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ASSOCIATION DES SENATS, SHOORA ET CONSEILS
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THE CONFLICT IN IRAQ: CONTENDING ISSUES AND EFFORTS AT RESOLUTION

A Paper Presented by

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INTRODUCTION

The Gulf Region is perhaps the oil region of the world. Most of the oil here is produced by a handful of countries such Saudi Arabia (with the largest reserves), Iraq (with second largest reserves), Iran, Kuwait, UAE, Qatar, etc. This region also supplies the industrialized countries of Europe and North America most of the oil they need. The major oil companies in the world which are from these advanced countries are involved in the Oil Sector in the Gulf.

The Gulf region is therefore of strategic value to the Western World and for centuries, the West has tried to maintain control over it. It has been a battle ground for various world powers over the ages as they tried to gain and maintain control over it. The most recent power to do this is the United States, especially since the Second World War. During the Cold War period, the US maintained its grip over the Gulf through such countries as Iran and Turkey by militarily propping them up. These countries served as the local overseers of US interests in the region.

When, as a result of the Islamic Revolution (in 1979) the US was kicked out of Iran, Iraq was built up by the USA into a military power to counter Iran. The result was that Iran and Iraq fought a bitter war for most of the 1980s. In this war, the USA and her allies armed Iraq and she became a military power feared by her weaker neighbours.

Following the eight year war with Iran, Iraq turned her attention towards Kuwait, a country it attempted to annex. This resulted in the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. The United States led a coalition of other countries in a war, sanctioned by resolutions of the UN Security Council, to get Iraq out of Kuwait and restore the latter's sovereignty. This was done and the terms of peace were imposed on Iraq as contained in Security Council Resolution 687 (1991) of 3 April 1991. It is the unfinished business of the implementation of Resolution 687 (1991) that is at the root of the current problem. The paper begins first by looking at the issues that brought about the present conflict in Iraq. This paper therefore examines the Iraqi conflict vis a vis the different actors and their roles in managing and ending the conflict. To this end, the paper examines the

mediatory efforts at ending the conflict. It also examines the setbacks encountered in dealing with the conflict. It concludes by making recommendations for the resolution of the conflict.

THE ISSUES IN THE CONFLICT IN IRAQ

The issues in dispute arose out of the conditions imposed on defeated Iraq, by the United Nations, otherwise known as UN Resolution 687. This resolution sought to rid Iraq of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) through a thoroughly defined process. The UN demanded that Iraq reaffirm unconditionally its obligations under the Geneva Protocol on the Prohibition of the use in war of asphyxiating, poisonous or other gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare of 1925. Iraq was required to ratify, the Convention on the prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons. Up till the time President Bush addressed the UN on 12th September 2002, the issues raised in Resolution, 687 (1991) had not been settled. The issue of disarming Iraq of WMD brought to a head in the UN, the tension between multilateralism and a creeping unilateralism. This tension was not over whether Iraq should be rid of WMD by the UN, but over how this should be done.

The decision therefore by President George W Bush of the United States to launch what is essentially an Anglo-American war against Saddam Hussein's Iraq brought into sharp focus the disagreement between the Permanent Members of the United Nations Security Council on how to disarm Iraq of WMD. On the one hand, the United States and United Kingdom had insisted that the UN Security Council should sanction the use of military force to rid Iraq of WMD. This, the two Anglo-Saxon countries maintained, would be in consonance with Resolution 1441 (2002) which provided for 'serious consequences' to be taken against Iraq if UN inspection and verification exercise revealed that she was in material breach of the earlier resolution 687 (1991). On the other hand, Russia, France and China, the other three Permanent Members who were also joined by Germany, insisted that only peaceful means should be used to disarm Iraq of any WMD she might have.

Eventually, the issue of whether Iraq should be disarmed of WMD was settled through Resolution 1441 (2002) which was unanimously passed by the UN Security Council. Resolution 1441 not only enthroned multilateral diplomacy as the method by which Iraq would disarm, it also put the UN firmly in charge of the process. When the United States and Britain declared that Iraq would be disarmed militarily if necessary and with or without the UN, this threatened the architecture which has sustained multilateral diplomacy in the post-cold war era. The disagreement which pitched Russia, France, China and other countries against the US and UK position was a clear reflection of their preference for multilateralism which suited their interests. This was due partly because of the doubt they had over the claims by the US and the UK that Iraq still had WMDs.

DID IRAQ HAVE WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION?

It is probable that Iraq had the specifics in terms of quantity and types would have varied depending on who gave the answer. As it were, the 1200 pages of material which Iraq had produced in accordance with Resolution 1441, would have been assumed that it implied the answer to the question above to have been in the affirmative. However, because Iraq had not been forthcoming in admitting to possessing WMD, it was easy to get figures on which all had agreed. Some attempts were made to give specific numbers to the WMD that Iraq was alleged to have possessed.

One of those attempts was the International Institute for Strategic Studies' (IISS) assessment as reported in the The Economist of September 14, 2002¹. On nuclear weapons, the IISS's assessment was that Iraq did not possess facilities to produce fissile material in sufficient amounts for nuclear weapons. It would have taken several years and extensive foreign assistance to build such fissile material production facilities, but Iraq could have probably assembled nuclear weapons within months if it had to get such materials from foreign sources.

Regarding biological weapons, Iraq was thought to have retained substantial growth media and agents from the pre-1991 stocks. From the existing facilities, it was capable of

resuming within weeks, agent production. Although actual stocks were not known, it was thought that Iraq could have produced thousands of litres of anthrax, botulinum toxin and other agents since 1998. The actual stock of chemical weapons were also unknown. The IISS's assessment was that Iraq probably retained mustard and precursors for a few hundred tonnes of sarin/cyclosarin, and perhaps similar amounts of VX from 1991 stocks. In addition, Iraq was capable of producing within months from civilian facilities hundreds of tonnes of agent (mustard and nerve agents).

The delivery means available to Iraq was put around 12 of the 605 km range al-Hussein missile, some al-Samoud missiles with ranges up to 200km. These al-Samoud missiles were then being destroyed by UN inspectors with Iraq's cooperation. It lacked the facilities to produce long range missiles, and it would have taken several years and extensive foreign assistance to achieve this. However, Iraq was capable of manufacturing rudimentary chemical and biological warheads, converting civilian vehicles to mobile launchers, and, of delivering biological weapons with simple airborne wet-spray devices.

The other obvious attempt to show that Iraq did not have WMD was the position of the USA and UK, the two countries which jointly sponsored what became Resolution 1441 (2002). Leaders of the two countries openly maintained that Iraq had WMD, even if they had not been specific than the IISS assessment. Former Prime Minister Tony Blair of the UK published a dossier on Iraq's weapon's programme in September of 2002. The grain of Tony Blair's dossier is that Iraq continued to produce chemical and biological weapons, as well as biological and chemical agents, and retained up to 20 al-Hussein missiles capable of carrying chemical and biological warheads². The same view was re-echoed by Colin Powell, then US Secretary of State, in his remarks to the UN Security Council thus,

We haven't accounted for the anthrax. We haven't accounted for the botulinium, the VX, the bulk biological agents growth media, 30,000 chemical and biological munitions³.

However, the main issue remained that of how to disarm Iraq: through war as US and UK were insisting or peacefully, as Russia, France, China, and others, were also insisting.

Thus, the disarming of Iraq became a major contest of interest between the big powers in the UN, and it is appropriate to look at who the major players were and their interests. It has since been revealed that there was no WMD as the Americans and British claimed.

KEY EXTERNAL PLAYERS AND THEIR INTERESTS

The context within which this stand-off was taking place remained multilateral-the UN. However the key players who were mainly the Big 5 (Permanent Members of the Security Council) and Iraq/Arab world disagreed on how to go about disarming Iraq. Each position was determined by peculiar interests. Who were the players, what were and are their interests?

a. USA and UK:

These two countries who were also permanent members of the UN, were the ones who hurried the world to war against Iraq. They mobilized additional troops for combat action in Iraq, and were just shopping around for support in this venture.

It should be pointed out that the US and UK had stayed behind with some of their forces after the Gulf War in 1991-ostensibly to implement the relevant UN resolutions. In the process, they imposed 2 'no-fly zones', one in the north and the other in the south of Iraq. They used this to carry out many aerial attacks on targets in Iraq. Who was their target?

They wanted to depose President Saddam Hussein and his government. It was a policy they announced to the whole world. President George Bush had linked Iraq to Al-Qaeda terrorism, had said Iraq is one of the 'axis of evil' and must be dealt with. UK and the US were organizing the Iraqi opposition to take over from Saddam Hussein.

It has been argued that the US and UK were in this because they wanted to control the oil not only in Iraq but also in the whole region. All 5 permanent members of the Security Council have international companies with major stakes in the change of leadership in Iraq. Presumably, if they gain control of Iraqi oil with proven reserves of 112 billion

barrels of oil (and the largest in the world outside Saudi Arabia), the rest will be easy to bring in. The Americans were ostensibly clearly looking for another Kuwait in Iraq.

It had also been argued that the Americans were working towards total control of the Gulf region through regime change, beginning with Iraq. It was common knowledge that the region was controlled by unfriendly authoritarian regimes, which the Americans would like to see replaced with friendly or democratic ones. The US led-war on terrorism is also a part of this conflict in the Gulf.

b. Russia/France/China/Germany:

. The other three permanent members of the Security Council clearly came out to insist that Iraq should be disarmed through the UN only. They claimed that force was not necessary, only that the inspectors should take more time to find the WMD in Iraq, before further action was to be taken what was their reason? They had some interests to protect. Since the Gulf War of 1991, companies from many countries, including Russia, France and China, had either reached or sought to reach agreements to develop Iraqi oil fields, refurbishing existing facilities on the lifting of UN sanctions⁴.

Russian oil companies have had major interests in Iraq. Russia's Lukoil negotiated a \$4 billion deal in 1997 to develop the 15-billion-barrel West Qurna field in Southern Iraq. In October 2002, the Russian oil services company Slavneft reportedly signed a \$52 million service contract to drill at the Tuba field, also in Southern Iraq. Russia was also owed a debt of \$7-8 billion by Iraq, a debt which was ran up before the Gulf war. It was bad for Russia if the USA controlled Iraqi oil because that would have diverted investment from her oil fields to those of Iraq.

The French Company, Total Elfina Elf had negotiated for rights to develop the huge Majnoon field, near the Iranian border, which may have contained up to 30 billion barrels of oil. Other major countries had economic interests in Iraq.

c. Iraq's Neighbors:

Iraq has held on as long as it did because it rightly believed that if Americans should have their way, then Iraqi sovereignty and independence would have disappeared. This is a view shared in the Arab world: that the Americans wanted to dismantle the Arab world. The pressure which America was putting on the Arab countries to democratize their societies was seen as further evidence of her hidden motives. That is why even countries like Saudi Arabia were speaking out against the war in Iraq. There were fears that after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, those of the other Arab countries might follow one after another. The Arabs did not really trust American intentions in their region, especially its policies and actions after 11 September, 2001.

However, most of the Arab nations had their interests in the conflict in Iraq. Iran for one, was hoping to see an Iraq weaker than Turkey (particularly given their rivalry in the region), and perpetually controlled by pro-Iranian parties. Even though, it was totally averse to the dismemberment of Iraq. Syria also did not want a dismemberment of Iraq, particularly because of the common Kurdish problems it shares with Iraq. Turkey also shared the same views with Syria. Saudi Arabia on the other hand, even if not wanting a dismemberment of Iraq, wanted a situation in which the Sunni's in Iraq would gain the upper hand in Iraq's socio political terrain, a view also shared by Jordan.

MEDIATORY EFFORTS IN THE CONFLICT: UN IN IRAQ

Having refused to authorize the use of force, the Security Council sharply reversed course after the invasion. Keen to avoid further tension with Washington and persuaded that no alternative options were available, Council members agreed to several resolutions that conceded legality to the occupation and provided it with financing from Iraq's oil revenue. Resolution 1483 of May 22, 2003 recognized the US and the UK as "occupying authorities," an effort to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law. At the same time, the resolution also gave the Coalition the right to sell Iraqi oil, to take billions of dollars from the UN's Oil for Food accounts and to spend as they saw fit for "purposes benefiting the Iraqi people."⁵ The Council's anti-war majority was hopeful that, as the

resolution insisted, the UN would play a “vital role” in Iraq , eventually taking over real responsibility. This is however very unlikely given the US’s long term strategic interest in Iraq.

Sergio Vieira de Mello, the UN's Special Representative in Baghdad , tried to stake out an independent function for the UN, but the US-led administration in Iraq gave him little room for maneuver, rejecting his proposals for broad consultation with Iraqis of all political persuasions. The “vital role” foreseen by the Security Council never materialized. On August 19, 2003, a truck bomb destroyed UN headquarters in Baghdad, killing Vieira de Mello and thirteen members of his staff. Thereafter, the Organization drastically reduced its presence in the country and moved its Iraq operations to Amman, Jordan.

Yet in October 2003, the Security Council took another fateful step with Resolution 1511. In exchange for US-UK promises that a political process would soon lead to elections and a turnover of authority to Iraqis, the Council gave an official UN mandate to the occupation, making the Coalition a “multinational force” (MNF). The US and the UK afterwards stepped up their claims that they were acting on behalf of the UN and that the UN has provided legal authorization for their actions.

Since that time, despite the many violations of international law by the Coalition, the Council has twice renewed the mandate⁶. But it has never exercised any meaningful oversight of the MNF nor has it had a frank and full discussion of the Iraqi matter. A few ambassadors, like Juan Gabriel Valdes of Chile and Adolfo Aguilar Zinser of Mexico, tried to press the issue, but Washington forced their governments to recall them, making it very clear that no dissent would be tolerated⁵. As other ambassadors have reported ruefully since then, ‘Washington does not even accept questions when it presents periodic reports to the Council in the name of the MNF’⁷.

However, the new United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon, in a newly released report has indicated that he would accept a larger role for the UN in Iraq, pending solutions to security problems. The Quarterly Report on UN activities in Iraq, issued to

the UN Security Council, shows that the world body is exploring ways to expand its Iraqi mission, nearly four years after its Iraqi headquarters were destroyed by a massive bomb blast that killed 22 of its staff.

The issues preventing the UN from assuming a larger role in Iraq, the report suggests, are related to the security situation itself, and to the question of funding the construction of "hardened" infrastructure that would allow UN staff to operate in the poor security situation. However, some observers warn that an increased UN presence could tie the organization closely to the US military presence in Iraq, if clear political distinctions between the UN and the US are not drawn. Such an association may have unfavorable ramifications for the agency, as some suggest was evidenced in the 2003 bombing of the UN compound in Baghdad, which killed 22 UN staffers including its Brazilian chief of mission, Sergio Vieira de Mello. This would present a dilemma to the UN, since it is clear from Ban Ki-Moon's recent report that the UN is dependent on the Coalition forces for security, and would be even more dependent on the MNF if its mission were to expand.

The major development in the reporting period was the increased threat of indirect fire into the International Zone. These attacks have become increasingly concentrated and accurate and often consist of multiple mortars and rockets landing within minutes of each other. Essentially, the overall security environment presents a major challenge for the United Nations, particularly for its staff in the International Zone in Baghdad. The UN has taken several security measures in the last three months in response to increasing insecurity in the International Zone and other areas, including relocating its Green Zone staff to "more hardened accommodation facilities." One UN staff worker was kidnapped and one reported missing in early 2007. Their whereabouts are still unknown⁸.

The UN mission in Iraq is known as the United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq, (UNAMI). While UNAMI's presence in Baghdad is adding "overhead protection" to its facilities in the Green Zone, the Secretary General's report expresses concern that the reinforced building may still be vulnerable to heavier ordinance attacks. In the report, the only long-term solution to this dilemma is the expeditious construction of a hardened

integrated compound, with the necessary structural integrity to withstand impacts from high-calibre ordnance. In the long run, however, the report proposes "purpose-built structures" for the United Nations missions, in order to consolidate and expand the UN role in Iraq. Arrangements are therefore being made for the expeditious construction of a new United Nations building in Baghdad. Although the high level of specification for security features will inevitably lead to relatively high construction costs, it is felt that there is no realistic alternative if the Mission is to continue operations⁹.

Elsewhere in Iraq, UN staff were withdrawn from the Basra Palace compound on April 28, 2007, along with multinational forces, who handed the facility over to Iraqi security forces. The withdrawal of the MNF troops led to a security deterioration around the perimeter of the facility. The UN also maintains a compound in Irbil, which the Organization is considering expanding. Outside of Iraq, UNAMI staff operate in Kuwait City and Amman, although the eventual plan involves closing the Kuwait City offices and consolidating external UNAMI operations in Amman.

The Secretary General has indicated the world body's openness to an increased UN presence in Iraq. There have been growing calls for a larger United Nations role in Iraq. However, for this to happen clear direction from the Security Council and the Government of Iraq would be essential and better coordination with major international partners would also be required. Of particular importance would be the creation of necessary infrastructure and operational conditions for the United Nations to play its role. This includes adequate protection and security arrangements, air support and, in particular, the construction of secure facilities.

The Secretary General's indication of his readiness for an expanded UN role in Iraq has also raised some eyebrows. Some diplomats and observers suspect the beginnings of a US "handover" to the United Nations. Other observers suggest that the UN might play a positive role in Iraq if its mission is understood to be a departure from, and autonomous to, the policies of the United States. An increased UN role without a clear commitment by the US to withdraw its military from Iraq would only tie the UN too closely to the US military presence in Iraq. However, other than providing whatever humanitarian aid

under these dire circumstances, the only proper U.N. role would be to strongly oppose the U.S. continued occupation of Iraq. This has become important when we consider that the 2003 attack on the United Nations compound in Iraq may have indicated that the UN was perceived in the eyes of Iraqi insurgents as being closely involved in the multinational military force in Iraq.

The August 2003 bombing of the UN mission in Baghdad was one in a series of attacks on international workers in Iraq, which led to then-UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to withdraw nearly all UN staff from the country in October 2003. A skeletal crew of 35 UN staffers returned to the country the following August of 2004. That number has increased, but has not evolved into full-blown UN relief or reconstruction activity in the country, due to security concerns. The UN's activities in Iraq presently include consulting with Iraqi elites and data gathering.

THE ARAB LEAGUE

The Arab League has not really been a significant player in the mediatory efforts on the Iraq conflict. This may be the result of the competing national interests of members towards Iraq. Arab countries have been demanding that Iraqi government do more to reach out to its own disgruntled Sunni Arabs, before they pledge substantial aid to it. The festering tensions between Iraq and its neighbors are complicating U.S. efforts to round up key aid — including debt relief. Iraqi Prime Minister, has said that his country would not tolerate other Arab countries setting conditions for Iraq. He also accused some Arab countries of still harboring extremists who infiltrate Iraq to launch attacks.

It is in a bid to resolve some of these underlying problems of the region, that a ministerial summit of Iraq's neighbors, is being slated for late November 2007. In the interim however, political and security tensions remain high across Iraq's borders. A string of attacks by Kurdish rebels prompted Turkey's parliament to approve cross-border military operations against the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a Kurdish guerrilla group hiding out in northern Iraq. Iraqi refugees continue to flow steadily out of the country, with Syria imposing restrictions on these refugees that could send some Iraqis back home.

Washington and Tehran continue to argue acrimoniously about the role of Iran in Iraq's internal conflicts.

Despite these high stakes, the Istanbul summit is not likely to achieve much progress, for two key reasons. First, the unresolved PKK problem is likely to dominate discussions. In spite of pleas from Iraqi leaders to focus on broader issues such as support for Iraq's reconstruction and stronger control over all of Iraq's borders, all signs point to little progress on this level because of the continued crisis with the PKK.

Second, the failure to address the simmering PKK issue through earlier regional conferences is emblematic of a broader inability to produce substantive achievements out of important diplomatic meetings. As is the case across the Middle East these days, crisis management rather than concrete steps at building enduring collective regional security cooperation will likely dominate the Istanbul summit.

In order to escape this crisis-management trap, the United States needs to be more proactive in addressing potential regional problems arising in and around Iraq rather than simply waiting for them to boil over. For the past five years, the United States has rushed from crisis to crisis in the Middle East, allowing events to shape its actions rather than developing a realistic strategy that shapes them. A big part of the problem is an incoherent U.S. approach to the entire region—one that fails to balance competing interests and priorities. What it seems, is that there is no agreed strategic view of the Iraq problem or the region, essentially, the current Washington decision-making process lacks a linkage to a broader view of the region and how the parts fit together strategically.

This strategic incoherence is a key factor impeding progress on several key fronts in the Middle East—Iraq, Iran, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. All of these issues to a large extent are interconnected, but the United States has not developed a strategy that properly balances the competing interests on these different tracks. As a result, conferences like the Istanbul summit have little potential for producing even small gains.

What needs to be done to ensure this meeting and future high-level meetings are productive? At this meeting, there will be no getting around the PKK issue. The meeting

is being held in Turkey, and the ongoing crisis is the most current and vivid example of the potential regional problems arising out of Iraq's conflicts. Both Iran and Turkey are facing Kurdish guerrillas, and can be expected to agree on the need for a crackdown on separatists.

The statement by Nechirvan Barzani, the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government in northern Iraq, condemning the PKK attacks, sets the right tone for dealing with this issue. One result that the representatives should work toward is an agreement by Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and Syria jointly to address the problem of Kurdish rebels, with support from the United States and other outside actors. This means that the United States should also strongly condemn the activities of Kurdish rebels that have been causing instability in Iran, as well as Turkey.

Second, the United States and other outside powers should quietly encourage the countries in the region to convert the committees formed at the first ministerial conference held earlier this year, which are focused on the problems of border security, transnational fuel shipments, and refugees, into regular working groups that address these challenges day-to-day in attempt to achieve tangible progress. Regular cooperation between lower-level contacts among countries in the region—outside the glare of high-level two-day summits—are the way to build a more stable security arrangement in this troubled part of the world. Where it is possible and constructive, the United States needs to be more involved in preventive efforts.

Retired Gen. Joseph Ralston, the former NATO Commander, recently stepped down as a special envoy on the PKK issue in frustration over perceived American and Iraqi inaction. Ralston also said that Washington inaction and its failure to deliver on promises were “driving strategically the Turks and Iranians together.” American attention needs to be focused on using these regional conferences to defuse border crises before they explode. The United States should also appoint a full-time high-level envoy to deal with this crisis and work with the lower-level officials dealing with cross-border issues. The Bush administration should empower the envoy to take concrete steps toward resolving the tensions and not simply send this envoy on symbolic shuttle diplomacy.

Third, the international community needs to help enforce accountability mechanisms for agreements made at these summits. The most prominent accord produced out of the discussion in the first ministerial meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh—a pledge to halt the flow of foreign fighters to Iraq—has not been honored, according to the United States. Without some guarantee that action will be taken on issues agreed upon, regional summits amount to nothing more than talk shops.

In the end, ministerial meetings like the Istanbul summit offer great potential for achieving progress toward greater stability in the region. Diplomacy is only as effective as the strategy behind it. On this score, the United States remains trapped in a crisis management mode without a longer-term realistic vision of what it wants to achieve and how it can manage the different tracks in this troubled region of the world. It may have to start thinking of towing the line of some of the Arab countries on the conflict. For instance, the Arab countries, while recognising the importance of the support of foreign nations to the efforts of the Iraqi government to stop the bloodshed, violence and anarchy, believe that the establishment of a calendar for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Iraq would increase the chances of reaching understanding between Iraqis. The position of the Middle Eastern countries which consider the forces of occupation (as) responsible for the deterioration in the security, economic and social situation in Iraq, have made it clear that their presence in this country has attracted extremist forces to Iraq and has exacerbated the blind violence which every day leaves dozens of innocent Iraqi victims.

EU ROLE IN IRAQ

The European Union encouraged the formation of the Iraqi transitional government as an important further step in the process of Iraq's political transition under Resolution 1546. Accordingly, it has been working with the transitional National Assembly and the Iraqi transitional government to ensure the implementation of the full assistance programme it presented to Iraq on 5 November 2004. This is in order to achieve the objective of a safe, stable, unified, prosperous and democratic Iraq that upholds human rights, fully exercises her sovereignty and cooperates constructively with neighbours and with the international community.

The EU has also offered to provide support for the constitutional process in accordance with Resolution 1546 and in full coordination with the UN, if asked by the Iraqis. The European Union has supported and encouraged the Iraqi authorities to pursue the full involvement of all sections of the society in the constitutional process and to promote genuine national dialogue. In this connection, the EU committed itself to setting up with the Iraqi transitional government a political dialogue on areas of mutual interest and to develop for this purpose contacts between the European Union and Iraq, including at ministerial level.

In addition, the European Union has been contributing to the economic, social and political reconstruction of Iraq, while also lending support to UN's activities in Iraq. It has, together with the United States, been in close collaboration with Iraq and the UN, fostering, enhancing and coordinating the international community's support for Iraq in this. The process of cooperation on resolving the conflict in Iraq, especially with the United States will hopefully be greatly assisted by France under Nicholas Sarkozy. Mr Sarkozy has warmed up to the United States in a way that signals a narrowing of differences in policy over Iraq and probably the Gulf region in general.

THE US INTERESTS VERSUS THE UN ROLE

Although the US and UK made good their threat to unilaterally wage war against Iraq, and went on to invade and occupy Iraq, the issue of the position of UN in world affairs still remained to be properly addressed. It was clear that the action by the US Coalition threatened to undermine the capacity of the UN to intervene in conflicts around the world and even protect the rights of smaller countries which look up to it for such protection. In the anarchical environment of world politics, it is the UN that is seen by the weaker states as offering them the protection from the predatory design of the stronger states. The US led Coalition invasion and occupation of Iraq has grievously wounded the standing of the UN in the management of global peace and security.

This is already clear in the issue of how to handle Iraq after Saddam Hussein. In their joint statement on the future of Iraq after the regime of Saddam Hussein, President Bush and former British Prime Minister Tony Blair granted to the UN a "vital" role in post-war Iraq.¹⁰ The UN has been given a vital role on the reconstruction of Iraq, working with the US coalition. This means that the United States is in firm control of the construction of Iraq. The UN has been limited to humanitarian assistance and not civil administration. As President Bush put it: "That means food. That means medicine. That means aid."¹¹

In keeping with this, President Bush created the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Aid (ORHA) for Iraq, led by retired US Army Lt Gen Jay Garner. The main areas of responsibilities given to ORHA are humanitarian assistance, reconstruction and civil administration. ORHA comprises mostly of Americans with a small number of Britain and Australian specialists. The response of the UN so far is that the Security Council will decide what role the body will play in post-war Iraq, and by implication, not the United States and Britain acting alone.

In place of the Iraqi state, the US established the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), a governing body without Iraqi participation, headed by Paul Bremer, a Pentagon appointee¹². Bremer set up his offices in Saddam's former Republican Palace and ruled the country by decree, with almost unlimited powers. To protect the unpopular CPA from a growing Iraqi resistance movement, Bremer organized a tightly-controlled four square mile security area in the middle of Baghdad known as the "Green Zone," where the CPA and the military High Command could live and work in relative safety. Bremer and his team of youthful Republican enthusiasts from Washington set out to rebuild Iraq according to neo-conservative principles.

Bremer radically restructured Iraq's public institutions and the economy. He issued over a hundred sweeping decrees. In one of the first such "Orders," he suspended all tariffs, customs duties and import fees, opening Iraq's economy to the effects of free trade after years of protectionism. While Bremer gave wide publicity to a newly-created Iraq stock exchange, its banking system was dysfunctional, its industry collapsing, and even its

vital oil sector sinking. Unemployment and poverty rose steadily, as did violence against the people by different armed groups pursuing different interests.

In a major effort to quell the violence in Iraq, U.S. military forces joined with Iraqi forces to establish security in Baghdad through an operation called "Operation Together Forward II," which began in August 2006. Under Operation Together Forward II, U.S. forces are working with members of the Iraqi Army and police to "clear, hold, and build" in Baghdad, moving neighborhood by neighborhood. There are approximately 141,000 U.S. military personnel serving in Iraq and about 15,000 U.S. troops in Baghdad. This operation—and the security of Baghdad—is crucial to security in Iraq more generally. This operation—and the security of Baghdad—is crucial to security in Iraq more generally. A capital city of more than 6 million, Baghdad contains some 25 percent of the country's population. It is the largest Sunni and Shia city in Iraq. It has high concentrations of both Sunni insurgents and Shiite militias. If Baghdad goes, so goes Iraq.

SET BACKS

The results of Operation Together Forward II have been disheartening. Violence in Baghdad—already at high levels—jumped more than 43 percent between the January and October 2006. U.S. forces continue to suffer high casualties. Perpetrators of violence leave neighborhoods in advance of security sweeps, only to filter back later. Iraqi police have been unable or unwilling to stop such infiltration and continuing violence. The Iraqi Army has provided only two out of the six battalions that it promised in August 2006 would join American forces in Baghdad. The Iraqi government has rejected sustained security operations in Sadr City. Security efforts will fail unless the Iraqis have both the capability to hold areas that have been cleared and the will to clear neighborhoods that are home to Shiite militias. U.S. forces can "clear" any neighborhood, but there are neither enough U.S. troops present nor enough support from Iraqi security forces to "hold" neighborhoods so cleared. The same holds true for the rest of Iraq. This is because none of the operations conducted by U.S. and Iraqi military forces are fundamentally

changing the conditions encouraging the sectarian violence, U.S. forces seem to be caught in a mission that has no foreseeable end.

Much of the problem results from the fact that most of the Iraqi forces, working under and supposedly along-side the American military, oppose the U.S. and its objectives. Desertions are widespread and mutinies are not uncommon. At the same time, the Iraqi police and National Guard are unable to provide security because their association with the U.S. fatally compromises them. The daily and grisly death toll of Iraqi security forces reveals the futility of the American strategy in Iraq. To the extent that the new Iraqi security forces are seen as "replacements" for U.S. soldiers – exactly the Pentagon's strategy for bringing down U.S. troop levels – they will be seen as U.S. stooges and high priority targets of the insurgency. Moreover, these forces are furthering the tensions leading to civil war. The army is dominated by Shiites and Kurds, in a proportion even higher than the 80 percent those groups represent in the population. The Iraqi units sent to the worst hot spots are the most capable ones, and by definition, they are dominated by recruits from sectarian militias deeply hostile to Sunni Arabs.

It is as a result of all these problems that President George Bush outlined a new strategy for Iraq, which is composed of three elements; building a free Iraqi society with inclusive democratic institutions that will protect the interests of all Iraqis; Training the Iraqi Forces to take over when the US Forces leave; and targeted reconstruction to help Iraqis rebuild their lives. Of importance however, are plans to increase U.S. troops in Iraq (there are estimates of extra 21, 500 American troops). However, the extra 21,500 American troops amount to a mere 16 percent increase in U.S. troop strength in Iraq. If 132,000 U.S. troops have not delivered "victory" in Iraq (in a war that has now lasted longer than American participation in World War II), then 153,500 American troops are not likely to do so either¹³. Indeed, the total number of U.S. troops in Iraq was actually higher than that at the end of 2005, and it didn't make the slightest difference in the security situation.

So it is not surprising that Bush replaced both Gen. George Casey, the Commander in Iraq, and Gen. John Abizaid, the head of Central Command (which oversees the entire

operation), before he unveiled his "new strategy." Those officers had already privately questioned the usefulness of a "surge" in U.S. troop numbers.

Also, the fact that the war was fought on the foundation of 'lies', didn't help matters. The former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, was one of the victims to fall as a result of this. He lost his credibility with the British public (which was among the reasons for his stepping down as Prime Minister of Britain) when it was found out that the entire war effort was based on misinformation. This was to later add to the British public opposition to the war in Iraq, as they called for the return of British military personnel serving in Iraq back home. Again, the high number of internally displaced persons as a result of the conflict in Iraq, seems to be fueling tensions between the nations in the region. For many of the Iraqi citizens, the constant state of fear and insecurity have made them lose faith in the state and raise the need to relocate if they have to survive. Essentially, there is feeling that that under Saddam Hussein they were more secure than under the Americans.

THE NEED FOR A NEW APPROACH

Ultimately, the goal of U.S. policy in Iraq, as stated by President Bush: is an Iraq that can "govern itself, sustain itself, and defend itself." This entails an Iraq with a broadly representative government that maintains its territorial integrity, is at peace with its neighbors, denies terrorism a sanctuary, and doesn't brutalize its own people. Given the current situation in Iraq, achieving this goal will require much time and will depend primarily on the actions of the Iraqi people.

Attaining these objectives would require the US to adopt a new way forward that will offer the people of Iraq a reasonable opportunity to lead a better life than they did under Saddam Hussein. The new approach should positively influence the outcome in Iraq and the region.

Progress in Iraq is still possible if new approaches are taken promptly by Iraq, the United States, and other countries that have a stake in the Middle East. To attain the goals, changes in course must be made both outside and inside Iraq. The change in course must

offer a comprehensive strategy to build regional and international support for stability in Iraq, being able to encourage the Iraqi people to assume control of their own destiny.

Externally, the United States should immediately begin to employ all elements of American power to construct a regional mechanism that can support, rather than retard, progress in Iraq. Internally, the Iraqi government must take the steps required to achieve national reconciliation, reduce violence, and improve the daily lives of Iraqis. Efforts to implement these external and internal strategies must begin immediately and must be undertaken in concert with one another. This responsible transition can allow for a reduction in the U.S. presence in Iraq over time.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is now five years since the Americans launched 'Operation Iraqi Freedom', the end of fighting and conflict is not yet in sight. Contrary to the expectation of a quick victory over the regime of Saddam Hussein, a warm welcome from the 'liberated' Iraqis, and the enthronement of a democratic order, the country remains in conflict and is a 'killing fields' of sorts. The Americans and their allies have lost many troops. The Iraqis have continued to die in their hundreds of thousands with millions more either in exile or internally displaced.

The security situation in Iraq is exacerbated by the inability of the American political engineering to deliver a stable and equitable political arrangement. So far the process has yielded deepening divisions along sectarian lines, thus resulting in fragile governments. There have been three Prime Ministers since the Iraqis took over government from the Americans and none has been able to narrow the differences between the Shia, Sunnis and the Kurds to make for an acceptable power-sharing arrangement. There is a political stalemate which needs to be broken to get Iraq moving in the direction of resolving the conflict.

Outside Iraq, weariness is setting in as the conflict persists without any concrete signs that it will be resolved in the near future. This is evidenced by the growing impatience of

the American leaders with what they see as slow progress in getting Iraq back on her feet. The Iraq conflict is therefore dominating political debate in the United States, especially with their Presidential elections only a year away. In Britain, the Iraq conflict ended the political career of Mr Tony Blair who had to step down as Prime Minister for leading the country to war based on false information. It is clear that both the United States and Britain need the help of others to bring the conflict which they started in Iraq to an end. This moment should be seized by the international community to end the misery which Iraq has been put through. The following recommendations are being made in that direction:

- a. There should be an immediate return to multilateral approach to resolving the conflict in Iraq. This means that the United Nations should take over the process of working out a political solution among the Iraqis. The Security Council should ensure the UN has all the support required to do this.
- b. The Security Council should agree a new mandate to the mission in Iraq which is clear and unambiguous to cover the whole spectrum of peace operations, including post-conflict peace building.
- c. The territorial integrity of Iraq should not be subject of negotiation, and a democratic arrangement which will reverse the division of the country into Sunni, Shia and Kurds as political groupings should be put in place. The constitutional arrangement to be adopted must be equitable enough to incorporate the interests of minorities in Iraq. These groups seem to have suffered most from the conflict.
- d. The United States and Britain must make concessions to the other permanent members of the Security Council and other stakeholders with legitimate interests in Iraq. This is the only way to get the cooperation of everyone and stop some of them from carrying on the spoiler activities which have contributed to keep the conflict going.

e. There should be significant troop contribution from other countries to gradually replace the American-led Coalition Forces in Iraq. This will lift the feeling of Iraqis that their country is now under occupation, and also give the UN the right environment to carry out its mandate.

ENDNOTES

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6. Toby Dodge, "Staticide in Iraq" *Le Monde diplomatique* (February 2007)
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12. CPA website <http://www.iraqcoalition.org/bremerbio.html>
13. Thom Shanker, "Special Operations in Iraq : High Profile But in the Shadow," *New York Times* (May 29, 2007)