

US Administration's Political Apology Strategies for the Invasion of Iraq

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the strategies adopted by the US governmental bodies in the issuance of their political apologies for the atrocities committed by the US military personnel during the Iraq War (2003–2011). The objectives were to: i.) identify their number and issuers, and ii.) examine the extent of which they incorporated the six obligatory component parts stipulated by the UN's *'Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law'* (2005): iii.) determine how far they conform and are consistent with the stipulations of latter international law. Research data consisted in the five political apologies issued so far by the US governmental bodies for atrocities committed by the US military personnel during the Iraq War as published on the website of 'The Institute for the Study of Human Rights (ISHR)' – at Columbia University, New York, USA. Data analysis indicated that the US occupation forces had resorted to the strategies of i.) minimizing the number of political apologies to the least possible digits, notwithstanding the numerous widely-reported and documented stories of war crimes committed; ii.) transforming formal state-to-state political apology to a non-formal person-to-person issue; iii.) total refusal to seriously abiding by the rules of the International Law; iv.) Making one American journalist based in Baghdad publish in the New York Times newspaper an article with the headline of *'U.S. Apologizes for Baghdad Mosque Incident'* that

contains no textual evidence for the locution of any 'apology', whatsoever; v.) President G. W. Bush addressing one political apology for the 'Torture of Abu-Ghraib Prisoners' to the Jordanian King Abdulla II, rather than to the Iraqi victims themselves. These results were found to clearly justify the conclusion that all the five political apologies issued by the US governmental bodies so far do not conform with the moral obligations and legal stipulations of the International Law, especially the crucial 'acceptance of responsibility' rule, and, are, therefore, unworthy of Iraqi victim's serious consideration for forgiveness and absolution.

Key Terms: Political Apology; Strategies; Iraq War; US Army Atrocities; International Law; Acceptance of Responsibility; Iraqi Victims.

ستراتيجيات الاعتذار السياسي للإدارة الأمريكية لاحتلالها العراق

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الملخص

تناولت هذه الدراسة بالبحث الاستراتيجيات التي اعتمدتها الهيئات الرسمية الأمريكية في إصدار اعتذاراتها السياسية عن الفظائع التي ارتكبتها الجيش الأمريكيون خلال حرب العراق (٢٠٠٣-٢٠١١). وكانت الأهداف هي: (١) تحديد عدد تلك الاعتذارات السياسية والجهات الأمريكية المصدرة لها، و (٢) تفحص مدى تضمنها للمكونات الستة الإلزامية المنصوص عليها في "المبادئ الأساسية وتوجيهات الأمم المتحدة بشأن الحق في الانتصاف والتعويض لضحايا الانتهاكات الجسيمة للقانون الدولي لحقوق الإنسان و للقانون الإنساني الدولي: (٢٠٠٥)", و (٣) تحديد مدى توافقها واتساقها مع أحكام القانون الدولي الأخير. وقد اشتملت قاعدة بيانات البحث على الاعتذارات السياسية الخمسة الصادرة حتى الآن عن الهيئات الحكومية الأمريكية عن الفظائع التي ارتكبتها أفراد الجيش الأمريكي خلال حرب العراق حسبما تم توثيقها على الموقع الإلكتروني لـ "معهد دراسة حقوق الإنسان (ISHR)" - التابع لجامعة كولومبيا، نيويورك، الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية. وقد أظهر تحليل البيانات أن قوات الاحتلال الأمريكية قد لجأت إلى استخدام الاستراتيجيات التالية: (١) تقليص عدد الاعتذارات السياسية إلى أقل عدد ممكن، رغم القصص العديدة المنشورة والموثقة على نطاق واسع عن الجرائم المرتكبة في تلك الحرب ؛ (٢) تحويل الاعتذار السياسي من اجراء رسمي من دولة إلى

دولة إلى قضية غير رسمية تتعلق بالعلاقات الشخصية؛ (٣). الرفض التام للالتزام الجدي بقواعد القانون الدولي؛ (٤). جعل أحد الصحفيين الأمريكيين المقيمين في بغداد ينشر مقالاً له في صحيفة النيويورك تايمز بعنوان "الولايات المتحدة تعتذر عن حادثة مسجد بغداد" والتي لا يوجد فيه أي دليل نصي يُثبت صدور فعل "الاعتذار" من أي نوع كان؛ (٥). توجيه الرئيس الأمريكي جورج دبليو بوش اعتذاره السياسي عن قضية تعذيب نزلاء سجن "أبو غريب" إلى العاهل الأردني الملك عبد الله الثاني، وليس إلى الضحايا العراقيين أنفسهم. وعليه فإن هذه النتائج تبرر بوضوح الاستنتاج بأن جميع الاعتذارات السياسية الخمسة الصادرة عن الهيئات الحكومية الأمريكية حتى الآن لا تتوافق مع الالتزامات الأخلاقية ولا مع النصوص القانونية للقانون الدولي، وخاصة قاعدة "قبول تحمل المسؤولية" الحاسمة؛ وهي، لذلك، لا تستحق الاعتبار الجدي من جانب الضحايا العراقيين لقبولهم العفو عنها والغفران.

الكلمات المفتاحية : الاعتذار السياسي؛ الاستراتيجيات؛ حرب العراق؛ فظائع الجيش الأمريكي؛ القانون الدولي؛ قبول تحمل المسؤولية؛ الضحايا العراقيين.

Introduction to Political Apology

Political apology is a special type of speech act that falls within the broader speech act of 'pragmatic social apology', broadly defined as one issued by the offender, addressed to the offended 'face-needs, and intended to remedy an offence for which' the apologizer explicitly 'takes responsibility', in order to 'restore equilibrium' between the two persons (Holmes, 1998: p. 204). While 'the offender/offended' parties in social apology are natural persons, the parties involved in political apology are two legal (juristic) persons representing nations, ethnic groups, corporations, or individuals (Bentley & Ma, 2020). The pronouncement of political apologies is always public, and can be issued and publicised by individuals in their official capacity as monarchs, presidents, heads of states, ministers, parliamentarians, ambassadors, courts, or the representatives of any other authorized sovereign entities.

All political apologies are required to aim at remedying historically established wrongdoings and serious human rights violations; therefore, they can serve the functions of affecting interstate/intergroup reconciliation, conflict resolution, mutual trust, and forgiveness (Cohen,

2001; Lewicki & Polin, 2012; Schumann, 2018; Tavuchis, 1991). Being an essential moral act, political apology also serves as a form of healing and a wise practice of acknowledging and implementing justice (Davis, 2002; LeCouteur, 2001). This 'healing' office is attributable to the effect of 'dissociating the offenders from their offences' that underlies the social function of apology. In this speech act, Goffman (1971, 113) explains, the apologizer 'splits himself into two parts, the part that is guilty of an offense and the part that dissociates itself from the delict and affirms a belief in the offended rule'.

Over and above its instrumentality in conducting effective diplomacy and its social and moral healing office, the public issuance of explicit political apology has been formally incorporated into the statute of the International Law. Article (20, e) of the UN General Assembly resolution No. 60/147, dated 15 December 2005, requires providing the victims of 'gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law' with: 'Public apology, including acknowledgement of the facts and acceptance of responsibility'. Article (18) of this same resolution also stipulates that such victims are entitled to: 'restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition' (UN Basic Principles on the Right to a Remedy, 2005). Hence, its direct bearing to the catastrophic outcomes of the Iraq War.

Some Atrocities of the Iraq War (2003–2011)

This war – which continued for eight years, eight months, and twenty eight days – was waged under totally unfounded pretexts by the US-led coalition invasion of Iraq on 20 March 2003, in stark violation of the UN Charter, as publicly stated by the then Secretary General of the United Nation: Kofi Annan (Robinson, 2023). The US military conducted a "shock and awe" bombing campaign, consequently dropped an overall 25,000 tons of bombs during the war, which caused devastating deaths,

infrastructure destructions, and humanitarian and health crises. One credible estimate conducted by the London-based independent polling station: ORB International, put the war death toll at (1,220,580) during the period (20 March 2003 – 16 September 2007) (Beaumont & Walters, 2007). More than four million Iraqis were internally displaced, and at least two millions were forced to migrate abroad, including (50%) of all local doctors (Rosen, 2007). Iraqi Christian population shrank from (1.5) million in 2003 to only (275,000) in 2016 (Griswold, 2015; Sabah, 2007). About (70%) of all Iraqi population were left without access to clean water, with child malnutrition rate at (28%) (Oxfam report, Reuters, 30 July 2007). The U.S-led coalition use of depleted uranium munitions caused radioactive material to spread across the country, contaminating its soil and waters, which had had dire public health outcomes, especially the drastic increase in various cancers' incidence, birth defects, and ecosystem destruction, which resulted in the prevention of crop seeds' sprouting, and certain plant extinction (Al-Shimmari, 2016; Bonds, 2016; Jamail, 2018; Edwards, 2014).

The very brief account above offers just a snippet of the colossal atrocities and violations of international law committed by the US-led military occupation forces for waging this unprovoked war, putting aside individual incidents of US-led military killings, rape, and torture. However, this account suffices to show some of its dreadfully serious outcomes – indeed the cataclysmic ones. Consequently, the US government is under obligation by the statute of international law – let alone its presumed moral obligation – to explicitly and duly apologize to the innocent Iraqi victims for its fateful actions.

Research Aim and Limits

This study is designed to investigate the strategies adopted by the US governmental bodies in the issuance of such political apologies, and how far they conform with the stipulations of international law described

above. The research scope is limited to specifically those political apologies issued by authoritative US governmental bodies to Iraqi victims.

Structure and Content of Political Apology

As a speech act, political apology is a compound locution, often consisting in all or at least some of the following six components, each of which is performable with a different form of a speech indicating verb (Blatz et al., 2009; David & Tam, 2024; Lewicki et al., 2016; Schumann, 2014).

- i. Expression of Remorse (express),
- ii. Acceptance of Responsibility or Blame (accept),
- iii. Admission of Injustice (admit),
- iv. Acknowledgement of Victims (acknowledge),
- v. Offer of Repair (offer),
- vi. Promise of future Forbearance (promise).

Since all of the six constituent components above are realizable in many verbal forms, it is quite conceivable that the wording of each component will differ in the text of one speech act of political apology to another. The real issue here lies in the true meanings and intents of the actual apology texts, not their linguistic structures. Quite significantly, it goes without saying that a valid act of political apology presupposes the explicit/clear realization of all of its constituting components. Otherwise, the whole speech act of political apology may misfire in cases where the offender resorts to ambiguity, trivialization, dilution, or denial. The use of such lamentable strategies can add public insult to injury, as far as the victims of the historical wrongdoings are concerned. It is a well-established historical fact that the offended always subject a political apology's text to rigorous scrutiny to make sure of its true face worthiness prior to their issuance of the required subsequent absolution

gift. In addition, it must be issued in the name of the offender's authoritative bodies, specifically addressed to offended victims.

In English, the two explicit lexical forms: 'sorry' and 'apologize' are frequently used in the wording of the 'remorse-expression' component of political apologies (Robinson (2004)). However, a mere expression of remorse is not enough for the actuation of the illocutionary force and securing the intended perlocutionary uptake in this particular speech act (Scher & Darley). Over and above the expression of regret must come the crucial moral requirement that the apology's formulation is rendered clear enough to express the apologizer's acceptance of responsibility for perpetrating the specific historical offence in question. This is the BASIC component for all political apologies. Without such explicit acceptance of responsibility, this speech act may be construed as an attempt to dilute the offence, or even play it down to the inexcusable level of 'self-denial' or 'self-exoneration' – for example – by resorting to some version of the 'nobody is responsible' fallacy. Moreover, the crucial component of 'accountability measures' stipulated by the minutes of International Law in the last four components (iii-vi) listed above are nullified without the initial acceptance of responsibility. Such an acceptance serves to show the offender as a reformed person who abides by the moral values and international law, and is, therefore, worthy of forgiveness and absolution. Otherwise, both of the two socially and politically sought mechanisms of the 'perpetrator's dissociation from the offence' plus its reciprocating 'victim's gift of absolution from the offence' cease to play out; thus, obstructing the way for the build-up of empathy and mutual reconciliation that are inherent to the act of issuing political apology in the first place (McCullough et al., 2000). This is because apology cannot enhance the prospect of mutual reconciliation unless the offender is verbally presented as essentially a changed person who publicly admits the guilt, accepts its responsibility, and is ready to make up for

the due amends to its victims (Govier & Verwoerd, 2002; Tavuchis, 1991; Wohl et al., 2011).

Method of Research

All the political apology texts issued so far by the authoritative US governmental bodies to their Iraqi victims of the Iraq War are listed in tables, and analysed in terms of: i.) identifying their number and issuers, and ii.) the extent of which they incorporate the six obligatory component parts described in the previous section in order to determine: iii.) how far they conform and are consistent with the stipulation of international law.

Data Collection

The comprehensible political apologies' database published on the website of 'The Institute for the Study of Human Rights (ISHR)' – established in 1978 at Columbia University, New York, USA – includes the sum total of (835) pages of political apologies dating from the year 1077 up to this date. Of these, only five political apologies were issued by certain US governmental bodies that were addressed to Iraqi victims for the war crimes committed by the US military personnel during the Iraq War (2003–2011). The details of these five apologies are listed in Table (1) hereunder.

Data Analysis

Table (1) List of US Apologies for the Invasion of Iraq

No	& Title	Summary	Source
Date			
(1)	USA–Iraq	The U.S. apologizes	Oppel, Richard
	soldiers	for American soldiers	A. Jr. “U.S.
15	taking down	taking down a flag	Apologizes for
August	a flag from a	from a mosque in Sadr	Baghdad
2003	mosque in	City, Baghdad.	Mosque
	Sadr City,		Incident.” New
	Baghdad.		York Times.

			August 15, 2003.
(2) 16 March 2004	As part of a compensation process for Iraqi civilian casualties, the U.S. government gives \$5,000 and an apology to an Iraqi man whose wife and three children were killed after an American missile struck their home.	As part of a compensation process for Iraqi civilian casualties, the U.S. government gives \$5,000 and an apology to an Iraqi man whose wife and three children were killed after an American missile struck their home.	Gettleman, Jeffrey. "For Iraqis in Harms' Way, \$5,000 and 'I'm Sorry.'" New York Times. March 17, 2004.
(3) 7 May 2004	<i>USA apology for the abuse of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison</i>	At a press conference with Jordanian King Abdullah, U.S. President George W. Bush apologizes for the abuse of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison.	"Bush Apologizes for Iraqi Prisoner Abuse." www.foxnews. May 7, 2004.
(4) 7 May 2004	USA. apology for the mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners	U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld apologizes for the mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners and takes responsibility for failing to notify Congress and the president of the abuse.	Shanker, Thom and Eric Schmitt. "The Struggle For Iraq." New York Times. May 8, 2004.
(5) 20 May 2008	USA apologizes to Iraq–American soldier shooting a Koran	U.S. President George W. Bush apologizes to Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki for an American soldier shooting a Koran.	"Bush apology for Koran shooting." www.bbc.com. May 20, 2008.

First US Political Apology (PA1)

The text of this political apology was published by the American correspondent in Baghdad: Richard A. Opel, Jr. in The New York

Times issue of Aug. 15, 2003, under the title of: ‘*U.S. Apologizes for Baghdad Mosque Incident*’. The article’s text relevant to the apology–issuance reads as follows:

‘The United States military apologized today for an incident that deeply angered Iraqi religious leaders on Wednesday when soldiers in a helicopter forced down a flag near a mosque in an overwhelmingly Shiite district of Baghdad. A large protest followed, leading to the death of one Iraqi and the wounding of four others by American troops...

American officials also said today that they were changing the way they set up temporary checkpoints on roads and streets to make them more visible and apparent to Iraqi drivers, after the deaths of at least nine Iraqis in the past several weeks who were gunned down at checkpoints by American soldiers.

One such attack killed two Iraqi policemen who were responding to an emergency call but were killed when they approached what the top American commander described today as a "hasty traffic control point" – – a temporary checkpoint typically set up in a matter of minutes....

Accounts differed about what happened to prompt the demonstration: Shiites in Sadr City said soldiers in the helicopter appeared to remove the flag intentionally from a tower near the mosque. But American officials said downward rotor wash from the hovering helicopter stripped the flag from the tower, something they described as apparently unintentional, but very regrettable.

"Apparently, the helicopter did either blow down the flag, or somehow, that flag was taken down," Lt. Gen. Ricardo S. Sanchez, the commander of ground troops in Iraq, said during a news conference today.

"We are taking steps to ensure that that doesn't happen again," General Sanchez said. "There is no policy on our part to fly helicopters up to communications towers to take down flags. And my understanding at

this point is that, in fact, there has been an apology issued by the commander on the ground because of this incident that blew down that flag."

News agencies reported that an American commander in the area had distributed a letter today vowing to punish the soldiers responsible as well as to reduce the presence of American troops in the area. However, a military spokesman said he could not confirm the authenticity of the letter.

General Sanchez also said today that military forces would improve the visibility of traffic checkpoints so that "we have enough standoff so that people that are getting close to it will know that it's there and can slow down and comply with the hasty checkpoint."

The new procedures, he said, are an effort to ensure that "what you don't have is a vehicle that's coming up to the checkpoint has no idea that it's there, and the first time it knows that the checkpoint is there is when it starts getting warning shots."

The first paragraph above states unequivocally that the offence occurred when US 'soldiers in a helicopter forced down a flag near a mosque'. But then this statement – which determines WHO did WHAT – is back-tracked on quoting Lt. Gen. Ricardo S. Sanchez, the commander of ground troops in Iraq, saying during a news conference on that day: "Apparently, the helicopter did either blow down the flag, or somehow, that flag was taken down". So, according to the statement of this commander of ground troops in Iraq, the offence of 'forcing down the Iraqi flag' – which involves desecrating the religious motto (Allah is Greater) embalmed on it – is now attributed not to the very action of the US soldiers in the flying helicopter, but passively to either 'the helicopter blowing it down' or to the patient flag itself, which 'was taken out' by some mysterious force! This stark distortion of facts and responsibility denial is then further self-justified by the commander's vacuous claim

that: "There is no policy on our part to fly helicopters up to communications towers to take down flags" despite the fact that the helicopter did actually fly up to communication towers and that the flag was forced down by the US soldiers, otherwise this witnessed act would not have provoked local demonstrations, in the first place.

In addition, the speech act indication device of ‘apology’ is nowhere to be found in the quoted words of the ground force commander, Lt. Gen. Ricardo S. Sanchez, himself, nor the official identity of the issuer of ‘punishment repair’ is definitely and unequivocally spelled out in the apology parlance. The text reads: ‘News agencies reported that an American commander in the area had distributed a letter today vowing to punish the soldiers responsible as well as to reduce the presence of American troops in the area. However, a military spokesman said he could not confirm the authenticity of the letter’. The strategy here is to ‘scatter’ the contents of this political apology among more than one military commander, to the effect of rendering it completely blurred and lost out. The final manipulation is left to the American reporter embedded with this same US army to publish a newspaper article with a headline that falsely claims: ‘*U.S. Apologizes for Baghdad Mosque Incident*’, as if American reporters were entitled to apologize on behalf of the US army!

Accordingly, the text above stands out as one grave example of apology–abuse and responsibility–denial by invoking false pretexts, ignoring to apologize for the admitted and reported US military gunning down of at least nine innocent Iraqi civilian and two Iraqi policemen at abruptly held checkpoints by American soldiers, refusing to admit injustices for the committed killings of the said Iraqi victims, and denying the offer to repair. In addition, the text does not tell who apologized for what, and in what official capacity.

The question now arises, given that this particular political apology falls short of expressing remorse, accepting responsibility/blame, admitting injustice, acknowledging victims, offering repair, nor the apologizer's agency is made known nor confirmed, then what actually motivated its issuance in the first place? The obvious answer is that it was certainly concocted and propagated by the then-US military commander in Iraq for self-serving ends in order to appease the offended Iraqi demonstrators and get away with the war crimes committed by glossing over them to melt them away.

Second US Political Apology (PA2)

The text of this apology was also published in 'The York Times' newspaper on March 17, 2004, by its Baghdad reporter Geffrey Gettleman. The article is entitled: '*For Iraqis in Harm's Way, \$5,000 and 'I'm Sorry'*'. The apology texts reads as follows:

'Nearly a year ago, Ali Kadem Hashem watched his wife burn to death and his three children die after an American missile hit his house.

Last week, he got \$5,000 from the United States government and an "I'm sorry" from a young captain.

Mr. Hashem sat for a few moments staring at the stack of bills, crisp \$100's.

"Part of me didn't want to take it," he said. "It was an insult."

But the captain, Jonathan Tracy, insisted. "A few thousand dollars isn't going to bring anybody back," he explained later. "But right now, it's all we can do."...

Captain Tracy checks each claim a civilian files against a database of military incident reports. If they match, the military pays the civilians, but does not issue a formal apology or claim of responsibility.'

Unlike the previous apology, this one satisfies at least the requirement of the apologizer's verbally expressing his personal remorse (I'm sorry) by the US army Captain Jonathan Tracy in his

personal capacity. This is done without the US army's issuance of formal apology, nor accepting responsibility/blame, admitting injustice, acknowledging victims, nor the promise of future forbearance. The offer of cash recompense attests to paying repair, albeit a very scanty one (\$5000 for the deaths of a wife and three children in one family). In addition, the apologizer is identified as 'Captain Jonathan Tracy' who is the officer in charge of the US army special compensation programme dubbed: "sympathy payments" to Iraqi civilian war victims. He also personally expresses the proper emotion of sympathizing with the bereaved father of the slain family, and acknowledges the disproportionality between the serious crime committed and the compensation paid. The protest of the victim, who calls such a meagre compensation amount for the bombing of four of his family members: 'an insult' is quite understandable in view of the total lack of a fair procedure here.

However, such a unilateral, partial, inadequate, and unfair processing of political apologies for the deaths of tenths of thousands innocent Iraqi civilians by the formidable US-army war machine cannot but be conceived as a premeditated measure to turn the formal proceedings of political apology into a mere informal 'person-to-person' settlement transaction, in which the US offender plays the dominant role of judge, jury, and the selective determiner of the so-called 'sympathy payments', unilaterally deemed to be adequate for crimes' repair. In this particular case, the perpetrators' formal state-to-state apology for the heinous war crimes committed by the US army were reduced to the notorious deformity of a personal civil issue between a selective fraction of individual Iraqi victims of war and the officer of the US army "sympathy payments" commission.

Third US Political Apology (PA3)

This apology, entitled '*Bush Apologizes for Iraqi Prisoner Abuse*' was published on May 7, 2004 in Fox News. The relevant text reads: 'President Bush on Thursday apologized for the "humiliation" some Iraqi prisoners suffered at the hands of U.S. troops as he said that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld is safe in his job.

At a Rose Garden press conference following a White House meeting with Jordan's King Abdullah, Bush offered his first direct apology over the prison issue.

"I told him I was sorry for the humiliation suffered by the Iraqi prisoners and the humiliation suffered by their families," Bush said.'

The apology text above was formally issued by the US president himself, who expressed remorse: 'I was sorry', and, as such accepted blame, admitted the injustice: 'humiliation suffered', acknowledged the victims: 'Iraqi prisoners', and sympathised with the prisoners' families. However, this apology neither offers repair nor a promise of future forbearance. Also, the 'spin' in using the past tense form of the verb to be 'I WAS sorry' indicates that his act of 'feeling response' was a not permanent one, but just temporary and ephemeral. In addition, it was addressed to a non-Iraqi authority: the King of Jordan, rather than to the Governing Council in Iraq, nor to victims themselves.

Fourth US political Apology (PA4)

This political apology was published on May 8, 2004 by Thom Shanker and Eric Schmitt in The New York Times paper, under the rubric: *THE STRUGGLE FOR IRAQ: HEARINGS; RUMSFELD ACCEPTS BLAME AND OFFERS APOLOGY IN ABUSE*. Apology-related text reads:

"So to those Iraqis who were mistreated by members of the U.S. armed forces, I offer my deepest apology," Mr. Rumsfeld said...

"It was inconsistent with the values of our nation, it was inconsistent with the teachings of the military to the men and women of the armed forces, and it was certainly fundamentally un-American," Mr. Rumsfeld said...

The defense secretary revealed that he was seeking official compensation for detainees whose abuse included being forced to strip, pile onto each other and simulate sexual acts. And he announced that a special panel would be given 45 days to examine "the pace, the breadth, the thoroughness of the existing investigations and to determine whether additional investigations or studies need to be initiated."....

Mr. Rumsfeld revealed that while he had known of the existence of the photographs, he had not until Thursday night viewed any but those broadcast by television or printed in newspapers and magazines.

"It is the photographs that gives one the vivid realization of what actually took place," Mr. Rumsfeld said. "Words don't do it. The words that there were abuses, that it was cruel, that it was inhumane, all of which is true, that it was blatant, you read that and it's one thing. You see the photographs, and you get a sense of it, and you cannot help but be outraged."

The text above expresses remorse, admits injustice, acknowledges victims, offers repair and bringing the abusers to account, but falls short of formally accepting responsibility, nor promising future forbearance. One notable observation in this particular case is that the stories of its outrageously scandalous abuse that spread worldwide must have necessitated at least its lengthy apologetic text, though in less conformity with the stipulations of international law.

Fifth US Political Apology (PA5)

This last US political apology was published in the BBC on Tuesday, 20 May 2008, vide the text:

‘Bush apology for Koran shooting

The Iraqi prime minister's office said Mr Bush had called to apologise

US President George W Bush has made a personal apology over the shooting of a Koran by an American soldier, the White House has confirmed.

Mr Bush made the apology during one of his regular video conferences with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Maliki.

The soldier was sent home by the US military after the Muslim holy book was found riddled with bullet holes at a shooting range by Iraqi police.

The US military said last week that the soldier would be disciplined.

He was unnamed, but was said to be a staff sergeant in a sniper section.

'People's anger'

Mr Maliki's office said in a statement: "The American president apologised on behalf of the United States... promising to present the soldier to the courts."

Mr Maliki had expressed the anger felt by the Iraqi people, his office said.

A US military spokesman last week described the shooting as "both serious and deeply troubling", but stressed it was an "isolated incident and a result of one soldier's actions".

US military authorities have already apologised to community leaders in the area, west of Baghdad.

The military presented the elders with a new copy of the Koran.'

This political apology, while seemingly appear on its face to be the most 'balanced' state-to-state political apology in the data – while satisfying the moral and legal requirements of admitting injustice, acknowledging victims, and offering repair – falls short of explicating the remorse remark uttered by the apologizer, accepting responsibility/blame, and does not promise future forbearance. The responsibility for abuse was attributed to 'one soldier's actions', rather

than to the US government which trained, armed, and sent that soldier to join the ranks of the occupation US army, and is, therefore, formally and legally responsible for his actions. This strategy of attributing war crimes to a 'loan wolf' aims at enabling the US government to evade accepting moral and legal responsibility, which renders the apology vacuous.

Results

1. Database records cite the issuance of just five political apologies for the US military numerous war crimes that were committed against Iraqis during The Iraq War (2002–2011). Given the widely-reported and documented stories about the colossal levels of war crimes committed by the US army during this war, such a petty number of political apologies issued is an index of the US occupation forces strategy of minimizing the number of such apologies to the least possible digits.
2. Of the five aforementioned political apology speech acts, only three (PA3–5) were formally issued by authorized sovereign American statesmen. The other two (PA1–2) were issued by non-authorized army officers in their personal agencies. This fact reveals the strategy of transforming the formal state-to-state political apology to a non-formal person-to-person issue.
3. All of the five speech acts of political apology declined to formally accept responsibility in addition to their refusal to promise future forbearance. This fact shows the US government resort to the strategy of totally refusing to seriously committing itself to abide by the rules of the International Law (Article (20, e) of the UN General Assembly resolution No. 60/147, dated 15 December 2005).
4. The text of (PA 1) shows the US Army resorting to the strategy of converting a totally non-political-apology speech act into an allegedly real one, merely by making an American journalist publish in the New York Times paper an article with such a vacuous headline of “U.S.

Apologizes for Baghdad Mosque Incident that contains no textual evidence for the locution of ‘apology’.

5. The fact the (PA 3) was addressed by President G. W. Bush to the Jordanian King Abdulla II, rather than to the then Iraqi Governing Council, not to the victims themselves, for US army’s war crimes committed on Iraqi soil shows another example of US–Administration strategy of insisting upon evading its obligations according to the International Law, as far as political apology is concerned.

6. Results (1–5) clearly attest to the fact that all the political apologies issued by the US governmental bodies for the war crimes committed by the US military do not conform with the stipulations of International Law.

The details of the results above are given in Table (2) below:

Table (2) Features of US Political Apologies during the Iraq War

Feature	PA1	PA2	PA3	PA 4	PA5
US Apologizer	Unidentified, Unconfirmed, & Unauthorized	Unauthorized US Army Captain	US President , G.W. Bush	U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld	US President, G.W. Bush
Offence	1.US soldiers taking down a flag from a mosque in Sadr City, Baghdad, Iraq. 2.US soldiers gunning down	Iraqi wife and her three children killed by US Army missile hitting their home in Kifil town, Babylon Governor	mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners	mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners	American soldier shooting a Koran

	Iraqis at check points.	ate, Iraq			
Addressee	Iraqi demonstrators	Father of the victims	King of Jordan	To those Iraqis who were mistreated by members of the U.S. armed forces	Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki
Remorse Text	None	I'm sorry	I was sorry	I offer my deepest apology	None
Responsibility Statement	None	None	None	None	None
Admission of Injustice	None	None	the humiliation suffered by the Iraqi prisoners and the humiliation suffered by their families	there were abuses, it was cruel, it was inhumane,	both serious and deeply troubling
Acknowledgment of Victims	None	None		To those Iraqis who were mistreated by	the Muslim holy book was

				members of the U.S. armed forces	found riddled with bullet holes at a shooting range by Iraqi police.
Repair Offering	None	US\$ 5000.00	None	The defense secretary revealed that he was seeking official compensation for detainees	The military presented the elders with a new copy of the Koran.
Forbearance Promise	None	None	None	None	None

Conclusions

Political apology is one serious formal speech act that serves the interests of both the offender and offended, be they states or groups. As far as the offender is concerned, it requires courage, good faith, sincerity, and the genuine willingness to come to terms with its lamentable past wrongdoings. To get at this serious goal, political apology texts are required to be clear and balanced by fulfilling the moral and legal requirements of winning the offended party’s forgiveness and absolution. Significant in this respect is the offender’s

abidance by the UN's *Basic principles and guidelines on the right to a remedy and reparation for victims of gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law* (2005), which stipulate six requirements for a political apology issued in the name of the offender's authoritative bodies and addressed to the offended party. These stipulations are: explicit expression of remorse, accepting responsibility/blame, admitting injustice, acknowledging victims, offering repair, and promising future forbearance. Though 'the acceptance of responsibility' constitutes the basic element in a political apology, all the requirements stated above are equally significant, interrelated, and obligatory. Accordingly, skipping any one of these moral and legal stipulations can cause the whole speech act of political apology to misfire.

The texts of all the five political apologies issued so far by the US bodies for the US military atrocities committed during the Iraq War (2003–2011) declined to abide by all of the six stipulations above as required by the minutes of International Law, especially the basic 'acceptance of responsibility', and, are, therefore, unworthy of the offended serious consideration for forgiveness and absolution.

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