarian divide in Iraq and divides Iraq's population in three groups: Arab Shi'tes, Arab Sunnis, and Kurds (48). He develops his explanation of the 2003 war's impact by looking at these three groups separately. Dawisha also analyses Iraqi identity 'in Saddam's Iraq' by looking at the sub-national ethnic (Arab vs. Kurd), sectarian (Sunni vs. Shi'i) and tribal affiliations, and analysed how these divisions took precedence over a collective Iraqi identity (554). Moreover, he places a lot of emphasis on Saddam's hegemony and identifies his role as "the final arbiter of power, [...], and the sole formulator of policy." (555) According to Dawisha, Saddam employed redefinitions of Iraqi identity by, for instance, elevating one of Iraq's sects at the expense of others and often used historical imagery, such as likening the Iran-Iraq war to the battle of Qadisiyyah when Arabs defeated the Persians in AD 637, to emphasise this ethnic divide (556-8). Bengio builds upon Dawisha's argument and analyses the political discourse of Saddam where he remarks two movements: firstly, "the massive intrusion of historical contents, themes, and parallels into almost every aspect of the discourse on current events", and secondly the shift from a secular and socialist idiom to a Islamic and religious one (203). Although Iraq certainly has sectarian divides, the Iraqi identity is much more complex, intermingled and fluid and therefore requires more research than a fundamental sectarian division (Lukitz 16). The Iraqi nation may have been artificial, however, as Anderson argues, a nation consists out of a socially constructed community and so many, if not all nations, can be therefore seen as 'artificial' (6-7). Moreover, through concerted efforts by the government and the people themselves, Iraq became a real social and political entity. In fact, Davis implements the Gramscian ideology model to view Saddam's manufacturing and manipulation of Iraqi historical memory, but rejects the argument of an artificial and sectorial Iraq (276). Davis argues that studying Iraq in this sectarian manner obscures the regime's lack of hegemonic control with the actual Iraqi population toward Iraq as a nation-state (ibid.) His argument against the sectarian study of Iraq is two-fold: firstly, he argues that the three main ethnic groups have continuously indicated a desire to remain a fundamental part of Iraq as a nation-state, by analysing the Kurds' desire for federalism instead of independence and the Shi'i reluctance of calling for an independent Shi'i state during the Intifada (ibid.) In addition, he argues that not even 'the most bloody and materially devastating' Iran-Iraq war destroyed the cohesion of Iraq as a nation-state as the dominant infantry of Iraq consisted out of Shi'is whom were fighting fellow Shi'is from Iran (Davis 277). In other words, the continuous desire to participate in Iraq as a nation-state and even remaining loyal to Iraq as a nation-state whilst fighting against members of their own religion, proves for Davis that the problem of collective identity lies not in sectarian divides of Iraq, but rather the lack of control of the regime.

The study of Iraqi identity is still quite limited. Many of the studies, for example Kubba, have developed their arguments on the basis of fundamental sectarian divides.

However, this argument disregards the fluidity of an identity and the recognised argument of Anderson advancing the notion of a nation-state to a socially constructed community (6-7). In addition, a lot of emphasis has been placed on Saddam's hegemony and political ideologies, such as the works of Dawisha, Davis' and Bengio, through identifying significant transformations in collective and cultural identity. However, according to Khoury, one of the few scholars researching Iraq in the realm of commemorative and collective memory studies, the wars have affected the social and cultural processes tremendously.

1.3 Introducing the Monuments

Martyr's Memorial

The official name of the monument is *The Monument of the Martyrs of Saddam's Qadisiyyah*, but has been referred to by Iraqis as Martyr's Memorial, translated from the Arabic *Nasb Al-Shaheed* (Antoon "Monumental Disrespect" 28). It had been inspired by the 'principles of glorification of the "martyr"' (Makiya 23). The monument, designed and developed by Ismail Fattah Al-Turk was unveiled in Baghdad on 30 July 1983. On-site construction, however, began as early as April 1981; merely six months after the war had started (ibid.) It consists out of a 40 metre-high shell split in two to form an inverted and disjoined S-pattern with an eternal flame, made out of a three-dimensional metal Iraqi flag in the middle (see Fig. 1). The domes are constructed out of galvanised steel frames and covered with turquoise-coloured ceramic tile cladding, which was pre-cast in carbon fibre reinforced concrete (Archnet). In the middle of one of the domes is a circular pool that pours its water into the courtyard below. Under the platform upon which the domes are built are two levels consisting out of a library, lecture hall, museum, exhibition gallery, and a cafeteria. The entirety of the monument is set on an island, which is 190 metres in diameter, in an artificial island surrounded by parks, walkways, children playgrounds and bridges (see Fig. 2). The monument and its establishments are situated afar from Baghdad's centre, on the East side of the Tigris river, close to the Army Canal that separates Baghdad from Sadr City. The monuments and its settings cost the Iraqi government a quarter of a billion dollars (Makiya 23).

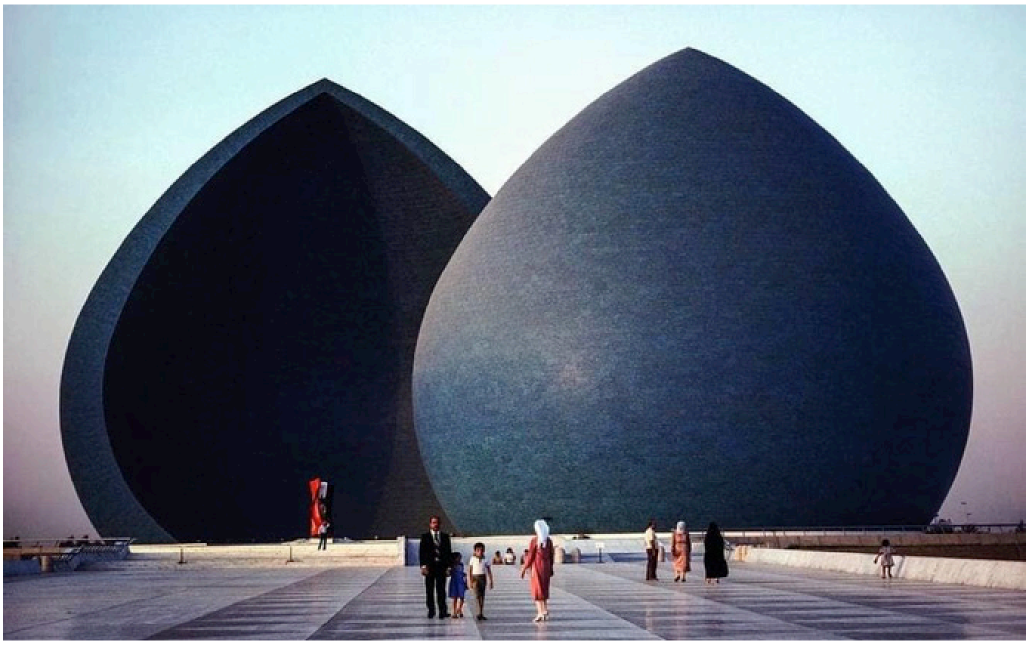

Fig. 1. McCurry, Steve. *The Shaheed (Martyrs') Monument.* 1983. Baghdad. Photograph. *Telegraph.*

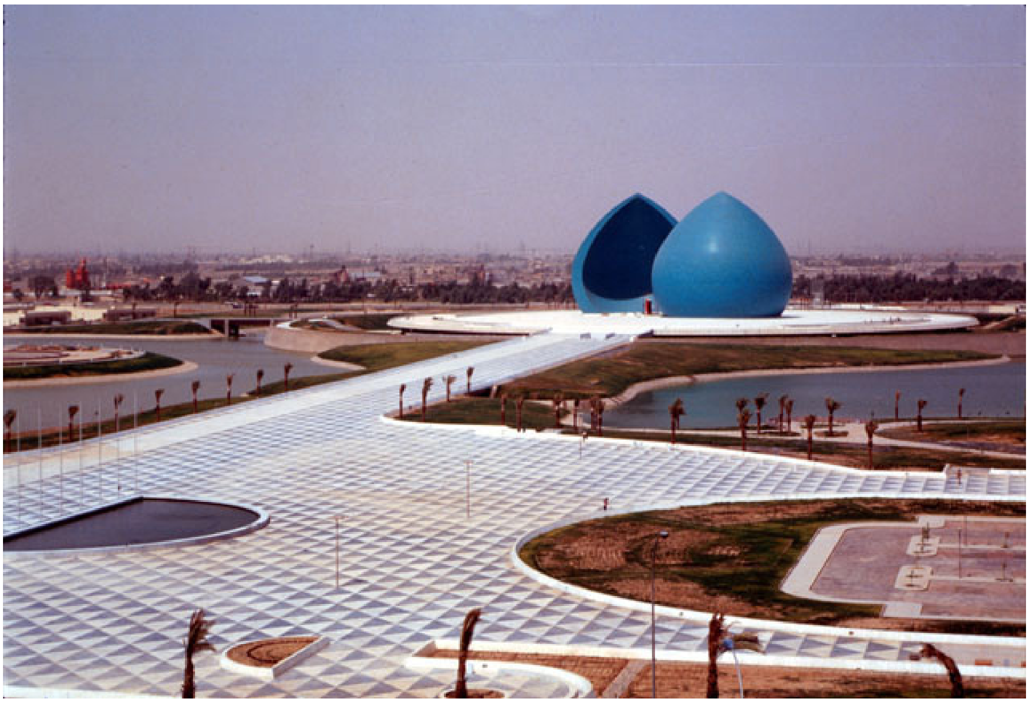

Fig. 2. *View along Public Plaza.* N/A. 1985. Baghdad. Photograph. *ArchNet.*

Victory Arch Monument

The Victory Arch, translated from the Arabic *Qaws Al-Nasr*, was erected on 8 August 1989 and is also named *Swords of Qadisiyyah*. On the invitation for the opening of the monument, it said the monument is an announcement of 'the good news of victory to all Iraqis.' (Makiya 2) It was constructed in close collaboration with Saddam: Iraqi sculptor Khalid Al-Rahal developed it from Saddam's original sketch of the monument in 1985, until he passed away and Mohammed Ghani took over the process, still in close collaboration with Saddam (Makiya 1). The monument was made in duplicate, marking both entrances of the Grand Festivities Square, which was created in 1986 in central Baghdad. It constitutes out of two arms emerging from the ground made from reinforced concrete, both holding a sword in an arched form to be met with a seven metre long Iraqi flag at their intersection (see Fig. 3). These are said to have been plastered from bronze cast from Saddam's arms and hands himself and amount to sixteen metres in length and weigh twenty tons each – cast in sections at the Morris Singer foundry in England as there was no Iraqi foundry big enough for the task (Makiya 3-4). The swords, each weighing 24 ton and at a length of 43 metres, were manufactured in Iraq and consist out of stainless steal, from which a portion was obtained from molten Iraqi tanks and guns used during the Iran-Iraq war by perished Iraqi soldiers. At the exploding ground from which each arm arises, a bronze net contained 2,500 helmets confiscated from Iranian soldiers, some of which were purposefully scattered to emphasise the exploding ground (see Fig. 4).

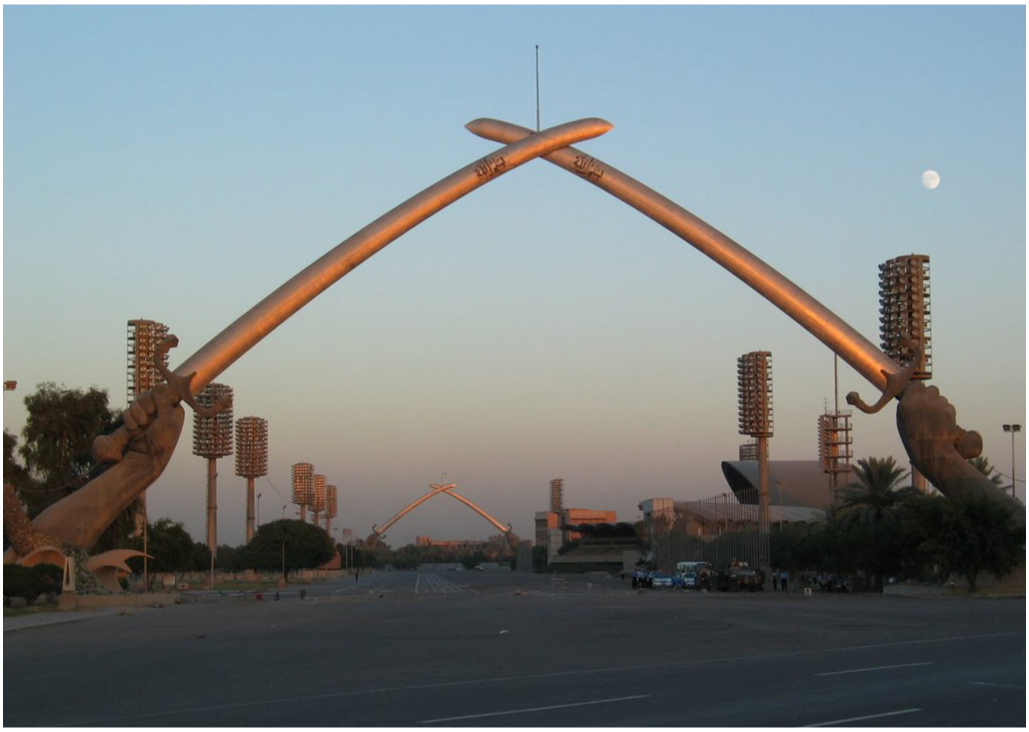

Fig. 3. Ayestaran, Mikel. *Swords of Qadisiyyah*. 2003. Baghdad. Photograph. *Mikel Ayestaran.*

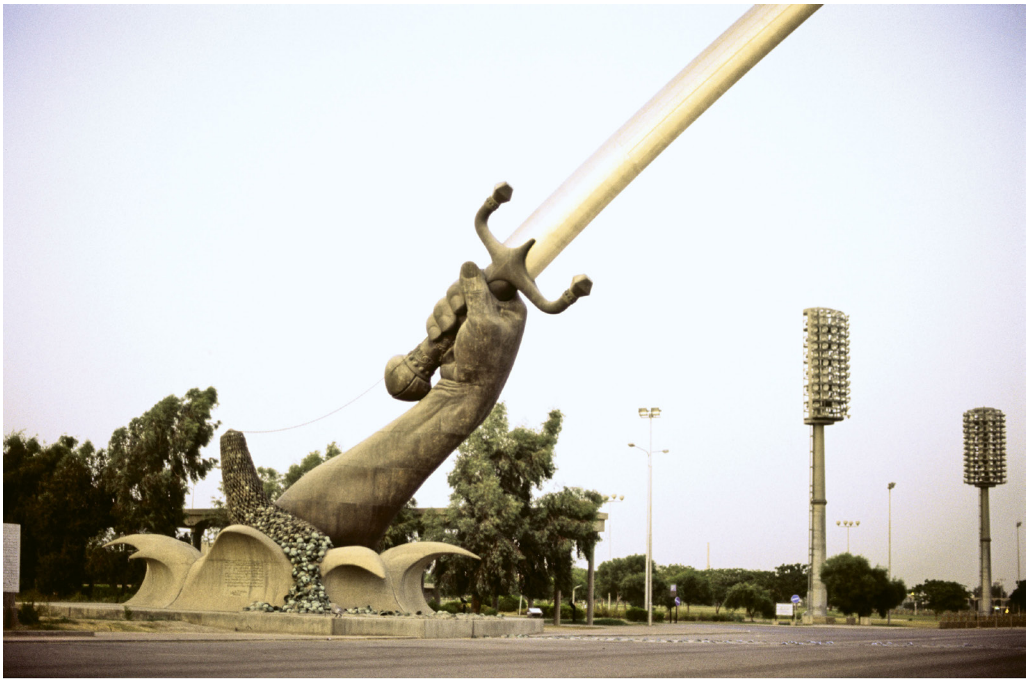

Fig. 4. Kreul, John R. *Detail of Swords of Qadisiyyah Hands of Victory Monument in Baghdad, Iraq*. 2008. Baghdad. Photograph. *Alamy.*

This chapter has examined the political and historical context of the Iran-Iraq war to deepen our understanding of the monuments and Iraq's collective identity. By first looking into the Ba'athist regime and the Iran-Iraq war itself, we have found that the war did not simply launch by an invasion. Rather, the process of this conflict was much more complicated, involving intricate power struggles and the regimes' clashing objectives with the advancement of Islam on the one hand (Iran) and the secular, Arab nationalist advancement on the other (Iraq) (Karsh 9). Due to the unexpected and prolonged nature of the war, the Ba'athist regime developed a war rhetoric to render the war acceptable for Iraqi population. Moreover, not much literature has been dedicated to Iraq's collective memory. The lion's share that includes Iraq's collective memory focuses on sectarian divides, often in combination with an emphasised scrutiny of Saddam's leadership. However, as this thesis further develops, it argues that the Iraqi identity is much more complex and fluid, comprised of more than merely sectarian divisions or authoritarian leadership. The last section of this chapter has introduced both monuments that will be analysed throughout this thesis.

2. Triumphalism

"*We no longer celebrate the nation,*
but we study the nation's celebrations." – Pierre Nora

During the Iran-Iraq war, the Ba'athist regime set up a project titled The Project for the Re-Writing of History, which attempted to construct a "new public sphere, including the reconstitution of political identity, the relationship of the citizen to the state, and public understandings of national heritage." (Davis 148) In other words, this project that has been employed during the Iran-Iraq war by the regime, is crucial in understanding the constructed aspect of Iraq's collective identity and memory during and after this period. The rhetoric employed ethnic and Islamic symbolism with a focus on Saddam's leadership to convey messages of triumph over Iran whilst also advocating unity in Iraq. The theme of this chapter, 'triumphalism', is a term deliberately chosen to convey precisely this victorious propaganda in combination with an amalgam of patriotic, Islamic and nationalistic narratives and, to a much lesser extent, the megalomaniac tendencies of Saddam's leadership. Moreover, triumphalism characterises the symbolism in the monuments during and even after the Iran-Iraq war. In this chapter, I argue that the significance of the calculated triumphalist rhetoric and symbolism surrounding the Iran-Iraq war revolved around the main objective for the Ba'ath regime: creating and maintaining a collective identity in Iraq, by availing themselves of a collective memory. I will also analyse the symbolism in both monuments by means of this chapters' theme Triumphalism, but also look at these monuments in post-Ba'ath regime phases to see if and how they can still be studied under this triumphalist lens. As such, the first section of this chapter will focus on this triumphalist war narrative of the Ba'athist regime by analysing the symbolism and propaganda used during the Iran-Iraq war to create and maintain a certain collective identity (1); and the second section will look at triumphalism and the Victory Arch monument and triumphalism and the Martyr's Memorial (2).

2.1. Saddam's Qadisiyyah: The Triumphalist War Narrative of the Ba'athist Regime

This first section of the chapter will analyse the nationalistic rhetoric enforced under the Ba'athist rule, which manifested itself in triumphalist propaganda and state celebrations during and about the Iran-Iraq war. In addition, this section will discuss several views on the Ba'athist regime and ultimately argues for a nuanced analysis of this period.

The First and Second Battle of Qadisiyyah

The apex of symbolic cultivation of Iraqi nationalism seemed to materialise during the Iran-Iraq war (Isakhan 263). This war was dubbed *Qadisiyyat Saddam*, translated to Saddam's Qadisiyyah, recalling the Battle of Qadisiyyah where the Arab-Muslim army, led by commander Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, had defeated the Persian Sassanian Empire in AD 637. It was the Ba'ath Party's daily newspaper in of Al-Thawra that drew a parallel between the two conflicts "because there are so many similarities between Qadisyya[t] Sa'd [ibn Abi Waqqas] and that of Saddam that even the passage of time and change of generations could not obscure them." (qtd. in Alianak 99) The Battle of Qadisiyyah was not only symbolically cultivated, but reappeared in material objects such as government complexes, two massive dams, bridges, a port, a canal, an artificial lake and, naturally, in monuments in Baghdad (Lewenthal 93). Moreover, Saddam played the leading role in this symbolic narrative and was often depicted with and similarly to ibn Abi Waqqas (see Fig. 5). Not only was the outcome of this battle seen as an ethnic triumph (Arabs over Persians), but also as a religious one (Muslims over non-believers) as the victory led to the Islamisation of Iran (Reid 87). Saddam mixed past and future tenses often in his speeches involving Qadisiyyah fostering the senses of a deja vu, an anticipatory representation of the war and its implied inevitability of future victory and glory (Lewenthal 63, 99). It is the blend of this ethnic and, to a smaller extent, religious triumph that was employed in a symbolic rhetoric in opposition to Iran and, more importantly, in Iraq itself to construct a collective identity, greatly by the means of recalling a collective memory.

Religious rhetoric

As discussed in the previous chapter, the call for an Islamic revolution for Shi'ites in Iraq and against Saddam by Khomeini exposed the complex composition of the Iraqi population. One might wonder how, even after being called upon by the highest consolidation of power of Shi'tes the majority complied in fighting men of their own religion? According to Ahram, it is because "Saddam sought to harness Shi'ite sectarian identity to the larger Iraqi state and integrate Shi'ite consciousness into Iraq nationhood while respecting Shi'ite particularism." (37) Considering the secular nature of the Ba'ath Party, this meant it had to modify its policies by emphasising religious dimensions into its rhetoric, and to a greater extent, Shi'i inclusive narratives. With Saddam at the centre of the regime, the Ba'ath Party appealed to Iraqi Shi'ites to revert them from joining the inferior Khomeini-based practice of Islam and instead, return to the authenticity of Arab Islam (Ahram 36). A manifestation of this is Saddam's linkage to Shi'ite history and memory to create unity amongst the Iraqi population. For instance, in a semi-official biography Saddam's family tree was presented, demonstrating his genealogy to be a direct descendant from Husayn ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib, the nephew of Prophet Muhammed, the third Shi'ite Imam and a highly regarded historical figure for Shi'ites (Iskander 20). This imagery was materialised in Saddam's riding on a white horse on several public occasions, referring to Imam Husayn ibn Ali at the battle of Karbala who has often been depicted on a white horse. Moreover, in his study of postage stamps in Iraq, Reid found Iraqi stamps celebrating the 1920 revolution of Shi'ite tribes against British powers and the Shi'i shrine at Najaf (87). In 1986, Saddam also included an Arab warrior with 'Allahu Akbar' on his shield holding the *Dhu Al-Fiqar*, the sword of the Prophet that was passed down to Imam Husayn ibn Ali, showcasing an explicit Shi'i symbol in the Qadisiyyah set of stamps (ibid.; Makiya 11). Many more symbolic references for the purpose of cultivating Iraqi Shi'ites were produced, such as murals of Saddam praying in front of Shi'ite mosques (see Fig. 6). Saddam's linkages to Shi'i figures such as Husayn ibn Ali have been described as 'ironic' by authors such as Roy, though the appeal to Shi'ites seems to be deliberately constructed to create a united narrative for Iraqi nationalism (62).

Ethnic rhetoric

Much more prevalent than a religious correspondence were the symbolic connotations to an ethnic rhetoric, inducing unity by recalling a shared memory. According to Isakhan, the Ba'ath Party emphasised the "ethnic rather than the religious dimension of the war, positing the battle as one between Arabs and Persians, not a secular state and Shi'i regime" to maintain public endorsement, especially from Iraq's majority of Shi'i population (263). In addition to ibn Abi Waqqas and Imam Husayn ibn Ali, more historical figures, mostly hailing from ancient Mesopotamia, were invoked for the projection of Saddam as 'the latest personification of Iraqi and Arab nationalism' (Karsh & Rautsi 152). Among the associations with historical figures were: King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, who conquered Jerusalem and was described by Saddam as "a great Arab leader who fought Persians and Jews" (qtd. in

Karsh & Rautsi 152). Moreover, the Ba'athist regime often referred to Al-Mansur's victories, the Abbasid caliph who had established the original round city of Baghdad and the military general Saladin of Kurdish origin, who conquered the Crusaders and restored Islam as the primary religion in Jerusalem (Isakhan 262-63). From these examples we can clearly identify the Ba'ath regime's involvement of cross-sectarian key historical figures, all with a prevailing triumphalist narrative, in their symbolic implications of Iraqi and Arab nationalism.

Celebrations

Another aspect of the cultural production during the Iran-Iraq war was the increasing number of state holidays in Iraq. In his book *The Politics of National Celebrations in the Arab Middle East*, Podeh found that Iraq celebrated a remarkable amount of fifteen state holidays, excluding religious holidays, which was more than any other state in the region (162). During the Iran-Iraq war, the following state holidays were added: Bay'a Day [1] (added in 1982); Martyr's Day (1982); Saddam Hussein's birthday (1983) and Victory Day (1988). Podeh argues that Iraq's obsessive use of the state's calendar was to bolster the regime's legitimacy and raise the people's spirits (ibid.) Moreover, in her analysis of the imposed rituals and commemorative celebrations in Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war, Khoury argued that the rhetoric served the government's goals to nationalise many casualties "create rituals that commemorated the fallen, render their deaths acceptable to their families, and do so while controlling the meaning of that loss." (219) By means of this, the state celebrations of Iraq were not only a way of enforcing a triumphalist war narrative, but certain state holidays such as the Martyr's Day, with its laden Islamic symbol of a martyr, were employed to affect the Iraqi population in its imaginative registries. The subsequent chapter will elaborate on the emotional index of mourning.

Saddam: Exceptional or Traditional?

The prominent placing of Saddam as the embodiment of the triumphalist rhetoric during the Iran-Iraq war has led numerous scholars to focus predominantly on his leadership (e.g. Bengio; Dawisha; Faust; Makiya; Post & Baram). For instance, Post and Baram in their book *Saddam is Iraq: Iraq is Saddam* have 'diagnosed'

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[1] The bay'a refers to the ceremony of the oath of allegiance from Iraqi population to Saddam, which occurred on 13 November 1983. Through its anniversary each year, the oaths were considered as renewed (Bengio 74-77).

Saddam with malignant narcissism and argue that "all actions [taken in Iraq] are justified if they are in service of furthering Saddam Hussein's needs and messianic ambitions." (1) Saddam unquestionably played a significant part in the construction of this nationalistic rhetoric, specifically when arbitrating his presidency with great historical figures, thereby creating his own 'cult of personality'. However, the undivided attention Saddam has received in literature about Iraq has resulted in an oversimplified representation of Iraqi politics. Isakhan argues that "to reduce Hussein's cult of personality and the dexterity with which the Ba'ath handled state propaganda to Hussein's vanity, his megalomania, or his penchant for gaudy imagery, is to severely underestimate the ability of the Iraqi dictatorship to utilise political symbology to create a collective historical memory and degrees of national identity and social inclusion." (261) Moreover, Iraq is no exception to nation-states employing nationalist narratives to create a collective identity. According to Benedict, with the consolidation of national power in a 'new nation', comes a search for "appropriate symbols to project an image of unity for their own people and to present to the world at large." (167) He continues by asserting many nations "have delved into the events of their pasts to find appropriate symbolics and to construct narrative which will justify their national identities." (ibid.) Indeed, Podeh argues that France, England, Germany and the United States have also engaged in identity formation through varying social mechanisms (12). Furthermore, Carleton, in one of the few studies conducted about the dynamics of triumphalism, argued that triumphalism seems to be a default narrative of any nation-state, as a time of conflict induces a discourse of unity (634, 619). In sum, we can state that though Saddam's leadership certainly has had its merits in the construction of an Iraqi national identity and narrative, it would paint an overly simplistic picture to reduce this complex relation to merely Saddam's megalomania. Moreover, it is significant to note that a nationalistic narrative through symbolism is not exceptional to Saddam or even Iraq as a nation-state alone.

2.2. Triumphalism and the Monuments

Triumphalism and the Victory Arch Monument

As mentioned in the analysis of the triumphalist war narrative the Battle of Qadisiyyah was one of the clearest and recurrent symbolisms employed in the identity and memory construction. The Victory Arch, under its epithet Swords of

Qadisiyyah appears to be the embodiment of this rhetoric with its myriad of symbolic connotations and has been analysed quite often in literature about 'Saddam's Iraq' [2]. After careful analysis of this monument, I argue that the Victory Arch is an epitome of a triumphalist theme, both during the Iran-Iraq war, but also after the U.S. led invasion of 2003.

The implication of a triumphalist narrative is proven from the monument's onset, starting with the fact that the Victory Arch was conceived in 1985, years before the war had even ended and of course, the name chosen for the monument. To compliment the monument, the Great Festivities Square was built in 1986, to reiterate this celebratory and victorious rhetoric. At the opening ceremony on 8 August 1989 – that proceeded to become the annual Victory Day though the Iran-Iraq war ended in stalemate – Saddam recapitulated his likening to Imam Husayn ibn Ali by riding a white horse. Further nationalistic connotations can be found in the stainless steel Iraqi flag at the apex of the swords, at the highest level of the monument, which reiterates the rhetoric of Iraqi unity above sectarian divides. By the same token, the liquefaction and insertion of Iraqi tanks and guns in the stainless steal swords also adds nationalistic merit. According to Machin and Abousnnouga, who developed a toolkit for analysing discourses of war communicated in war monuments in *The Language of War Monuments*, the materiality of a monument also offers meaning potentials (2-5). Stainless steel can represent a meaning potential of timelessness, which would reiterate the blurring of the past and present as the swords of the Victory Arch attempt to exhibit (Machin & Abousnnouga 135). Moreover, the choice in constructing a set of this monument, marking the entrance and exit of the ceremonial square, is argued to have been made consciously to establish dominance, authority and grandeur (Roy 62; Makiya 6). Similarly, the same argument of authority upholds when looking at the actual size and location of the Victory Arch. It was constructed at a height of more than 42 metres [3] and was built in the heart and administrative centre of Baghdad and the Ba'ath Party, as well as the place of residence of Saddam himself. However, the duplication of the monument can also be seen as a reference to both Qadisiyyah battles by fortifying the employment of historical symbolism. Correspondingly, Saddam is very prominent in this monument by his role as designer of the monument, and naturally, by the casting of his own arms in bronze as an evident constituent of the Victory Arch. A bronze casting can subconsciously communicate heaviness, permanence and tradition, which conform to Saddam's leadership aspirations during the Iran-Iraq war (Machin & Abousnnouga 219).

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[2] The most noteworthy work on the Victory Arch has been conducted by Kanan Makiya, under the alias of Samir Al-Khalil in *The Monument*. In this book Makiya analyses the politics of art, and particlarly the meaning of the Victory Arch whilst emphasising Saddam's leadership.

[3] Though it is important to mention, for the goal of avoiding exceptionalism of this monument, the Arc de Triomphe in Paris reaches 50 metres above ground.

The Victory Arch retains quite some aggressive connotations, one of which is laid bare in the lurid swords. In a speech in 1985, Saddam refers to the "protecting swords" as "hav[ing] cut through the necks of the aggressors" (qtd. in Makiya 3). Similarly, the incorporation of war helmets of Iranian soldiers further cultivates this bellicose account. These war helmets have been taken 'fresh from the battlefield' as can be seen by the perforated bullet holes, and have been described as "scatter[ed] into wasteland" by the Ministry of Housing and Construction on the official invitation card of the Victory Arch (Makiya 3; qtd. in Makiya 2). Indeed, the 'scattering' of the Iranian enemy by hands of Saddam reproduces and strengthens the narrative of Iraqi triumph.

This analysis of the monument showcases that the triumphalist narrative was epitomised in the monument of the Victory Arch during the Iran-Iraq war. However, I argue that a triumphalist rhetoric was still in place decades later, though including altered and conversed protagonists. Isakhan discusses the subject of active destruction of Ba'athist symbology by the U.S. led Coalition, including defacing and vandalising images of Saddam (see Fig. 7 and 8) (267). Similarly, many pictures can be found of U.S. military posing in front of the Victory Arch, whilst pretending to hold the swords or pointing rifles (see Fig. 9). The area of the Victory Arch was seized by Coalition military forces, branding it the *Green Zone*, with the Palace of Saddam as the epicentre of their occupancy (Isakhan 271). With the committed de-Ba'athification of the Coalition and the newly established and fortified Coalition headquarters that appropriated the Ba'athist and Saddam's base of operations in mind, the images of American soldiers triumphantly in front of the Victory Arch can be taken to meaning of a renewed connotation of triumphalism. Though this time, the triumphalist rhetoric faced Saddam and the Ba'ath Party and hailed from Western forces.

Triumphalism and the Martyr's Memorial

As previously mentioned, the Martyr's Memorial has not been analysed often and is usually glanced over in literature about Iraq. Other than the official name, *The Monument of the Martyrs of Saddam's Qadisiyyah* and the commencement of construction before the reality it commemorated, the monument is not imbued with symbolisms of the triumphalist rhetoric of the Ba'ath Party. Though the Martyr's Memorial does employ plenty Islamic symbolisms, which will be discussed in the following chapter, the undeniable victorious narrative that is present in the Victory Arch seems to be eluded from this monument. Indeed, the Martyr's Memorial has been described as a 'successful' and 'magnificent' monument, as its serene aesthetics eschews strong triumphalist and Ba'athist connotations (Makiya 25; Baram 77; Khoury 252; Antoon "Monumental Disrespect" 29). However, a triumphalist narrative after the U.S. led invasion did develop surrounding the Martyr's Memorial, though not by the Ba'athist Party but by the Coalition and the new Iraqi government. In 2004, the Martyr's Memorial became occupied as a military base by the Coalition (see Fig. 10). Not only were average Iraqis, whom frequented the memorial quite often to commemorate fallen soldiers, obstructed from entrance, Antoon describes in *Monumental Disrespect* how the shrine was also utilised as a sleeping and living area by the occupying force (272). In addition to occupying Ba'ath's epicentre, the Coalition expanded to more symbolic manifestations of nationalistic registries, such as the memorial. Moreover, after the Coalition left the memorial, the new Iraqi government under Al-Maliki also attached a triumphalist rhetoric to the Martyr's Memorial. In the museum below the monument, a focus on Saddam's cruelty is presented in the form of graphic movies or exhibitions of his torture mechanisms (see Fig. 11) (Schreck). This showcasing alters the initial connotations of the monument and relays its focal point on Saddam's atrocities. One can argue that through 'othering' Saddam in this manner, as he did with the Persians during the Iran-Iraq war, the new government triumphs over Saddam's old regime.

In this chapter I have argued the significance of the calculated triumphalist rhetoric and symbolism employed during the Iran-Iraq war, which revolved around the main objective of creating and maintaining a collective identity in Iraq by drawing on a collective memory. In the first section of the chapter I analysed the employment of the Battle of Qadisiyyah and its co-occurrence with cross-sectarian ethnic, Islamic symbolism and increased state celebrations to not only reiterate this unity, but also to render the Iran-Iraq war justifiable to the Iraqi population by pertaining the inevitable victory and glory, as was the case with the first Qadisiyyah. Throughout this analysis, we have established that Saddam was irrefutably involved in the construction of this triumphalist and nationalistic narrative, with some tendencies of grandeur as evident in the Victory Arch. However, literature with a disproportionate focus on Saddam's leadership not only tends to oversimplify the complexity of Iraqi identity and politics, but can also represent an essentialist take on the relationship between nations and nation-building as it is prone to exceptionalise Iraq by overlooking the construction of collective identities and triumphalist narratives in many other nations (Benedict 167; Carleton 634).

The pinnacle of the triumphalist rhetoric of the Iran-Iraq war can be perceived as the Victory Arch, where nationalistic connotations, employment of historical figures, aggressive connotations and a strong presence of Saddam are employed. This is in contrast to the Martyr's Memorial, which mostly eludes Ba'athist and triumphalist connotations, which is perhaps why the latter has been analysed much less than the former. However, both monuments did experience a renewed connotation of triumphalism from the Coalition after the 2003 invasion. Western forces that actively de-Ba'athified Baghdad can be seen to 'triumph' in front of the Victory Arch. Similarly, the Martyr's Memorial was occupied as a military base by the Coalition in addition to the triumphalist tendencies of the new Iraqi government, when they relayed the connotation of the Martyr's Memorial from a commemoration shrine to where Saddam's cruelties are showcased. The theme Triumphalism has deliberately been chosen to not only encapsulate the Ba'athist victorious narrative over Iran, but can also be employed to analyse the post-Ba'athist period of the monuments in which the triumphalist narrative was redressed towards a triumphalist narrative over Saddam and the Ba'ath Party.

3. Mourning

"*Loss has made a tenuous "we" of us all.*" – Judith Butler

According to Ashplant et al., the literature on war commemoration can be divided into two main paradigms: one viewing war commemorations as fundamentally political, where the commemoration is employed as a tool by the government to secure the citizens' collective identity; the other consisting of the psychological perspective of war commemorations, where the focus lies on how monuments are perceived or experienced by visitors (7). In the previous chapter of this thesis, most of the literature and analysis carried out has aligned itself with the first paradigm Ashplant et al. mention, underscoring the impact of the politics on the monuments. This has brought us to understand the regime's triumphalist rhetoric and its objective for unity, however, excessive emphasis on Saddam and the Ba'ath Party's coercion does not do the impact of the monuments on the Iraqi collective memory – and vice versa – justice as it leaves out the experience of the citizens. The enforcement of commemoration discourses does not necessarily reduce the experiences and memories of the citizens when mourning for the martyrs or families. In other words, I argue that the top-down approach of collective identity construction is not enough to understand the complex ways in which the Iraqi population experienced these discourses. With this bottom-up approach in mind, and the desire for an interdisciplinary bearing, this thesis will now advance into its second theme and its third chapter: Mourning. This chapter will be divided into two sections: the first one aimed at contextualising theoretical framework on mourning and identity construction as well as mourning and monuments (1); the second one analysing mourning and the Martyr's Memorial and mourning and the Victory Arch (2).

3.1. Individual, Collective and Symbolic Mourning: Construction and Monuments

Mourning has often been studied as a human and individual response to the loss of a person, by works such as Kübler-Ross. However, Peter Homans' introduction in *Symbolic Loss: The Ambiguity of Mourning and Memory at Century's End* argues that mourning and theories surrounding it have encompassed fields such as anthropology, biology, evolutionary and psychology. Homans argues that one of the first and most influential modernisations regarding the theory of mourning is Sigmund Freud's

Mourning and Melancholia where he expanded the concept of mourning by also identifying "the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, and ideal, and so on" as a form (243). Homans expands on this type of loss by naming it a "symbolic loss" that refers to the loss of a symbol, or rather "a system of symbols" (20). Moreover, Homans distinguishes between grief and mourning by defining "grief [as] a painful emotion that is, so to speak, looking for a "cure." Mourning is a ritual that, so to speak, "heals" the pain of grief." (2) Whilst both are a response to a loss, whether this is an individual or a symbolic loss, grief is an emotion and mourning a symbolic and grief-filled process.

Mourning can also occur in the workings of culture, presenting itself as collective mourning without necessarily excluding individual mourning in the process (Homans 1). In his significant book *Memory, History, Forgetting*, philosopher Paul Ricœur also expanded on Freud's notions of mourning by theorising memory and mourning to the communal level. Ricœur exceptionally theorises works on memory and mourning and relates them to the construction of identity, whether by own recollection of memories and mourning or by manipulated memory and mourning that in turn creates manipulated identity (448). Due to the intrinsic exchange of memories for the processes of mourning and the inherent otherness of identity, an individual as well as a community is dependent on each other to "complete the process of constituting one's narrative identity." (Leichter 125) In other words, the workings of mourning in both individual and collective mourning are inseparable and rely on the exchange of memory to construct one's identity, whether this is collective or individual identity. This reiterates the argument of by merely focusing on the political coercion in the collective identity construction of Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war; one overlooks the more intimate and affective registers of memory and social imaginaries. When looking at mourning Iraqis over fallen soldiers of the Iran-Iraq war, we can take this to meaning that the mourners were not only affected by their own memories of fallen family members, but were also conditioned to a commemoration discourse.

A material manifestation of exchanges of memories is often a monument that often commemorates a loss, whether symbolic or individual. According to Homans, "the monument has been the material structure around which both personal and collective mourning have taken place and it has facilitated that mourning through a process of return and release. The monument represents a past event and serves as a carrier of memory back through time to that event." (22) Pierre Nora refers to symbolically loaded sites, where collective heritage is hardened and in which collective memory was rooted as 'lieux de mémoire' (xv) Moreover, a monument can even assist in reintegrating the fragmented and traumatised self back into the community by narrating the mourning process (Leichter 125). In fact, not only do monuments represent the manifestation of the works of mourning and memory, an individual's memory and mourning can conversely attribute meaning to the monument as well. Moreover, according to Ricœur's notion of intersubjectivity, which refers to the inextricable bond between body and a space, "the transition from corporeal memory to the memory of places is assured by acts as important as orientating oneself." (41) Osborne furthers this notion of spatial coordinates evoking particular types of meanings and serving as spatial coordinates of identity by coining the term 'a-whereness' (6). He argues that the particular places people identify with are "essential for the cultivation of an awareness of national identity." (ibid.) Furthermore, by analysing both the psychological role and political role of interactions between the object and the individual, Osborne argues that symbolic landscapes of power are constructed through designating focus on certain places and events by building certain monuments (14). In other words, much in line with the constructivist view of this thesis, meaning can be given to a monument by the works of mourning and memory but its spatial coordinates can also give the works of mourning and memory meaning as well.

The institutionalisation of the collective memory, acted out in, for instance, commemoration ceremonies are important mechanisms to create and hold the community together by cyclical affirmation (Jung 211; Hermanowicz 197). However, Homans noticed a decline in mourning practices in Western societies due to the privatisation of mourning, as it removed mourning practices from the public sector, whilst becoming the responsibility of the individual (6). It is here where we can see a divergence when looking at mourning practices during the Iran-Iraq war. According to Khoury, one of the few scholars who analysed commemoration practices in Iraq, these enactments of commemoration were carried out publically to enforce the discourse surrounding martyrdom (243). Though most celebratory practices were triumphalist and celebratory in nature, as discussed in the previous chapter, a strong rhetoric of martyrdom was also employed. Much of the regime's efforts to the collective memory and identity of martyrdom was symbolic, such as the frequently used motto of the Ba'ath Party: "The martyrs are nobler than us all" which is also printed near the entrance of the Martyr's Memorial (Musawi 84). However, the regime aimed to fulfil the claims implied in this quote, through for example providing a financial support system for families that lost members in the war (ibid.). The organisations of public culture in Iraq ascribed meaning to fallen soldiers by employing discourses of Arab nationalism, secular anticolonial struggles and “tapped into the rhetoric and rituals of martyrdom inherent in an emotional Shi’i historical narrative of death and redemption.” (Khoury 222) Khoury argues that this rhetoric implied unification through the victimisation of the Iraqi nation and employed martyrdom simultaneously in association with heroism and victimhood (219-221).

With the constructivist, reciprocal and internalising workings of memory and mourning in mind, which underline the complexity and intersubjectivity between mourning, memory and identity, it is time to move on to the analysis of these manifestations in the monuments in Baghdad.

3.2 Mourning and the Monuments

Mourning and the Martyr’s Memorial

The analysis of the Martyr’s Memorial will be divided into two sections. Firstly, its Islamic connotation, spatial ‘a-where-ness’ and design choices will be analysed; secondly, the employment of martyrdom will be inspected.

The Islamic connotations in the Martyr’s Memorial tap into the collective identity and mourning by referring to memories of Islamic association. The first lies in its exterior as the Martyr’s Memorial is shaped like a split dome, or to be more precise: a cupola (*qubba*), which is a fundamental part of Islamic architecture. In addition, Al-Turk, the designer mentioned the split of the cupola being “symbolic of *layla al-qadr*, the night during which the heaven opened and the Qur’an was first revealed to Muhammad.” (Bengio 158) Moreover, the blue ceramic tiles are a testimonial to the tiling of Shi’i mosque domes in Iraq, which allow the souls of the dead to go to heaven (Khoury 225). Repeatedly, we notice the choice for the connotation with a Shi’i mosque, which in turn represents the inclination for Iraqi unity as also discussed in the previous chapter. Another factor that may have contributed to the homogenisation and cultivation of the national narrative is the memorial’s ‘a-where-ness’. The Martyr’s Memorial is situated on the east of the Tigris river on the outskirts of Baghdad, unlike the Victory Arch, which is right in the heart of Baghdad, in the now branded Green Zone. In addition, the Martyr’s Memorial is built on an artificial island, with a playground and surrounding parks, creating a serene aesthetic language (Antoon “Monumental Disrespect” 29). The open atmosphere of the monument itself and its surroundings allow visitors to enter and experience. The Martyr's Memorial, although in a disjointed S-pattern, is symmetrical, which can convey balance and elegance (Machin & Abousnnouga 105). The absence of any human form (or Ba'athist connotation) results in an open interpretation of the viewers' meaning and its hollowness suggests vulnerability and transparency (Machin & Abousnnouga 105, 135). Moreover, the cascading waterfall in the memorial can be used to symbolise purity whilst signifying suffering and sacrifice (Machin & Abousnnouga 195). All this leaves room for the visitors to mourn both collectively and individually, whilst constructing identities of the individual, the collective and even attach connotations to the monument itself as the memorial does not insinuate strong meanings.

Martyrdom, also an Islamic connotation, is employed in the monument's symbolism. The pamphlet of the opening day of the Martyr's Memorial states that the "sculptural idea in the monument has been inspired by the principles of glorification of the 'Martyr'" (Makiya 25). Moreover, inscribed on the wall of the memorial is a Quranic verse, which resembles the symbolic martyr's grave: "Deem not those who were killed for God deceased, but alive with their lord." (Antoon "Monumental Disrespect" 29) A museum and library were built on the subterranean level of the monument, to honour martyrs and their sacrifice. One of the grandest ways of materialising this discourse of memory and mourning was the creation of Martyr's Day in Iraq, on 1 December 1982. On this day, special prayers were held in mosques and churches; five minutes of silence; the visitation of martyrs' families and handing them gifts; the mandatory hour of teaching on war and its martyrs at schools; special Martyr's Day pins were required to be worn; and lastly, Saddam laying a funeral wreath at the monument during the annual ceremony (Podeh 194). According to Khoury, the goals for the affirmation of national mourning were three-fold: "to garner support of the families of martyrs by reminding them of the state's largesse; to remind citizens of the sacrifice of the families of martyrs and engender support for the war effort; and to ensure that commemorations remained strictly controlled affairs that did not foment unrest." (228) However, the inclusion of different mosques and churches on this day can be viewed as coercion as well the regime's objective of creating unity. Though the commemoration rituals were highly controlled and coerced, they might have been effective in incorporating a national narrative of mourning and not only creating, but also maintaining a collective identity surrounding martyrdom. Similarly, Volk, in her analysis of memorials and martyrdom in Lebanon, critiques deterministic kinship ideology and argues that martyrdom transcends religious sectarianism in Lebanon, as all Christian and Muslim Lebanese share this symbol of martyrdom (22-25). This thesis aligns itself with this argument as the use of martyrdom in commemoration discourses has brought about unification in the Iraqi population. The Martyr's Memorial seems to still be held in high regard, as it is the only monument remnant from Saddam's Ba'ath Party during the Iran-Iraq war that has not been (partially) dismantled. Despite the months the Coalition set up their military base there, the Martyr's Memorial has been tended carefully and can still be visited.

Mourning and the Victory Arch Monument

In the last chapter we discussed the theme of triumphalism, which proved very fruitful for analysis of the Victory Arch monument. However, the Victory Arch seems to be lacking symbolisms of mourning due to its triumphalist and aggressive demeanours. Indeed, the Victory Arch can be argued to represent disregard of mourning by incorporating thousands of helmets from fallen Iranian soldiers. Judith Butler examines the vulnerable and interdependent realms of grief in post-9/11 responses in *Precarious Life* and uncovers that the U.S. by the 'war on terrorism' tries to seek a resolution for grief through violence (30). Similarly, it can be said of the Victory Arch that it tries to overcome grief of the Iran-Iraq war through an aggressive narrative. Moreover, the Victory Arch can even represent itself as a 'countermonument', which does not console or heal, rather it 'torments' its neighbours by being a "bearer or carrier of viewers; memories, imaginings, and fantasies about the events it represents." (Homans 23)

As previously mentioned, there has been a concerted effort to remove remains of Ba'athist symbolism in Iraq by a government committee aiming at eradicating the remains of the Ba'ath Party. After demolishing more than a hundred Ba'athist artefacts, the dismantling of the Victory Arched commenced in 2007 (Semple). After parts of the Victory Arch were taken apart, prominent Iraqis protested the demolition [4], but it was only halted after the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Khalilzad opposed the destruction of the monument (Isakhan 274). The demolishment of the Victory Arch without public consent perhaps lies in that the new Iraqi government viewed the monument as a 'symbolic wound', which can be caused by an abundance of memory about certain circumstances, in this case the Ba'athist regime and the Iran-Iraq war, and can lead to a violent reaction, such as the dismantling of the monument (Ricœur 79; Leichter 123). However, Isakhan argues that the fervent opposition to the destruction of the Victory Arch at least indicates, "tacit acknowledgement of the role such monuments have played in creating a unified Iraqi identity and that their destruction can contribute to deepening ethno-religious sectarian divides." (274)

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[4] Among these prominent Iraqis were Mustafa Khadimi, a member of the *Iraq Memory Foundation*, and Saad Al-Basri, a professor of sculpture (Isakhan 273-4; Semple).

This chapter has examined the emotional and personal records of memory and identity construction. Though commemoration discourses have been enforced during the Iran-Iraq war mostly with the employment of martyrdom, the focus on a politically laden top-bottom coercion of identity construction omits the complex interdependency of identity and memory construction in the process of mourning. Moreover, monuments are integral in commemoration rituals and also induce a reciprocal relation of identity construction with an individual or as collective. The Martyr's Memorial, due its open design, 'a-where-ness' and its lack of strong connotations, was open to interpretation and reflection of the visitor and provided room for individual or collective mourning. The Victory Arch with its distinct triumphalist implications has been argued to represent a disregard to mourning, utilising violence to overcome grief, a countermonument or a symbolic wound. Nonetheless, the opposition to its destruction and the appreciation for the Martyr's Memorial profess the meaning of the unifying significance it has had on Iraqi collective identity and memory, which exemplifies the complex and uneven interdependencies in identity construction.

Conclusion

This thesis carried out an extensive historical and close analysis of the two war monuments in Baghdad to answer raised questions of how the civic constructed element of collective identity is carried out and positioned in relation to the enforced political construct in Iraq. Firstly, by analysing the political and historical context of the Iran-Iraq war and the monuments, we could establish the complexity and fluidity of Iraqi identity that is not subdued to sectarian divides or authoritarian leadership. Moreover, the significance of the calculated triumphalist narrative and symbolism was not just present in the monuments, the pinnacle being the Victory Arch with its many victorious connotations, but also in maintaining a collective identity in Iraq by employing a great deal of ethnic and religious collective memories. However, alike Saddam's role, this should not receive a disproportionate focus as we have established that many, if not all, nation-states have constructed collective identities through triumphalist narratives. In addition, by analysing the more emotional and personal records of Iraqi collective identity and the war monuments, I have argued that focusing on the politically laden element of identity construction omits the complex interdependency of identity and memory construction. Moreover, when looking at the changed connotations in the monuments, from the 'Project of the Re-Writing History' to the 'Project of De-Ba'athification', we can establish that the triumphalist narrative encapsulates both triumphalist narratives of the Ba'athist over Iran but also in the triumphalist rhetoric of the Coalition and the new Iraqi government over the Ba'ath Party. Lastly, through the intimate and affective theme of mourning, it was established that due to the eschews of Ba'ath Party and general open interpretation of the Martyr's Memorial, it has not been dismantled like the Victory Arch, but instead enjoyed by the Iraqi population as it allows the reciprocal construction of identity. Perhaps the most striking finding of this thesis, lies in the internalisation of the identity construction, even when such a construction was forced. This can be noted in the opposition to the demolishment of the Victory Arch, even though this monument embodied a strong triumphalist narrative, showcasing the unification of Iraqi identity.

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Appendix

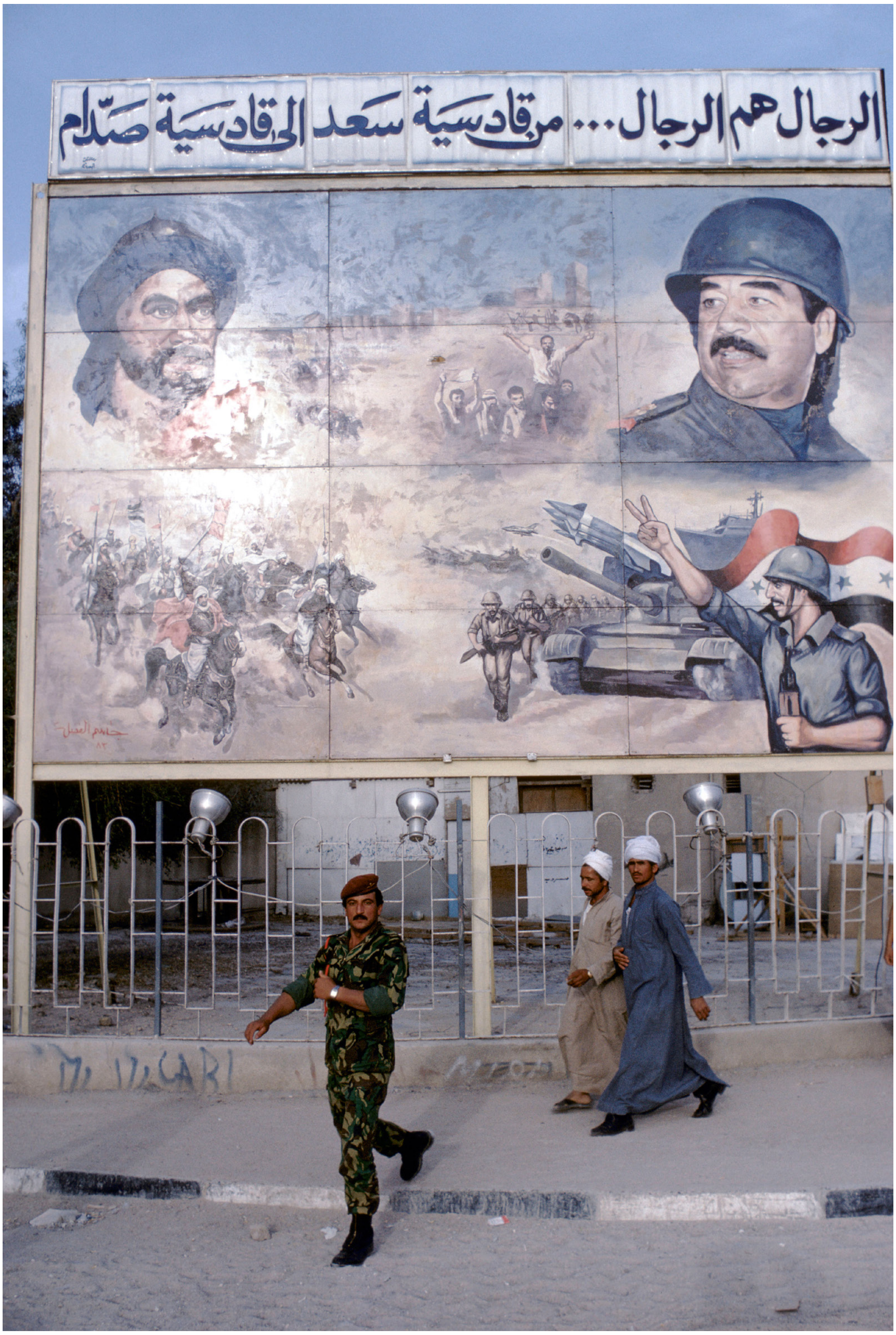
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Fig. 5. Sykes, Homer. *Saddam Hussein Portrait Abd al-Majid al-Tikriti Liberty Square Baghdad Iraq in Military Uniform.* 1984. Baghdad. Photograph. *Alamy.*

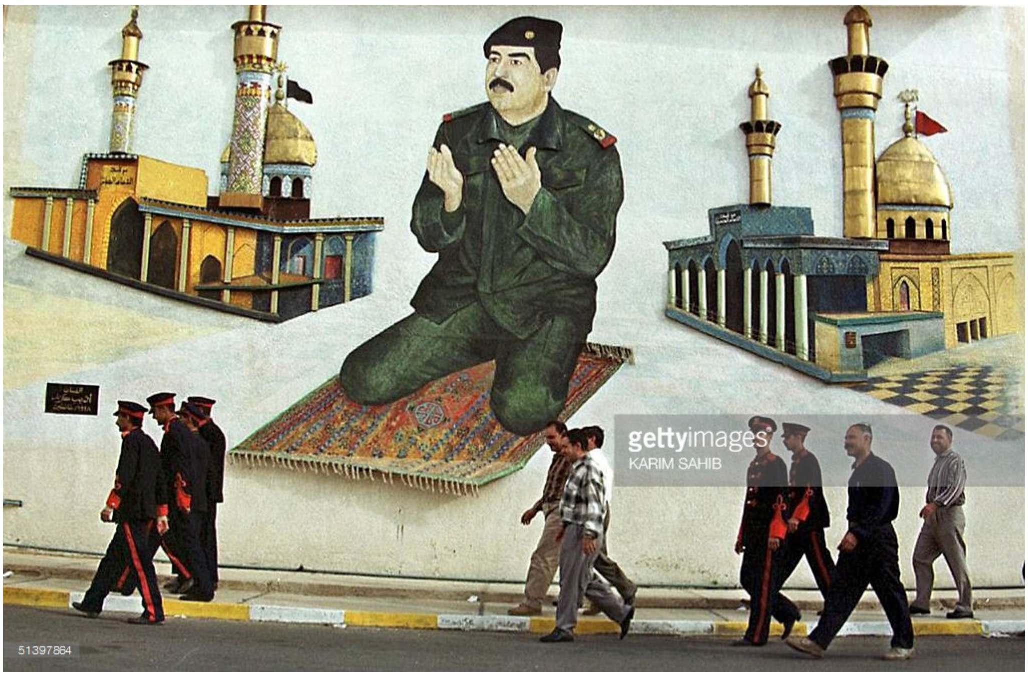
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Fig. 6. Sahib, Karim. *Iraqis pass a mural showing President Saddam Hussein.* 1984. Baghdad. Photograph. *Getty Images.*

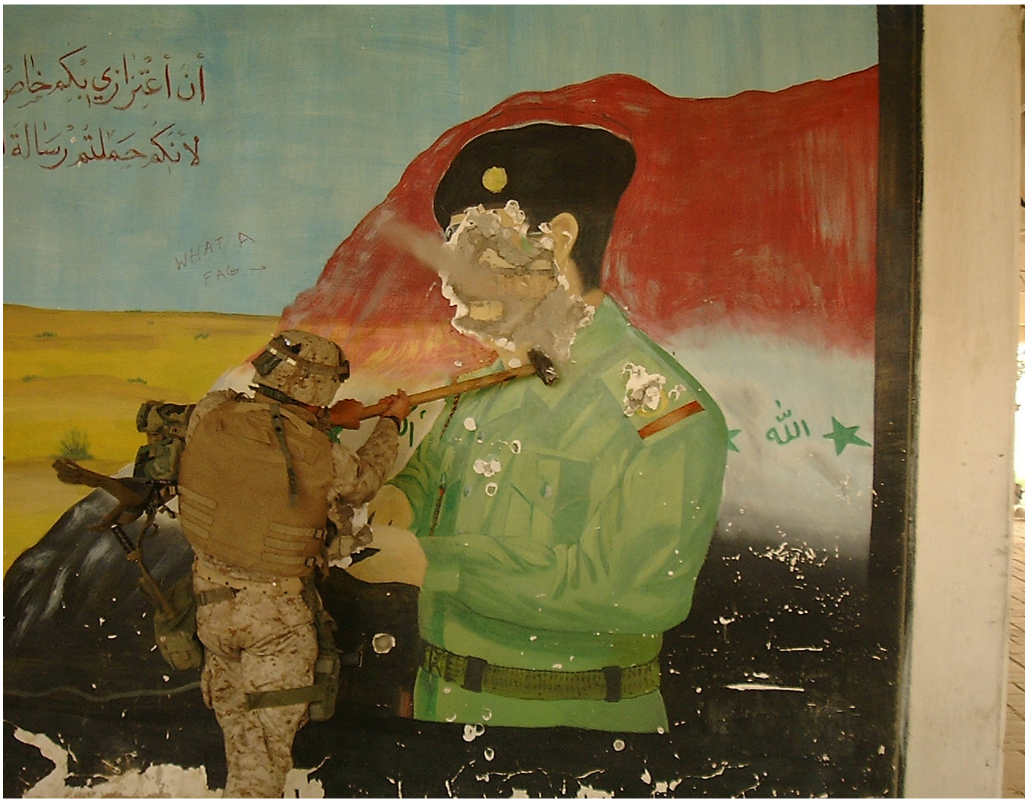

Fig. 7. Maass, Peter. *Lt. Col. Bryan McCoy uses a sledgehammer to deface a mural of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein at a military base a few miles from the center of Baghdad.* 2004. Baghdad. Photograph. *Propublica.*

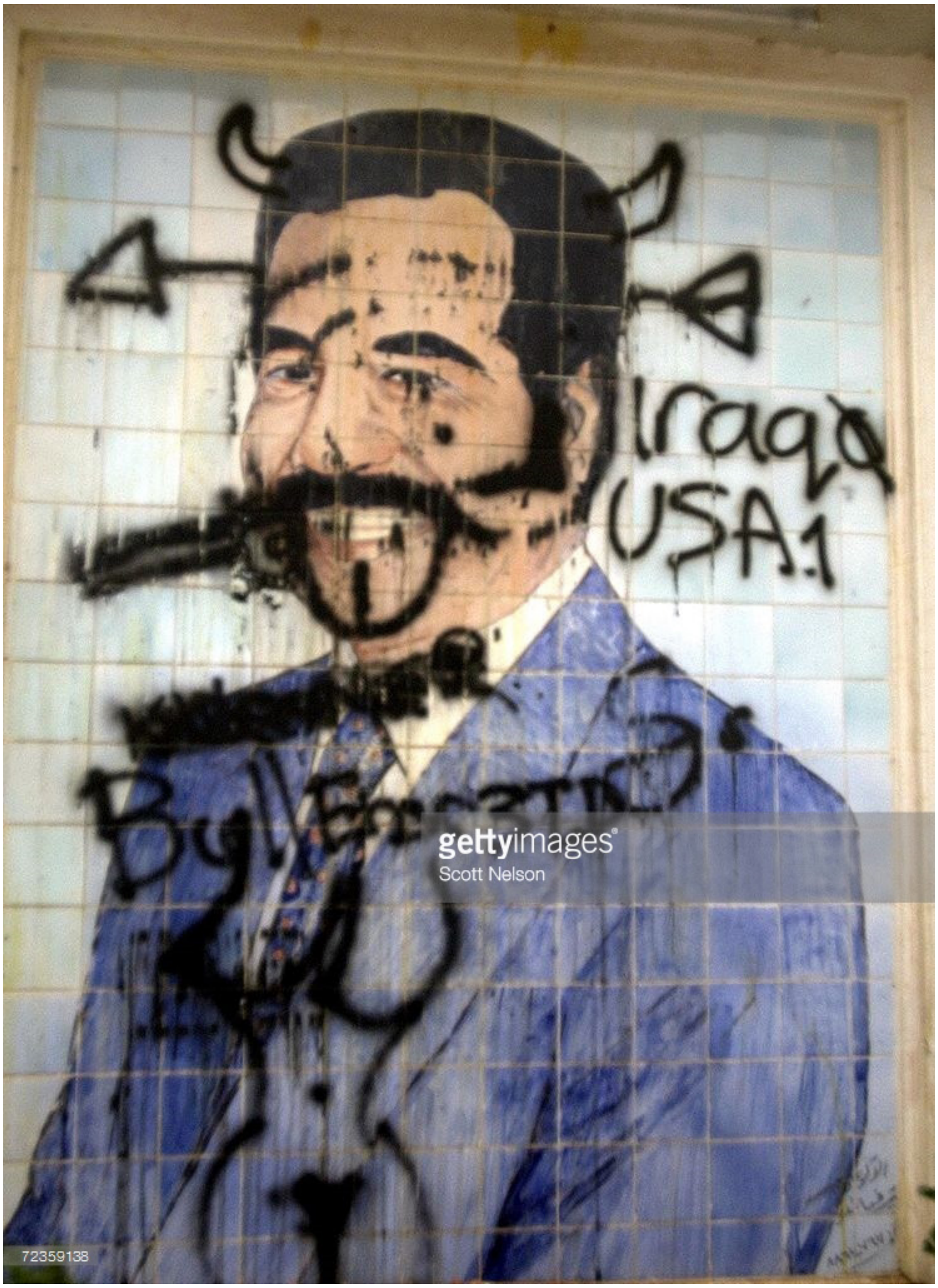
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Fig. 8. Nelson, Scott. *Coalition Forces Advance Into Baghdad.* 2003. Baghdad. Photograph. *Getty Images.*

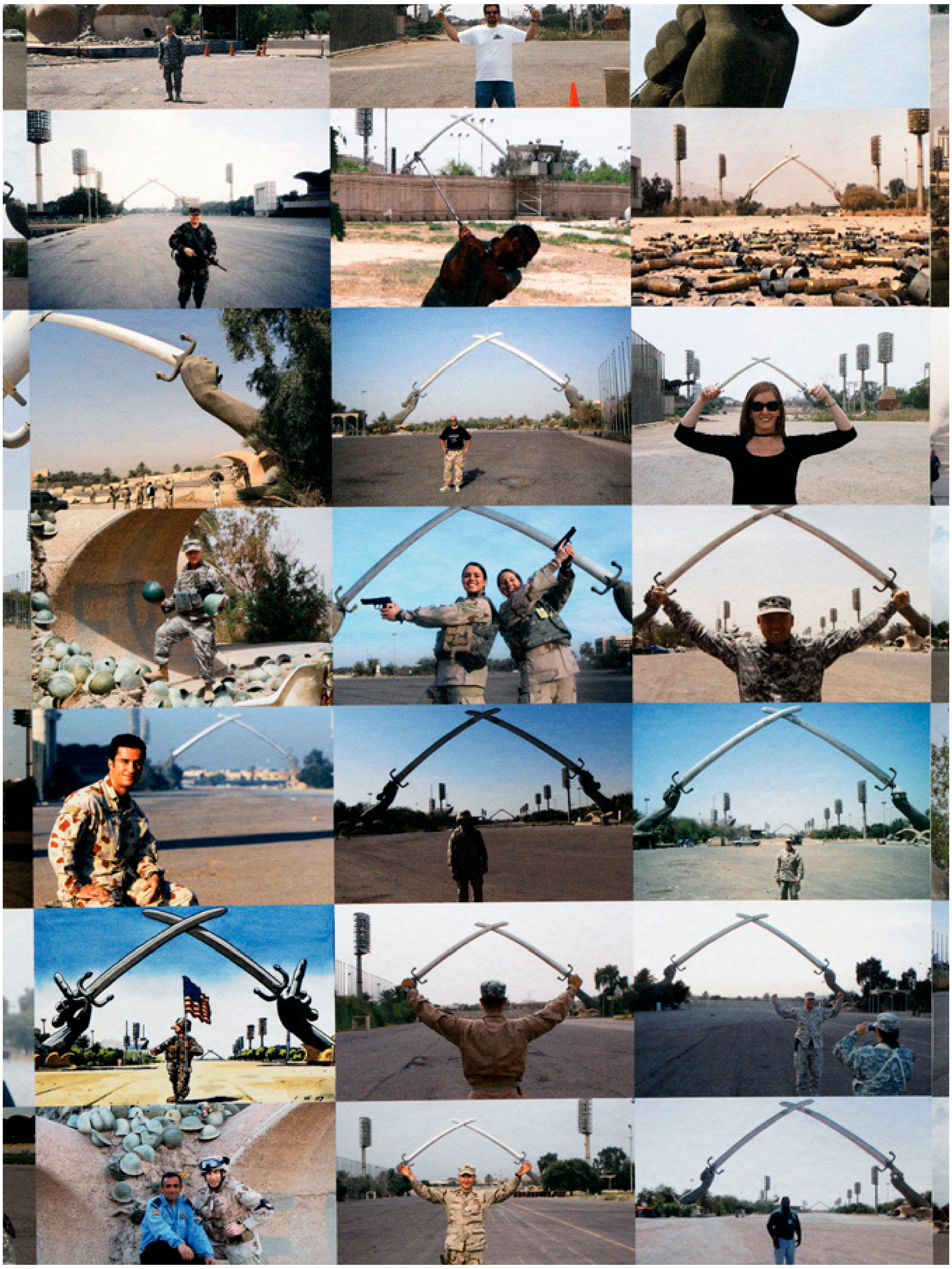

Fig. 9. Rakowitz, Michael. *The worst condition is to pass under a sword which is not one's own.* 2009. *Installation view at Lombard-Freid Projects, NY.*

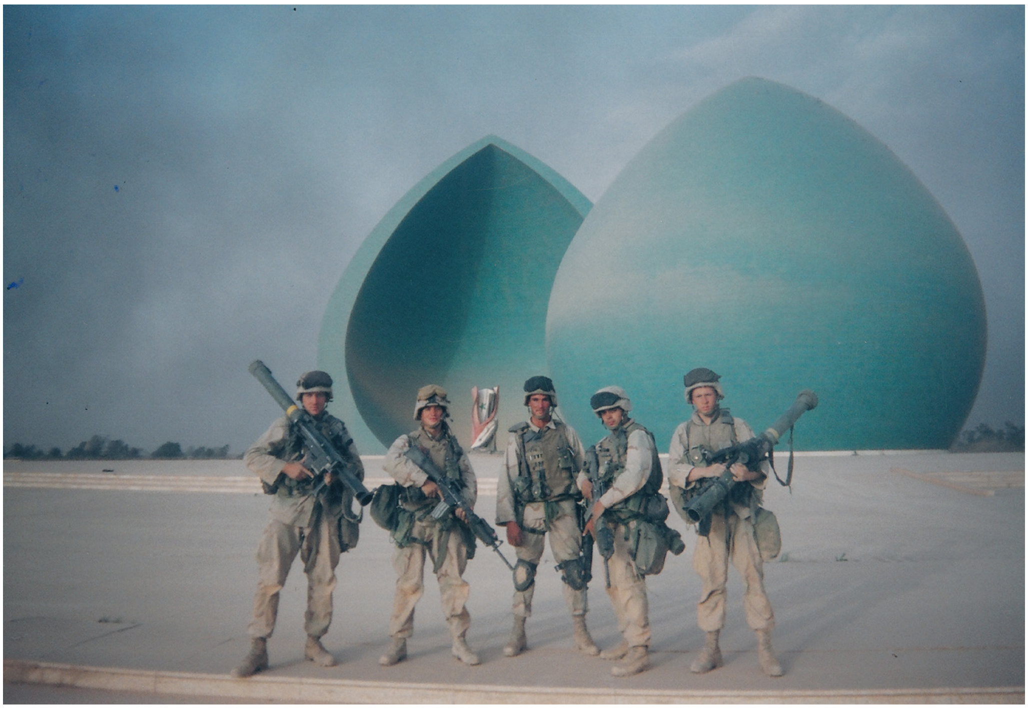

Fig. 10. Berry, Nathan S. *Al-Shaheed Monument, Iraq Invasion.* 2003. Baghdad. Photograph. *Flickr.*

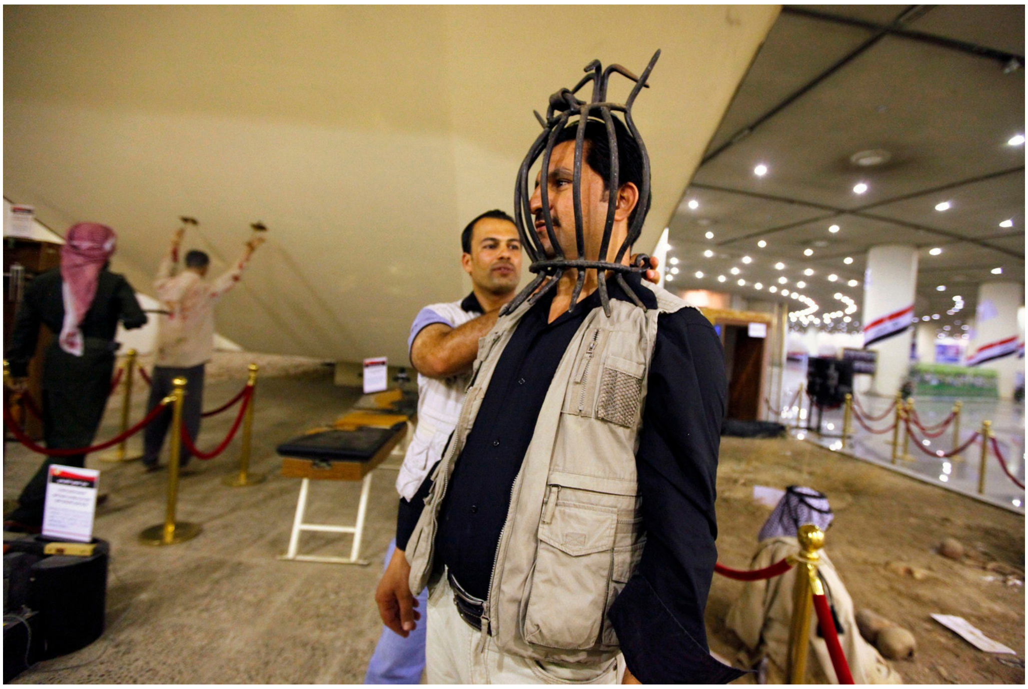

Fig. 11. Al-Sudani, Thaier. *A visitor tries on a metal mask, used as a torture device by the regime of Iraq's ousted leader Saddam Hussein, at an exhibition gallery at the Martyrs Monument in Baghdad*. 2013. Baghdad. *The Denver Post.*