

Every Man for Himself!

By Victoria Fontan

A “badge of honor.” This is what colleagues, readers and students frequently refer to when becoming aware of my one-year experience at Colgate University. I am told that I should be “proud” of myself, since my research is now “vindicated” and everything I claimed or wrote about the Iraq war has now filtered into common knowledge and public consciousness. A majority of Americans now believe that the Iraq war was a mistake, and are in favor of a withdrawal. The failure of US policy in Iraq is making prime time on CNN, and an increasing number of columnists and pundits are commenting on the impact that humiliation has on conflict escalation. More importantly yesterday’s enemies, nationalist insurgent groups, are now US allies in fighting al-Qaeda in Sunni Muslim parts of the country.¹ All in all, my research now seems to be in very good company. The issue, however, is that badges of honor do not pay the bills, and certainly do not make anyone’s career. In addition, they do not keep anyone safe!

My claim to this “badge of honor,” that for a long time I would have traded any day for a conventional academic career path, is to have carried out research on the effect of humiliation on the escalation of political violence, in both post-Saddam Iraq and post-war Lebanon, and to have engaged in action research in the field on several occasions between 2001 and 2004. This paper will expose, to the best of my recollection, how my research, teaching, and writings were repressed by different sources both within and outside my academic institution during the 2003-2004 year, and how this repression led me to expatriate from US academia into an Iraqi university. Of particular importance will be an illustration of the mechanisms that currently allow young academics to be flushed out of US universities before being able to prove themselves as scholars and teachers, such as result from weak or non-existent solidarity and support networks. Consequently, this paper also examines what systems might promote greater solidarity among critical or controversial scholars who face repression in their academic work.

My original sin

I was raised in a conservative family of Brittany, North-West of France. Throughout my entire childhood, I saw reports on television on terrorism in Corsica and the French Basque Country. I also learned that France had a problem at some point in its history with Algeria, and that this was why bomb attacks shook Paris from time to time. All these recurring news stories made me question the motivations that would lead human beings to injure or kill one another. I wanted to know who the individuals behind these attacks were, what motivated them, and how they saw us. If we considered them as brutal, heartless, evil people, how did they regard the French? What made them kill innocents? Did they ever start the day, thinking: “Today, I am going to kill as many innocent people as possible”? I just could not bring myself to believe that my reality was necessarily the right one since it stemmed from my “civilized” way of being.

After studying politics at the University of Sussex, in the UK, and being exposed to a version of the Algerian War that I would never have been encountered in France, I became interested in the politics of Arab World. A course on Lebanese politics led me to embark on a doctoral study on peace-building in Lebanon. As soon as I arrived in Beirut in January 2001, I realized the strategic importance of the Hezbollah, known in Lebanon as the Party of God, considered there to be a political party just like any other. My overall thesis was that since none of the issues that had plunged the country into a 17-year civil war had been resolved, if the country was to refrain from falling into conflict again, it would need the commitment of the Hezbollah as a powerful political broker.

My research, it seems, was not too much off the mark, since recent developments in Lebanon seem to point towards the same conclusion. Intrigued by the role played by the Hezbollah in Lebanese politics and social life, I set out to analyze their public diplomacy, ideas, social following, and so on. Since many colleagues of the American University of Beirut’s Centre for Behavioral Research had already made contact with them, I did the same. After all, I was enrolled in an Irish university, and the European Union had not placed the Hezbollah on its terrorist list. I therefore opened the Yellow Pages, looked to the Political Parties Offices section, and found the phone number of their Press Office. As they were used to meeting academic researchers from even the US, they received me. After a few preparatory meetings, they gave me *carte blanche* to

contact any of their social institutions for the sake of my research. I therefore spent the next two years carrying out participant observation with many of their institutions, women's groups, girl's summer classes, agricultural development centers, and hospitals. Since Hezbollah's military affairs were not the focal point of my research, however, I never observed any military activities or trainings.

Upon successfully defending my thesis in the Spring of 2003, I saw in the overthrow of Saddam Hussein the potential for another Hezbollah to establish itself in a Middle Eastern country, this time in Iraq. As I knew nothing about that country, I asked the Hezbollah Press Office to help me arrange interviews with their Iraqi partners once I reached Baghdad. Both my contacts at Manar Television (the Hezbollah television channel) and the Press Office originally refused, invoking concerns for my security, but upon my insistence, they finally agreed to contact the Beirut representative of their Iraqi partner organization, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI). The SCIRI representative in Beirut wrote a letter, in Farsi, for their Baghdad counterpart, saying that they should receive me once I reached Baghdad. I was also given a satellite phone number. Since there was no other type of communication available at the time, not even e-mails, this letter was the best I could aim for.

I set off for Baghdad the next day, shadowing a journalist to pay for my passage, uncertain of where I would stay or who I would meet, and with this letter for unique direction. After a first disappointing meeting at the Baghdad SCIRI Headquarters, where my letter was confiscated and no one seemed to know what was happening, I realized that the SCIRI was not made of the educated, disciplined, rigorous crowd that I had observed in Beirut for the past two years. I knew after a few days that there would be no Iraqi Hezbollah, that the SCIRI was not interested in helping foreign researchers, and that I had to keep my eyes open for alternative research material.

A few days later, our news team arrived in Fallujah. As tensions between US troops and residents raised due to a shoot-out on April 28th 2003, we witnessed a series of US raids over the following weeks.² From my first moment in Fallujah, I realized that it would be an important part of the post-war equation. I saw burned out US soldiers trying to uphold their perception of what constitutes security, facing a crowd of residents concerned with their own safety and more importantly their individual and collective

honor. Both parties were afraid, unaware of one another's codes of conduct and perceptions. In a society where honor and vengeance are of utmost importance, violence was bound to escalate rapidly.

I met with ordinary people who had not been given reparations for the outrages they had suffered, and who decided to resort to violence to avenge their lost honor. In other Sunni Muslim parts of the country, I witnessed the same phenomenon -- ordinary people taking up arms, standing for their own rights, in the same way, it felt, that US patriots once stood up against British rule. It was obvious, tragic, and predictable.

After witnessing many misunderstandings that turned violent, I decided to study the impact of perceived humiliation on conflict escalation in post-Saddam Iraq. I went to several Sunni Muslim parts of the country, interviewed various ordinary people, lived with some of them, and slowly began to come up with an Iraqi-based analysis of conflict escalation in post-Saddam Iraq.³

I was not the only foreigner in Iraq to realize the importance of humiliation in conflict escalation: al-Qaeda also did. In the few months during which some ordinary people organized themselves into nationalist insurgency movements, others answered the calls of Islamic fundamentalism and al-Qaeda. This too was predictable and could have been avoided, had conditions not been set for Iraqis to rebel in the first place.

Throughout the initial months of the invasion of Iraq, the US administration realized that it was losing the peace, and initiated a propaganda war vilifying both nationalist and al-Qaeda based movements. Under this framing of the Iraqi conflict, any attempt to separate the two movements or to understand the underlying factors that spurred violence was labeled as "condoning terrorism." Once the coalition decided to administer Iraq its way or the hard way, my research became controversial overnight.⁴

Lesson Number One: Do not be interviewed by anyone other than your future boss

As I completed my first academic article on the escalation of violence in Fallujah, I was invited to speak by various East-Coast Universities in the Spring of 2004, among them the United States Military Academy at West Point and Colgate University. After a very successful intervention at West Point, I arrived at Colgate to make a presentation that turned into an interview for the position of Visiting Assistant Professor of Peace

Studies for the following academic year. My stay at Colgate was a great success. It did not feel like I was being interviewed at all, but more like I was meeting compatible colleagues who seemed eager to learn about my research, and whose research was also of great interest to me. The day that I spent on campus was an absolute joy and we parted with the idea that I might be a good fit for the department.

A few days later, I was asked by the Acting Head of the Peace Studies Program, Prof. Nancy Ries, who had welcomed me with such warmth at Colgate, to have a conversation with the future head of the program, Prof. Dan Monk, who was being recruited with tenure at the same time as me. He called me from Israel where he was spending a sabbatical year and spoke about teaching loads and expectations that we both had from one another's perspective.

As I had just obtained a good offer of contract extension from the Turkish institution at which I was then teaching, I wanted to leave Turkey only for a place with even better potential. I made it clear to Prof. Monk that I would be looking towards staying for a tenure track at Colgate, while applying for other positions elsewhere. He did not exclude the possibility of my possible stay at Colgate beyond one year, but also said that he could not promise a tenure-track position in Peace Studies for that year. As he sounded positive and it was possible that I could stay beyond my first visiting year, I was not alarmed. A few days later, I was notified that my candidacy was successful. I arrived at Colgate in early August, on the assumption that I was there to stay.

Eager to meet my new boss, I made it to work only a few hours after landing at Syracuse Airport. We met and agreed to share lunch. Not long into our meal, a black cloud started to form over the table. After I spoke about my PhD research on the Hezbollah and my latest article on Iraq, Prof. Monk expressed reservations about the value of researching insurgencies. Was it not a rather empirically-based topic? What was my methodology in the field? Had I gone in front of the ethics committee? My PhD was from the University of Limerick, where is that?

Then came a discussion on Israel. As I knew of his sabbatical research there, I felt that our fields, experiences, and approaches would be complimentary. Speaking about the separation built between Palestinian and Israeli areas, however, we had quite different outlooks. When he spoke of a fence, I spoke of a wall. A fence for me was something that

my dog could dig under, and since we were both dog lovers, I drew the contrast to a wall that *is* a wall. He replied that the separation was much more of a fence than a wall. I replied that the Berlin Wall also was more of a fence than a wall, but that it was still called a wall. Clearly, our conversation was going nowhere. Our approaches were not to be complimentary. By the end of this lunch, and on my first day in the US, I realized that it was a dreadful shame that he had not been there for my campus interview, because I would never have been hired! This is a lesson learned for both of us: be on campus to recruit and to be recruited. On that day, I knew that I would not stay at Colgate beyond my one-year renewable contract, and that I had made a serious mistake in leaving Turkey. The rest of the year would prove to be one humiliation after another.

Lesson Number Two: Whatever you do, do not be “hysterical”!

After I arrived, I first had to find a suitable teaching load, as this had been mentioned during my interview. Understandably, I wanted to stay as close to my specialty as possible, since I also wanted to use the coming year for research, publication, and a job search. After being asked to submit a syllabus for a course on Core Middle East by Prof. Safi, I was told that the institutional need had switched from Core Middle East to Core Israel, and that Prof. Monk would be teaching it. The reason invoked for this was twofold: first, there was no longer any institutional need in Middle Eastern studies; second, and this came directly from Prof. Monk, I did not speak Arabic fluently, hence was not qualified to teach the Core Middle East course.

This was the first in a long line of humiliations in relation to my scholarship: how could I be a Middle East expert and not speak the language fluently? While true to one extent, French, my mother tongue, is spoken widely in Lebanon and equipped me to understand much of the political discourse. By the look of the Iraq invasion debacle, precipitated by many Iraqi exiles that little idea of how their country should be ran, I felt that my contribution to the academic debate surrounding this part of the world would be as valid as anyone's. I nonetheless embarked on Arabic lessons to show good will and to better fit departmental needs. Maybe I would be worthy of teaching Core Middle East in the next academic year if I was asked to stay.

As I had relied on shadowing a journalist, Robert Fisk, in order to be financially able to go to Iraq in 2003, I had to spend a few weekends away to either fly to Paris or Dublin in the Fall of 2004, to work as a researcher on his book.⁵ I was told that spending weekends abroad did not show my commitment to the Colgate community, and that working with Fisk made me more of a journalist than an academic. True, but collaborating with Fisk allowed me to initiate ground-breaking research in post-Saddam Iraq, and did that not count for anything?

Then came the attacks on my scholarship. I had sent an article on humiliation and political violence for review to Prof. Monk, whom I hoped would become a mentor for me during that year. He dismissed the article, accepted for publication since in a peer reviewed journal, *Peace and Change*, “as if it had been written to illustrate the books that I had on my shelf.”⁶ Whatever this meant, it was bad. Then he criticized my focus on humiliation and disparaged my network of scholars -- anchored at Columbia University, and counting no less than experts such as Morton Deutsch, Peter Coleman, and Don Klein – as unworthy of my time.

As I still thought that I could please Prof. Monk, I reduced my trips to Europe, focused on writing according to his standards, and worked hard to teach in the best way possible. My teaching load still had not been finalized, and I hoped to be able to at least repeat one class in the second term. This was not possible as my War, State, and Society class was given to a colleague. Instead of repeating this or at least teaching something in my research area, I was given a Core Modernity course, starting with Darwin’s theory of evolution.

Since this was a core curriculum course, I only had a 20 percent space for material of my own choice. I decided to focus on the theme of conflict and tried to introduce Joe Sacco’s book, *Palestine*. I showed it to my Program Head as a courtesy and because I was still looking for his mentorship. He replied that it was inappropriate, as it might alienate Jewish students. I then made the mistake in writing in an e-mail to him that I did not mind being “burned at the stake” for introducing the book to my class. As English is my second language, I did not quite understand the strong nature of this remark. Prof. Monk, however, seized advantage of the *faux pas* to brand me as hysterical.

Good old hysteria: a sure value in any conflict between an omnipotent male tenured department head and a visiting female rookie! I was therefore stigmatized as a hysterical immature person, as a journalist and a quasi-scholar.

All they had left to discredit was my teaching. The problem was that I had excellent student reviews. My Program Head sat in on two of my classes, but since his background was architecture, he did not have much to say about my theoretical take on ethnicity. However, as I like to illustrate concepts with facts, this was used against me. My student reviews, he said, were too good and probably illustrated my reliance more on facts more than theories. According to him, I was more of an entertainer than a professor. Students seemed not to challenge my teaching enough, which led him to think that, again, I was some sort of a glorified journalist.

After all this, one December morning, Prof. Monk called me in his office with Prof. Ries, who had recruited me, present. Again denigrated as a weak scholar, feeble teacher, and hysterical person, Prof. Monk informed me that my contract would not be renewed for the next academic year. In his benevolent mercy, he promised to help me be a better scholar and to find a job elsewhere. As I broke the news to some colleagues and students, I could only hear incredulity. How could this happen? How could I fall from grace at Colgate so quickly?

Lesson Number Three: Do not allow anyone to frame your research as “subversive”

Devastated, feeling worthless, shell-shocked, I went to Iraq during the semester break to continue research and search for a new position. A colleague from Columbia University Iraq Program gave me the details of a few universities in Northern Iraq that might be interested in having me the next academic year. On the day I reached Erbil, I was offered a position. I felt that I was saved, and that I could never be called a bad scholar again, since I would be able to learn both Arabic and Kurdish. Somehow, I still wanted to prove to the paternalistic mentor that had rejected me time and again that I was worth something after all. When I returned to Colgate, many students told me that they wanted me to stay, that they would fight for me. Yet this is when the internal Colgate conflict became even larger and more damaging to my career.

One morning, the Colgate Press Office issued a release stating that I had been “embedded” with the Iraqi insurgency during the semester break.⁷ This was in January 2005, at a time when the official Bush administration line was that all insurgent activities in post-Saddam Iraq were terrorist activities. Had I been “embedded” with terrorists? Absolutely not. I had only met with local Iraqi people who either had engaged or were going to take part in insurgent activities as a result of a perceived individual or collective humiliation. In some parts of Iraq, this meant a lot of people.

As soon as I saw the press release, I made it very clear to the Press Office that I had never been embedded with insurgent planning or carrying out any insurgent activity. I had only met with regular Iraqis, and never with al-Qaeda or any group of this type. The damage was done, however, and soon angry e-mails started to reach the Colgate Press Office. A few days later, neo-conservative forums started to demonize my research. The California-based conservative blog, Little Green Footballs, falsely reported that I was “negotiating to be embedded” with the car-bombing, head-chopping *mujahideen* in Iraq.” Early comments from readers ranged from “Rachel Corrie’s soul sister” to “useful idiot.”⁸ Once my office phone number was posted on the blog, I received a torrent of abusive messages. As readers became increasingly polarized against my research, their posts called for me to be beheaded in the same way that *The Wall Street Journal* correspondent Daniel Pearl had been, to die in a car bomb, to be abducted, and so on.⁹ Other blogs raised the stakes by enjoining US soldiers to kill me while in Iraq, urging that I be hanged for treason, or implying that I was a Nazi sympathizer.¹⁰

A few days later, a new blog appeared with a fake interview of me claiming that I had engaged in embedded research with KKK “freedom fighters” and that “if we would only listen, they wouldn’t have to resort to lynching.”¹¹ As grotesque as this assertion might seem, it did not look far off the mark to Prof. Monk who asked if I had ever been in Chicago and spoken those words. Instead of confronting him for his blatant lack of faith and outright harassment, I was in shock and could only deny all allegations.

By then, the university press office was receiving angry e-mails from the public and from veteran alumni who threatened to cut off their funding.¹² This raised alarm bells for the university Press Office which decided to publish a statement correcting the previous release that mentioned me being “embedded” with the Iraqi insurgency.¹³

Instead of standing by me, one by one, my close colleagues stood aloof and silent. Prof. Monk publicly distanced himself from my research, saying that “this was entirely [my] own research, [that] it was unaffiliated with Colgate.”¹⁴

At this stage, *Fox News* had taken interest in the controversy and wanted me to interview with Bill O’Reilly. I accepted at first, ready to defend my research and choices, but then received an e-mail from the Dean of the Faculty, Prof. Lyle Roelofs, discouraging me from appearing on the program. Then it was Prof. Ries’ turn at a pep talk, as she expressed worry that O’Reilly would “humiliate” me. She informed me that the conservative e-magazine, *FrontPage*, had inquired about me, and confessed: “Horowitz is after you, I am terrified.”

At this point, I realized two things. First, Colgate had given up on me and was hoping to lock me -- the hysterical, scandalous no-good failure -- in their attic until I made it out of campus. Second, my colleagues were afraid that somehow my disgrace was contagious. A few colleagues comforted me in private, and I will always be grateful to them for this. In public, however, it was a West Point colleague, Prof. Scott Silverstone, who alone defended my research by saying that it was extremely useful to the cadets and that I was “doing a valuable academic and, more broadly, policy service.”¹⁵ Without his support, my contract would probably have been immediately terminated, and Colgate made it obvious to me that I was not to speak with any media outlets.

One last straw came from a first-year student who had come to my office asking for help in becoming a journalist. His name was Mark Bello. As I wanted to help and mentor students in any way possible in my last few months at Colgate, I gave him two afternoons of my time where I exposed him to the life of a journalist. I told him about how I had gotten to where I was academically, what I had witnessed in Iraq while shadowing Robert Fisk, and gave him some pointers on how to succeed as a journalist. I did not hear from him for a few weeks, until his interview “notes” appeared on a Colgate conservative student website. The students running the site were engaged in a dispute with the university administration over its selling of chapter houses, and used me in their goal to discredit the university in any possible way.¹⁶

By the look of it, this student's shot at journalism will make him a prime candidate to work in a tabloid newspaper. The "notes" published on the net under the title "Fontan in Iraq" are exaggerated, distorted, and often outright false. Sadly they are still available online for anyone to read. While Bello states that I met with the wife of Abu Musab Zarqawi while in Jordan, I actually said that my newspaper's fixer in Jordan, Mayada al-Askari had met her as CNN was looking to interview her. Where he states that I "brag" about my Hezbollah ties, I simply said that I carried out participant observation with their social outlets in Beirut, an activity that many other PhD students were engaged in at the same time.¹⁷

A few weeks after this interview was posted, as I prepared to leave the US for Iraq, I received an e-mail from Prof. Ries, telling me that she no longer could act as an academic referee for me, since she could not write "unambiguous" letters about my tenure at Colgate. That is when I realized that the public extension of the conflict with my Program Head would cost me an academic career in the US.

Lesson Number Four: Build a network

Reflecting on the unfolding of those events and the reactions that I now get when asked about this painful period of my life and career, I realize that what I was lacking was a strong network of advisers. While conservative blogs seized on the ambiguous Colgate press release and spread it like wildfire, I had support or solidarity. No academic left-wing or liberal network was there to systematically pick up on every new case, as the conservative side did so well from their point of view. Was it because my research was not high-profile enough? Because I was not tenured? Because I was a foreigner? After all, several US journalists had embedded themselves with the insurgency while the controversy was developing around my research, and nothing happened to them.¹⁸ Some reasons can be put forward in connection to this at several levels.

First, as Prof. Ries's reaction illustrates, many academics are terrified to be pilloried as I was, and hence kept a low profile. Very few were the colleagues who checked in with me on a daily basis to give me advice, express their support, or simply to see how I was holding up. Prof. Jennifer Loewenstein, who was exposed to far more vilification than I, called me almost every day, as did Robert Fisk, who felt that the

Program Head's disrespect of my research must have been connected to him, since he frequently condemned Israel's human rights abuses in the past and is wrongly considered to be one-sided in his reporting.

Second, the fact that I was not tenured did not raise many eyebrows. My e-lynching occurred at the same time as the Ward Churchill case. Had a critical mass of academics come together as a united front to defend Ward, me, and numerous others, it could have launched a debate on how common academic repression actually is. By approaching these injustices on a case-by-case basis, however, no sense of *collective and systemic* repression of scholars was allowed to emerge. This grave oversight, which thankfully is being corrected by this book, meant that many young scholars have been flushed out of US academia without a fair chance to prove the validity and importance of their research. After all, what I wrote and said shortly after the US invasion and occupation of Iraq is now official US policy in the Sunni parts of Iraq; it is called the "Sunni Awakening," whereby yesterday's insurgent groups are today's allies.¹⁹ While I was shot down for differentiating between insurgent and terrorist groups a few years ago, this important distinction is now commonplace.

Epilogue: Research is one's best defense

I left for Iraq feeling worthless, worried for my own safety, since a colleague, Marla Ruszicka, had died in a car bomb a few weeks earlier. Penniless, I had no other choice than to press ahead with my exile. Before I left, I secured a link with Columbia University to develop a conflict resolution curriculum for them in Northern Iraqi Universities, in partnership with my new institution, Salaheddin University, based in Erbil. A few weeks after my arrival in Erbil, I caught a mysterious disease displaying symptoms ranging between cholera and salmonella. Realizing that I would not survive one year in Iraq in this condition, I took an offer from the University for Peace, in Costa Rica, to immediately join them as a Program Director in International Peace Studies.

Overnight, my exile turned into a golden retirement where I found a group of like-minded colleagues evolving in an institution displaying horizontal management practices and catering for exceptional students. In my three years at the University for Peace, I have never felt humiliated, disrespected, or sidelined as an academic. I often say that I

died at Colgate and reached heaven at UPeace. My god-sent recruitment, however, almost never took place. After my search committee reached a consensus on pre-selected candidates, the then Dean of the Faculty, Prof. Amr Abdalla, “googled” me and found all the sites mentioned above. Yet, with insight and integrity rare among academics, he realized that my research had been repressed and chose not to volunteer his findings to the rest of the search committee as he felt that such information” would in turn make the committee biased for or against me. I was therefore only to be recruited on my academic merit. Prof. Abdalla gave me a chance that I try to honor every single day since I started to work for UPeace. I now work directly under him as leader of a project facilitating the establishment of MA Programs in Peace and Conflict Studies in 16 universities worldwide.²⁰ I have also just been promoted to the rank of Associate Professor, an achievement I would never have thought possible only three years ago.

In the year that followed my appointment to UPeace as Program Director, I have reflected on my relationship with Prof. Monk. Above all, I regret that our research, methodological approaches, and ideas were not complimentary. My stay at Colgate was needlessly disputatious and dramatic. What burdens do I still carry, personally and professionally?

Personally, due to a significant loss of academic self-esteem, it took me more than four years to finish my book on the role of perceived humiliation in the escalation of violence in post-Saddam Iraq.²¹ While at UPeace, every time that I found a trace of dissonance between me and my management, I feared for my job security. The academic year of 2007-2008 was the first year that I have not been on the market due to my anxiety of being sacked with nowhere to go.

But the past was not yet completely behind me. A few months after I started working for UPeace, Prof. Monk, not satisfied in having gotten rid of me, threatened legal action. Some students of my Conflict Resolution class had complained about their grades and Monk wanted to see their papers for feedback. Since I had chosen to grade papers in my last days in the US before going to Iraq, I had sent them to an APA address kindly provided by the US army through a West Point contact. Sadly, the two boxes of files and personal items never arrived. I wrote this to Prof. Monk who never contacted me again. Regardless, had the papers reached Colgate, my grades probably would have been

overturned in a lengthy and expensive legal battle that would have left me in debt. I consider this attempt to deliver a final blow to my academic judgment as harassment.

Professionally, as mentioned above, I was on the market for two consecutive years, and received only one interview per year. Last year, an insider to the search committee of a leading Peace Studies Program in the Midwest wrote to me that the committee was impressed with my CV and put me among the top four candidates. Yet I was never called for a campus interview. The search committee probably “googled” me and feared the controversial nature of my research and name, or rang Colgate University.

Academic institutions are not alone in typing my name into a search engine: someone at Homeland Security did the same and put me on a “terrorist” watch list. Consequently, since February 2007, every time that I step out of a US bound plane I am met right outside the plane by Homeland Security Officers who escort me for questioning. Every episode supersedes the last, in a recent trip to Washington DC, I was even interrogated by the FBI at Miami Airport. In every one of these interviews, I meet dedicated and intelligent professionals who understand and are interested in my research. I have actually gotten to the point where I look forward to catching up with some of those officers when I pass through Miami airport.

Still, as the US moves ever closer to a total surveillance system and a menacing garrison state, I never know what will happen to me. Will I be branded as an “enemy combatant,” stripped of my constitutional rights, and sent to Guantanamo Bay? Although the state and academic complex seeks to stifle thought, criticism, and dissent, I know that my research is my best advocate in times like this.

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⁴ Bremer, L. P. (2006). *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*. New York, Simon and Schuster.

⁵ Fisk, R. (2005). *The Great War for Civilization: The Conquest of the Middle East*. London, Fourth Estate Publishers.

⁶ I subsequently withdrew this article from *Peace and Change* and incorporated it in my *Voices from Post-Saddam Iraq* book as Chapter 4.

⁷ <http://www.colgate.edu/DesktopDefault1.aspx?tabid=730&pgID=6013&nwID=3484>

⁸ <http://www.littlegreenfootballs.com/weblog/?entry=14483&only>

⁹ <http://www.littlegreenfootballs.com/weblog/?entry=14483&only>

¹⁰ <http://wizbangblog.com/content/2005/01/27/university-prof.php>

¹¹ <http://www.groupsrv.com/hobby/about135661.html>

¹² <http://pierrelegrand.net/2005/01/27/the-email-i-sent-to-colgate-protesting-this-shameful-behavior.htm>

¹³ <http://media.www.maroon-news.com/media/storage/paper742/news/2005/03/04/News/Peace.Studies.Professors.Research.Causes.Conflict-886076.shtml>; <http://www.colgate.edu/DesktopDefault1.aspx?tabid=730&pgID=6013&nwID=3484>

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¹⁵ <http://media.www.maroon-news.com/media/storage/paper742/news/2005/03/04/News/Peace.Studies.Professors.Research.Causes.Conflict-886076.shtml>

¹⁶ http://www.sa4c.com/documents/fontan_interview.htm

¹⁷ http://www.sa4c.com/documents/fontan_interview.htm

¹⁸ See <http://meetingresistance.com>

¹⁹ Cockburn, P. (2008). "If there is no change in three months, there will be war again." *The Independent*. London.

²⁰ <http://www.upsam.upeace.org>

²¹ Fontan, V. (forthcoming). *Voices from Post-Saddam Iraq: Living with Terrorism, Insurgency, and New Forms of Tyranny*. Westport, CT, Praeger Security International.