

# **European Security Forum**

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## **IRAQ – IF OR WHEN?**

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**SUMMING UP BY**

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## WORKING PAPER NO. 9 OF THE EUROPEAN SECURITY FORUM

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## CHAIRMAN'S SUMMING UP

FRANÇOIS HEISBOURG\*

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Meeting on 9 September 2002, the European Strategy Forum addressed the prospective war with Iraq three days before President Bush's speech at the UN General Assembly. The topic was introduced by Ambassador Edward Djerejian, Andrei Zagorski and Marta Dassù.

All three paper givers, in their oral as well as in their written presentations, supported a referral of the issue to the UN Security Council: Edward Djerejian thus recommended a *festina lente* approach, while Andrei Zagorski noted that Russia had learned a lot from the Milosevic precedent and Marta Dassù remarked that the absence of a UNSC resolution would lead to a complete disruption of the legality of the use of force: Kosovo was an exception, two exceptions would be too much.

In the debate, much consideration was naturally given to the role of the UN Security Council. In this regard, three types of resolution could be considered in rising order of robustness:

- a resolution stating what Saddam needed to do, but without stating explicitly the consequences of non-compliance nor setting a deadline (a so-called “wimp resolution”);
- a resolution with a deadline. Such an approach could be preceded by the “wimp resolution”; or
- an explicit resolution in terms of use of force and providing for coercive inspections.

It was generally noted that what counted for the Europeans, and possibly for Russia, was the very existence of a UNSC-sanctioned decision, and that they would go along with whatever was decided, even if it went beyond their preferences in terms of the use of force. Similarly, there was a widely shared view that the UNSC had to be involved: the absence of UNSC involvement would undermine the UN's credibility more surely than its engagement (although the point was made that the UNSC's authority could be damaged if a resolution were seen as authorising regime change). There appeared to be no dissent with the view that the despatching of inspection teams to Iraq should not be “made hostage” to the fear that Baghdad could take them as hostages to pre-empt US-led operations.

Generally, the view was expressed that a resolution should avoid escape clauses, with a view to ensuring a rapid outcome. Russia was particularly emphatic on this point: Moscow had no interest in seeing the matter drag into the next Russian presidential election. Indeed Russia's particular role was underscored: a strong containment policy backed by Russia would have a different meaning than one in which Moscow would be a weak link.

Turkey's place in the confrontation with Baghdad gave rise to a number of remarks that went beyond the traditional – and correct – observation that Ankara's position would be of great importance. Thus, it was noted that there would be considerable opposition in Turkey to a truly federal system in Iraq, which could exercise a centrifugal effect in South-Eastern Turkey.

Post-war issues were also raised. What would be the status of US (or coalition) forces in Iraq after the war? What were the prospects for democratisation in Iraq? A number of participants

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made the observation that neither of these questions could be considered in a short-term perspective. Indeed, post-war reconstruction would be a long-term endeavour, with Western forces in a “MacArthur mode” (albeit on a smaller scale) rather than delegating rapidly in an indirect rule “Sykes-Picot” mode. One participant styled the post-war force as a big ISAF, not confined to the capital. Europe’s role would be substantial in any long-haul reconstruction effort.

In terms of a possible war, differing views were held, with one American participant putting the question of alternatives (ranging from deterrence to intrusive inspections). If war did occur, some considered that it could happen as soon as December, possibly after the end of Ramadan (7 December).

# HOW TO DEAL WITH IRAQ: EUROPEAN PERCEPTIONS

MARTA DASSÙ\*

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There is no common European position on how to deal with Iraq. Confronted with the beginning of a rather intense US debate – from leaks over military planning to the US Senate hearings in August – the EU has produced only one declaration, confirming the European support for UNSC Resolutions 1284 and 1409,<sup>1</sup> followed by a statement of the Council (July 21) concerning embargo derogations already agreed by the UN.

A more articulated “common position” – more than urging Iraq to comply with UN resolutions – is simply not there. Why? We can offer three different explanations:

1. First, the *British factor* – or perhaps the *German* this time: i.e. European divisions make it impossible to achieve a common position. Strictly speaking, a common position (as a technical device of CFSP) is not there, simply because a common position (as the result of a common political standing) is absent.
2. Second, the *Kagan factor*, i.e. that mix of introversion, strategic weakness and no habit of thinking in global terms, which make it impossible for the EU to articulate an autonomous position on problems like Iraq – except to criticise how these issues are tackled by Washington.
3. Third, the *wait-and-see factor*, i.e. the tacit hope that the Europeans might stay aloof, at a safe distance, as long as the situation is not amenable to simple solutions. A sort of deliberate choice for inaction – leaving the US at the risk of overexposing itself.

My overall impression is that each of the three explanations contains a grain of truth, which means, in brief, that a common position does not exist today. It is also unlikely to emerge any time soon, however – except perhaps in a post-conflict scenario.

Since there is no “active” common stance, Europe is concentrating for the time being on a reactive position. Since Europe lacks a common view on how to deal with the Iraqi issue, what is left is only a more or less negative European perception of US intentions and tactics – which are still unclear at best.

In a realist but somewhat static view, we may argue that these basic features make any European role practically irrelevant. The individual European countries will find themselves, at some point, faced with a choice of “take it or leave it” with regard to a US decision. Unlike 1991 and the Afghan precedent, the temptation – almost a race – to “take” (that is, to offer some kind of direct participation and then claim some credit) will be less strong than the tendency to “leave” (that is, to stay out of the fight and keep a marginal role). But it is equally likely that most of the major European countries will eventually ratify an American action – once faced with an actual conflict.

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<sup>1</sup> See Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the EU on Iraq, which “calls on Iraq to comply with the Resolutions without delay, in particular by agreeing to the return on inspectors to Iraq in accordance with Resolution 1284”, Brussels, 20 May 2002, 8884/02 (Press 143).

Moreover, they will be directly affected by its consequences and thus will be unable to avoid a degree of involvement.

Allowing oneself a bit of wishful thinking, but with a more dynamic view, one can argue that it is precisely the divisions and uncertainties inside the US administration, and the recent emergence of a pretty heated debate, that could open up some space for a European role. As the doubts over the military rationale and economic costs of a conflict against Iraq mount in Washington, the existence of European reservations may even prove useful. What I will try to analyse in the second part of this paper is how and under which conditions. First, it is worthwhile to briefly illustrate the positions of individual European countries – since it is clear that any meaningful European role would imply a convergence between the major EU partners.

### **National Positions**

Lack of a common European position does not mean that there are no national attitudes and policies, which are somewhat more articulate. A look to the four major countries – plus Turkey, given its particular relevance to the Iraqi affair – shows the importance of a common thread: a majority of public opinion against military action. However, each government is reacting in its own way to this reality.

#### *Germany: Iraq as an electoral issue*

In the midst of an electoral campaign which finds him in an uncomfortable position, Schroeder has decided to bring Iraq into the election debate, moving away from the US stance (and provoking a firm US diplomatic reaction). In the speech launching the Social Democratic Party's electoral campaign in Hanover (August 5), the German Chancellor declared: "Pressure on Saddam Hussein: yes. But I can only warn against playing games with war and military intervention. That won't be done with us". At the party level, the SPD has stated that Germany would not take active part in a conflict against Iraq even in the presence of a Security Council mandate.<sup>2</sup> And, in a former speech (August 2), Schroeder already declared that: "Every form of division of labour which says the Germans won't participate but they will pay; this form of division of labour doesn't exist any more – at least not with me".

Very explicit statements indeed, with a national flavour (the "German way" to Iraq) but also clearly affected by the pre-election climate; in any case, they seem to indicate that, from the current government's standpoint, an Afghan scenario is unlikely to repeat itself in Iraq.<sup>3</sup>

In a context of widespread national anti-war feeling, Stoiber's foreign-policy spokesman, W. Schaeuble, criticised Schroeder for making Iraq a campaign issue, adding that "nobody says now that we will never take part in military action",<sup>4</sup> since such a stand amounts to weakening deterrence vis-à-vis Iraq. On his part, E. Stoiber has openly termed "irresponsible" Schroeder's position on Iraq;<sup>5</sup> on the whole, however, he has been taking a low-profile stance so far, by defining an Iraq intervention as just hypothetical and then reverting to France's "UN-first" position.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *Financial Times*, 6 August 2002, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Financial Times*, 5 August 2002, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *International Herald Tribune*, 6 August 2002, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Le Monde*, 27 août 2002, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Stoiber was quoted in the *Financial Times*, 29 August 2002, as saying "The monopoly on decision-making and action on this question lies with the United Nations. Unilateral moves on this issue by a country, without consultation with, or a mandate from, the international community, are not compatible with this".

My sense is that a victorious Stoiber would keep Germany in a marginal position with respect to the military conflict: no one in Washington, by the way, expects Germany to fight in Iraq anyway.<sup>7</sup> It is equally probable, however, that he would attempt – just like all other new entries among the European executives – to show good credentials to Washington by justifying the eventual US decisions (whatever they might be), rather than play the national card which Schroeder is now gambling on as a last-minute electoral tactic to appeal to a large portion of German voters.

In fact, German officials say privately that Berlin will be side-by-side with Washington on Iraq, as long as the Bush administration convincingly makes its case and honestly seeks unconditional weapons inspections before going to war.

Political support without military participation: this will likely be, in the end, the German position.

*France: The UN cover – or the Linus blanket?*

Does France hold the same position? The two countries stated – in the joint declaration of the bilateral Schwerin summit of July 30<sup>th</sup> – that both consider it necessary to obtain a UNSC mandate before undertaking any military intervention against Iraq. And, in the concluding press conference, Jacques Chirac repeated that any attack against Iraq would have to be justified by a decision of the UNSC.<sup>8</sup>

It is likely – as shown by the cautious response France gave to the letter addressed (on August 1) by Naji Sabri to Kofi Annan – that Paris will maintain a UN-first line over the next few months, playing the card of Unmovic's return to Iraq, in agreement with Annan and perhaps with Moscow's cooperation. It is equally likely, however, that France will refrain from taking any high-profile stance, given the serious risk of losing all of its stakes. Having already burned its fingers at Rambouillet, France is probably unwilling to take any chances of overexposure this time around, especially by embarking on a path that might well turn out to lead nowhere in terms of visible political results.

Economic interests, moreover, are not as relevant as they were before: French officials emphasise that since 2001 – given its support to the smart sanctions programme and the reduced volume of oil for food revenues – France has been losing around 70% of former legal contracts with Iraq.

On regional priorities, France is clearly wary of US intentions. According to a French diplomat, while the Bush administration “is obsessed about Iraq...we are obsessed about achieving peace between Israeli and Palestinians”; “the important thing is to build a coalition for peace in the Middle East, not to build a coalition for war in Iraq”.<sup>9</sup> Still, this point was absent from the French Foreign Minister's most recent speech, signalling an apparent decision to mute criticism of the US.<sup>10</sup>

French officials insist, privately, that their country's position does not oppose – unlike Schroeder's electoral stance with respect to Germany – any French involvement in the use of force, but rather that the eventual use of force must be clearly legitimised. That implies, first, that the stated objective of an attack has to remain the disarmament of Iraq (according to UN

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<sup>7</sup> *International Herald Tribune*, 6 August 2002, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> *Bulletin Quotidien Europe*, No. 8267, 1 août 2002 and *Le Monde*, 8 août 2002, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> See Patrick E. Tyler, “Europeans Split with US on Need for Iraq Attack”, *New York Times*, 21 July 2002.

<sup>10</sup> De Villepin's speech opened the Conference of the French Ambassadors. See “France shifting stance on Iraq”, *International Herald Tribune*, 29 August 2002, p. 1.



Resolution 687) and not regime change; second, that military action is seen as an option of last resort – following other attempts to obtain renewed inspections. If that option fails, the UNSC would have to take a decision about an international military action to force respect of the cease-fire conditions. A fresh mandate, in strict legal terms, would not be necessary – even if that would clearly be France’s preferred option.<sup>11</sup>

Going back to the initial question, France apparently sounds closer to Germany; but in fact perceives itself (at the government level, much more than among the public) as closer to Great Britain – especially given the gradual adjustment of the British position on the use of force against Iraq. This shows the weakness of the former Franco-German axis in European security issues, but also – given the current distance between Blair and Schroeder on the Iraqi issue – the weakness of an eventual “tripolar” leadership in CFSP which is not still there.

### *Great Britain: Less easy than expected*

Tony Blair, too, has a less smooth policy issue on his desk than he seemed to have just a few months ago. First, there has been the rise of vocal domestic critics, supported by the Anglican Church (led by the next Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams), significant sectors of the Labour Party, and important and bipartisan dissidents in Parliament. Then he must consider the growing anti-American sentiment in public opinion, according to a May poll published in *The Economist*. A more recent poll by Channel Four, made available in mid-August, saw more than half of the population opposed to sending British troops to Iraq in case of a war initiated by the United States.

Second, there is strong resistance in the Foreign Office and among British uniformed officials – which seem to go hand-in-hand with the reservations expressed by sectors of the Pentagon.

Third, Blair’s strategic design – his ability to serve as authoritative go-between for the US and Europe – requires a capacity to deliver in order to remain credible. For now, in the Iraqi case this capacity is still very much in doubt. In last April’s meeting with Bush, Blair apparently failed to persuade the American President to choose a posture that the Europeans collectively consider more acceptable: to envisage an armed intervention against Iraq only after the successful launch of a solution – or at least a significant reduction in intensity – of the Arab-Israeli conflict. And, clearly, Blair’s chosen role of “transatlantic ambassador” becomes much more challenging with the American lack of clarity on Iraq and the perceived widening of the Atlantic. It is doubtful, at present, whether Blair can in fact perform a function similar to what he did politically for the Afghan operation, i.e. make a convincing case for war and present it to the other Europeans.

For the time being, the British government has chosen, with Jack Straw, to indicate weapons inspectors as a means to reduce the threat by Iraq, leaving military action as a background option.<sup>12</sup>

In any event, the British “military” exception is bound to stay with us: the dispatch of the aircraft carrier Royal Oak to the Mediterranean, the recall of British forces from Afghanistan (which the Italian Defence Ministry stands ready to replace) and the possible call for reservists in September are all tangible signs of London’s intention to directly participate in military operations in Iraq (in the land invasion scenario, apparently enjoying less support today than some time ago, the participation of 25,000 British soldiers was envisaged). In any case, the domestic front signals that the Prime Minister’s room for maneuver is much more

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<sup>11</sup> My interviews in Paris, end of August 2002.

<sup>12</sup> “Straw plays down Iraq war talk”, *BBC News*, 22 August 2002.

limited that was initially assumed. For the necessary exercise in consensus-building Blair needs time, plus hard evidence of the threat posed by WMD in Iraqi hands. For these reasons London tends to exercise a restraining pressure on Washington.

*Italy: The pro-US stance under probe*

Prime Minister – and currently interim Foreign Minister as well – Silvio Berlusconi has not taken a high-profile stance on Iraq yet. The centre-left opposition, instead, has spoken against a military operation without a new UNSC Resolution. Italy, however, feels no urgency to take a strong position, as it would not have a direct military role but rather would act in support (possibly by replacing some of the Anglo-American forces in Afghanistan, as anticipated by Defence Minister Martino: the decision, however, has not yet been discussed in the Parliament).

In case of war, the Italian government will thus not be able to rely on a bipartisan consensus – which was available for Kosovo and for Afghanistan. And it will be vulnerable to a widely critical public opinion, with an anti-war front comprising the pacifist movement (both on the left and among Catholics), despite the Vatican's less vocal condemnation of the war option than in 1991.

In practice, it is almost certain that, faced with a US decision to move ahead with military operations, Rome would opt for supporting Washington politically: the unpalatable alternative for Berlusconi is to weaken the long-sought special link and positive relationship he has built with President Bush over the past year. At the same time, the Italian government might conceivably try to capitalise on its perceived constructive relations with both the Arab countries and Moscow, launching some more or less realistic mediation effort. Some diplomatic sources say that Italy is currently engaged in a joint initiative between the Europeans and the Arab countries (the key counterparts being Egypt and Jordan) designed to exert a coordinated pressure on Saddam Hussein and persuade him to unconditionally accept the return of the weapons inspectors. However, the very same diplomatic sources admit they still have to secure the support of London and even Paris (neither of which is happy to grant Italy the role of chief mediator of their own Middle East policy).<sup>13</sup>

*Turkey: The Western choice*

Turkey, too, with a grave domestic political crisis on its hands, is trying to buy time. The Turkish Defence Chief of Staff, Kirvikoglu, has openly stated that his country is not capable of tackling a military emergency before 2003, in view of next November's electoral deadline.

As is well known, Turkey has its own distinctive concerns: above all, the feared creation of a Kurdish state in northern Iraq (since the federal option is not regarded as credible by Ankara), and the repercussions of a war on Turkey's already-battered economy. Having said this, Turkey has precious few realistic alternatives.

In case of conflict, it will have to support the US by at least granting use of the air bases and possibly by sending troops into northern Iraq precisely in order to avoid the risk of its neighbour's fragmentation. Reports from Ankara suggest that Deputy Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz's July visit achieved informal understandings of Turkish-US military cooperation in toppling Saddam Hussein.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> "Iniziativa italiana per una soluzione pacifica", *Il Corriere della Sera*, 8 August 2002, p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> *International Herald Tribune*, 9 August 2002, p. 5 ("Talking of attacking Iraq is already paying dividends").

So far, Ankara has reaped benefits from the US response to September 11<sup>th</sup>. It has been assigned the command of ISAF in Afghanistan and is reasserting a degree of influence in the Turkish-speaking area of the Caucasus and Central Asia, thanks to Washington's cooperation. At the same time, Ankara's relations with Moscow have improved with regard to this vast region. The combination of these geopolitical interests (guarded by the Turkish military) and the economic interests of the country (linked to IMF loans), produces a situation where the pro-Western component of Turkey's elite (now opposing Ecevit) cannot be weakened beyond a certain extent.

In sum, however uncomfortable Turkey's predicament vis-à-vis an Iraqi conflict, Ankara will have no choice but to be involved.<sup>15</sup>

### **Good and Bad European Arguments**

Our analysis of the national positions shows that the European countries have a major common problem: how to manage their own domestic consensus, in a situation in which most European people do not consider Iraq a direct, imminent threat. From this perspective, selling Iraq to the Europeans involves making the case for war, starting with convincing evidence about the WMD threat. A pretty solid argument of course would be provided by reliable intelligence information that al Qaeda has been testing and possibly building crude chemical weapons with active help from the Baghdad regime or even in Iraq proper. Unconfirmed hints that something along these lines may actually be occurring in Iraqi Kurdistan is indeed a difficult piece of news to handle, since that portion of Iraq is actually out of Saddam Hussein's control.

#### *Threat assessment*

Looking at threat perceptions it is probably true that one of the major weaknesses of any position the Europeans take in discussing Iraq with Washington is that there is no apparent serious thinking – except in Britain – about the WMD threat. On the other hand, uncertainties abound in assessing Iraqi capabilities. US sources – based on satellite and aerial imagery – believe Baghdad is secretly storing a significant quantity of chemical warfare agents – a conclusion shared by independent analysis.<sup>16</sup> The same is true for biological weapon capability: since UNSCOM reported in 1998 that Iraq had failed to provide a full account of its biological weapons programme, the widespread assessment is that – in the absence of inspections – Iraq retains stockpiles of biological agents. British sources recently estimated that Iraq could rebuild its biological warfare programme within months. French intelligence, according to unconfirmed sources, goes in the same direction. Still – as emerged in the hearings held before the US Senate last month – no unequivocal evidence of the resumption of Iraq's proscribed programmes has yet been collected.

As for nuclear capability, US intelligence agencies do not believe that Iraq has a nuclear weapon or is near to acquiring one. Moreover, according to independent analysts, nobody knows when Iraq might have the means to deliver chemical or biological weapons.<sup>17</sup> Since

<sup>15</sup> According to Ozdem Sanberk, former diplomat and now director of the Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation, "Our policy is a little bit like Britain's. We do not want the operation to be carried out but, if it is, we have no choice but to be involved", quoted in Quentin Peel, "Indifference in Washington", *Financial Times*, 5 August 2002.

<sup>16</sup> *Iraq's WMD Arsenal: Deadly but Limited*, Carnegie Endowment, Issue Brief, No. 11, 28 August 2002.

<sup>17</sup> See the testimony submitted to the US Senate by Jon Woflsthall, <http://www.ceip.org/files/nonprolif/templates/article.asp?NewsID=3378>.

1998, according to the US, Iraq has kept some 20 Scud-type ballistic missiles despite UNSCOM accounting: these systems, however, are likely to be poorly maintained.<sup>18</sup>

In the end, there is no evidence that Iraq has a nuclear weapon, or will soon have one; but it almost certainly has chemical and biological agents that would complicate any military actions. It is not clear, however, whether and how these capabilities are increasing in the absence of UN inspections, and when Iraq will have the means to deliver those biological or chemical agents. Threat assessment remains a difficult exercise, in a situation in which “we do not know what we do not know; and this is why – whatever the truth is – inspectors have to go back in”.<sup>19</sup> In addition, it can be argued that weapons inspectors were able to destroy more facilities, missiles and weapons after the Gulf war than during actual military operations – an argument for an approach to pre-emption that should focus on intrusive inspections and more containment, rather than a new military campaign.

In short: threat assessment divides the two sides of the Atlantic. Europeans have a point in underlining the lack of convincing evidence about not only the links between Saddam and Al Qaeda; but also about current Iraqi capabilities. But their unwillingness to seriously consider even the potential, longer-term Iraqi threat as a priority weakens their bargaining position vis-à-vis Washington.<sup>20</sup>

*Regime change: Can it be the stated goal?*

Since Iraq is not perceived as an imminent threat, the Europeans clearly wish to buy time; they all (including Great Britain) would prefer to give a last chance to the return of the inspectors. If that involves a credible “unconditional” basis, such an opportunity – for the Europeans – would be worth grabbing.

This scenario – if ever implemented – would show the existence of one basic difference between the US and the Europeans: for the US, regime change has been declared as an end in itself; for the Europeans, containment – when successful – would be enough.

In other terms: Europeans (including Great Britain, again) see the only legitimate goal of external policies vis-à-vis Iraq as curbing the Iraqi threat – not toppling Saddam.

A change of government in Iraq would be welcomed, as a consequence of the use of force; but it cannot be the stated aim of an action whose legitimate goal has to remain curbing the WMD threat and forcing respect of UN resolutions.

With the inspectors back on an unconditional basis, Europeans would clearly find it even more difficult to endorse the scenario of a violent removal of Saddam Hussein.

That very difference shows not only transatlantic differences over the legal boundaries of “external intervention” for regime change purposes, but also different perceptions about how to stabilise the Greater Middle East.

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<sup>18</sup> The agencies conclude that for the next several years at least Iraq will not advance beyond MRBM systems and is unlikely to test any ICBMs before 2015. See *Iraq's WMD Arsenal*, op. cit.

<sup>19</sup> Fouad El Khatib, “Iraq and Weapons of Mass Destruction”, unpublished manuscript, IISS, London.

<sup>20</sup> According to a French official, the reason why the Europeans are less sensitive to WMD threat also depends on bureaucratic reasons: understaffing (on proliferations issues) in Foreign and Defence Ministries and lack of intelligence are the rule – more than the exception.

*A different set of priorities in the Middle East*

European reservations contain, from this region-wide angle, good arguments: legitimate, again, but quite shaky as well. The first has to do with the Israeli-Palestinian issue: confronting Iraq is not the immediate priority – so runs the argument from the European capitals – because we first need to “solve” the Palestinian issue. This means at least restarting a meaningful peace process. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in the European perception, is and has to remain the highest priority. Opening a new war front now would deepen the regional crisis, dragging in, this time, Israel. It would fracture the anti-terrorism coalition and make life harder for moderate Arab states. For Javier Solana, it will be “very, very difficult” to sustain allied support for an assault against Iraq unless progress is first made towards creating a Palestinian state. It will be very difficult, for instance, having the Palestinian elections during a build-up for war in Iraq.<sup>21</sup> Timing, for the Europeans, is thus narrow enough (on the Israeli-Palestinian front) to suggest a delay of plans for Iraq, but frankly, no one has indicated (or can realistically indicate) at what stage a “peace process” would be sufficiently established and self-sustaining to enable the West to tackle Iraq. The US knows this, and the European argument is viewed as little more than a way to slow down the course of events.

The US, moreover, seems to think that toppling Saddam Hussein first can produce positive (and not negative, as the Europeans think) regional consequences. A new US attitude could emerge over the next few months, in which a grand “vision” for the greater Middle East is set forth. Such a vision (sketched out in an embryonic form by Robert Kagan in a July piece in the *IHT* and later “dramatised” by the Rand briefing on the future of Saudi Arabia) could include the attempt to eliminate the Saddam regime in Iraq, but also a major push to set up a closely monitored new regime and actually make it the centrepiece of an ambitious US strategy to democratise the Middle East. Now, it is by no means certain that this high-profile policy will prevail over more traditional and modest alternatives; however, the current state of US-Saudi relations, and the vastly incomplete Iranian transition to a full reintegration in the international community, make such thinking more attractive than in the past. The pillars of stability in the region are not solid (Turkey is also less stable in some respects than in recent years, as it gets closer to potential EU candidacy; and Israel is clearly losing a series of public relations battles without gaining in terms of security). Thus, a proactive and high-risk approach becomes less unthinkable from a US perspective.

All this would have the value of providing the Bush administration with a much broader purpose in attacking Saddam: seizing a regional opportunity rather than just getting rid of a kind of personal enemy and settling old scores.

The Europeans, however, are highly sceptical about a grand plan to democratise the Middle East. More specifically, they do not share the confident view that a US intervention in Iraq will not only finish off Saddam Hussein but also unlock the Israeli-Palestinian question and usher in a new era of democracy and reform in the greater Middle East.<sup>22</sup> The order of priorities – as seen above – is rather believed to be the reverse. Still, the European approach sounds more like a status-quo attitude than an alternative view on how the region could be stabilised: the old remnants of the Barcelona Process, combined with some new collective steps (such as the trade agreement with Iran), indicate the usual preference for engagement – but without enough money and without a clear strategic design. European oil lobbies – traditionally searching for business in the holes left by the big failures of the “double

<sup>21</sup> See the interview reported by Patrick E. Tyler in the *New York Times*, 21 July 2002.

<sup>22</sup> Steven Everts, “Some strategies work better than force”, *International Herald Tribune*, 1 August 2002.

containment” – also apparently favour the status quo – more than a geopolitical shift able to promise a new, and more difficult competition between oil actors.

Listing a different set of priorities in the region and in the greater Middle East, European officials finally add that it would be crucial, before opening a new war front, to achieve some stability in Afghanistan, where the security of the interim Karzai government is not to be taken for granted, due to given the external reluctance to deploy enough troops, an issue looming large, and largely amplified, in a post-conflict Iraq.

### *The future of Iraq*

Another legitimate European argument has to do with the consequences of a war on the future of Iraq itself, both from a military and a political viewpoint. It is true that on this side of the Atlantic we tend to exaggerate the consequences of a military operation; but in this case the unknowns are indeed very significant – from possible use of chemical/biological weapons by Saddam to a retaliation against Israel (which will likely react this time) to a fragmentation of the country.

To be brief: the European perception is that a second Gulf War on Iraq would be a wholly new chapter. Thus, the scenario of a massive land invasion from both north and south (requiring 250,000 troops) is viewed as too dangerous and costly in terms of human losses as well as regional repercussions: this is, incidentally, the only option that would imply a relevant active role for British forces and possibly the deployment of European mine-hunters and minesweepers, as in 1991.

An alternative scenario of massive and extended air strikes without support from land forces is not believed to be effective, given the fragility of any internal opposition to Saddam, and will pose daunting problems in managing domestic consensus both in the West and in the Arab world. In this case, European support would be *de facto* irrelevant, also due to the Pentagon’s resistance to sharing command of the operations.

An “in-out” scenario to decapitate the Iraqi regime provoking a coup by elements of the regime itself, would theoretically be preferable but would present many uncertainties (past attempts to encourage internal revolts have failed abysmally) and considered illusory by most European observers and analysts. In any case, under this option British special forces would support US special forces with the infiltration tasks.

The European perception is that, in any of the hypotheses under discussion, an Iraqi intervention will not be another Desert Storm, another Kosovo or another Afghanistan. And unless a new grand coalition of the 1991 type is put together, something that is currently not in the cards, the European supporting role would be marginal – with the exception of British forces and the logistical cooperation of Turkey.

From the very beginning of the Iraqi debate, moreover, the Europeans have been asking questions not only about the risks of a military action – in which, as seen above, Europe’s military irrelevance makes its doubts irrelevant too. But also on the post-war scenarios – and here, on the contrary, Europe’s role in any re-building effort makes its questions legitimate ones.

From this point of view, it is likely that the Europeans will tend to support the more “realist” view of a post-war Iraq as envisaged by the State Department (a new authoritarian post-Saddam leadership) rather than the grander visions apparently sponsored by the US Defence Department (a democratic government, to serve as an example for the rest of the region) and

supported by some of the Iraqi opposition organisations.<sup>23</sup> As argued above and already shown by the European reactions (including British) to the regime change theory in Palestine, the Europeans are not particularly confident about the idea that forcing western-style democracies in the region is an easy exercise. With specific regard to Iraq, the dominant view is that the historic hostility between Kurds, Sunnis and Shiites would lead to bitter infighting over power-sharing and oil resources.

Rather than working with the fragmented opposition groups – with whom only London has sufficiently close links – the other Europeans will tend to look for any chances of an internal change of the guard in the Iraqi regime. This is also consistent with the overriding logic of keeping the country united, since a disintegration would destabilise its neighbours too.

This fundamental concern – which is also a Turkish priority – requires an arrangement between the Shiites in the south (led by Ayatollah Hakim) and the Kurds in the north regarding the political future of Iraq. To this end, Iranian support also becomes necessary, although this might be less difficult to get than one might think. Both Russia and Europe itself would welcome and facilitate a deeper Iranian involvement.<sup>24</sup>

In broader terms, Europe and Russia (plus some of the Arab states) could find common ground with respect to Middle East priorities and particularly on how to deal with Iraq. But it is quite evident that neither Europe nor Russia will value their mutual relations more than their ties to the US. In addition, on the European side there is a fear that, as with NMD, an American-Russian deal may have already been struck (whereby the Russians would get the economic compensation they ask for) – even if Russia's domestic management of the Iraqi dossier seems complex enough to defy easy predictions.

The Arabs are divided over this issue. King Abdallah has clearly stated that attacking Iraq before having solved the Palestinian issue is far too dangerous. But according to some, in the end he might be ready to provide a strategically important logistical rearguard which could facilitate operations designed to take control of Western Iraq – a crucial task if the chance of Iraqi missiles hitting Israel is to be reduced. Regime change might actually be in Jordan's interest after all, although the hypothesis of a return of the Hashemite monarchy in Baghdad appears unrealistic.

Saudi Arabia and Syria certainly prefer a weak Iraq under Saddam Hussein to a new regime that might become a regional competitor in alliance with the US. Egypt, too, is fearful of such a prospect. And most of them are anxious not to lose the advantages derived each year from illegal trade – which has abundantly voided the smart sanctions programme.

Ultimately, it can be ruled out that Europe, Russia and the Arab states will join forces (which would *de facto* end up being a coalition designed to contain the US itself, not Iraq). This is certainly a good thing, given the devastating effects it would have on transatlantic relations.

#### *A new UNSC mandate?*

Good or legitimate arguments are combined, in the European positions, with “formalistic” arguments. I would include in this category the position whereby a military action will in any case require fresh legitimacy emanating directly from the UNSC.

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<sup>23</sup> “Special Report: America and Iraq”, *The Economist*, 3-9 August 2002, pp. 20-22.

<sup>24</sup> According to Richard Perle, Iran would eventually come down on the US side. See the interview he gave to *Politique Internationale*, No. 95|2002. See also the results of discussions by the Iraqi opposition in Tehran in early August, as reported by Jim Hoagland, *International Herald Tribune*, 9 August 2002, p. 5.

It goes without saying that a renewed UNSC approval would be highly preferable in terms of international legitimacy and support<sup>25</sup> – also because it is legally disputable whether a military operation has already been legitimised by the repeated violation of existing cease-fire resolutions. The US Administration,<sup>26</sup> the British Government and some French officials think so: but the debate will unavoidably go on.

My view is that this very issue – whether or not to go for a new UNSC mandate – cannot be put on the table as a sort of precursor to collective action. It must, instead, be left to the final end of a more complex strategy. In order to take a credible UN-first line, the Europeans would have to follow, in fact, a much more concrete and more explicit path, taking two coherent steps together.

**First:** Exercise *serious*, intense and sustained pressure on Saddam Hussein, giving him one last chance to re-admit the arms inspectors forced out in 1998. According to an Italian diplomat, the Europeans have so far attempted only half-hearted pressure and, in some cases, rather ambiguous policies, affected by the economic stakes promoted by various lobbies, which have never given up links with Iraq, and weakened by the lack of a real threat perception. In other words, at least some of the European countries have not pursued even the containment option in a serious manner.

**Second:** State explicitly that either Saddam accept the kind of intrusive and unconditional inspection regime requested, or other means to enforce the UN Resolution on Iraqi disarmament – including military action – will become unavoidable. As rightly noted by Christoph Bertram, European governments must not only demand unconditional inspections, they must also lobby within the UN – whatever the practical results – for using international force should Saddam Hussein fail to bend to other pressures. This is not the case where opposition from Russia would be unavoidable (Moscow, as said before, is not going to risk the relationship with the West for the sake of Saddam Hussein), nor China's abstention impossible.

Europe could for instance suggest that the Quartet on the Middle East (consisting of the EU, Russia, the US and the UN) hold meetings also on Iraq, devising the broad lines of an agreed international strategy on how to deal, at this point, with Saddam. The existence of a joint-position – on forcing the inspectors back and acting in the case it fails – would clearly reinforce the international hand with Saddam. The Quartet format would underline the connections between one crisis and the other in the Greater Middle East.

An extremely slippery slope would have to be walked, probably by indicating a deadline beyond which such use of force would be considered. Otherwise, an endless debate would ensue on when “enough is enough”.

Only the credibility of the latter position makes the former credible. Without the latter – missing so far, except in the British stance – the European reference to complying with UN

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<sup>25</sup> For the reasons explained, among other, by Richard C. Holbooke, “Bush should seek Security Council approval”, *International Herald Tribune*, 28 August 2002, p. 7. For a legal view against a military operation without a new UNSC mandate (and without new Congressional approval: what the author defines as the “double unilateralism”), see Bruce Ackerman, “But what’s the legal case for preemption?”, *Washington Post*, 18 August 2002.

<sup>26</sup> According to Mr. Cheney, it would be a useless, if not a dangerous delay to seek a new UN resolution. According to the White House, moreover, the President does not need Congressional approval, even if he would “consult” with Congress about Iraq. See “Cheney Says Peril of a Nuclear Iraq Justifies an Attack”, *New York Times*, 27 August 2002.



resolutions becomes purely formalistic. More importantly, this undermines the good arguments against the wisdom of the current US approach.

Summing up. My opinion is that the Europeans are advancing meaningful arguments, but their failure to take seriously the problem of what to do in case of a continuing stalemate renders them shallow.

In a sense, if it is true that whatever concession Saddam will make is not going to satisfy the US to give up on regime change (as Javier Solana has put it, “if Saddam thinks that this option is inexorable, why would he yield to inspectors?”<sup>27</sup>), it is also true that whatever violation Saddam will continue to pursue, it seems insufficient for the Europeans to contemplate a reaction.<sup>28</sup> A two-step position, as sketched out above, is needed: giving, in a sense, British (explicit) and French (less explicit and probably more ambiguous) attitudes a wider European backing.

### The “Europe Speak- Up” Scenario

The assumption behind such a Europe “speak-up scenario” – considered to be positive by some American analysts<sup>29</sup> – is that only when the US and Europe are united behind the demand for effective inspections, including the threat of the use of force, do they stand a chance to get their way.

Just as the Europeans – sharing a credible threat – would enforce the deterrence side of the equation, so would the Americans – giving up on regime change as an end in itself, independently of inspections – increase the chances of succeeding in pressuring Saddam.

A re-balancing and re-calibrating is needed on both sides. It is one thing to punish Iraqi violations of UN resolutions, it is a totally different one to strike at a cooperative Iraq. On this crucial point, as seen above, Britain too has distanced itself from the Bush administration, affirming that the objective has to remain ending the threat of WMD, and not regime change per se – however desirable it may be.<sup>30</sup>

It is true that the chances of Iraq becoming cooperative under Saddam are slim. If past behaviour is any guide, the cautious openings that the regime is currently making towards the UN are likely to be tactical manoeuvres to gain time and divide the Security Council as well as the West.

The letter sent by Naji Sabri to Kofi Annan on August 1<sup>st</sup> – containing the invitation to Hans Blix for discussions in Baghdad on Unmovic’s missions, after the third round of talks with the UN broke down in Vienna in early July – has generated, not accidentally, different reactions: intransigence in Washington, scepticism in London, satisfaction in Moscow (where this is seen as a result of a mission of Russian deputy Foreign Minister, Alexandr Saltanov’s mission to Iraq) and an interested wait-and-see attitude in Paris and Rome.<sup>31</sup> In any case, Kofi Annan’s spokesman said that the procedure proposed by Baghdad “is at variance with the one laid down by the SC in its resolution 1284”, a position later adopted by the Security Council as a whole.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>27</sup> See again Patrick E. Tyler, *op. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> See Roberto Toscano, “CFSP and Transatlantic Relations”, in forthcoming issue of *Aspenia*.

<sup>29</sup> Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay, “Speak Up, Europe”, *Financial Times*, 9 August 2002.

<sup>30</sup> See the interview of a British official in Tyler’s article, *op. cit.*

<sup>31</sup> Evelyn Leopold, “UN skeptical on new Iraqi offer of Arms Talks”, Reuters, 2 August 2002.

<sup>32</sup> According to Hans Blix, the Iraqi thesis (that there are unresolved issues and how these issue are tackled should be agreed upon with Unmovic before the resumption of inspections) is not acceptable, “for the very good

Many observers believe that Washington will impose conditions for unfettered inspections that are so strict as to be unacceptable to Saddam. This could open the way for differing interpretations in the US, Europe and Russia on what “unconditional inspection” means.

It is crucial that this outcome be avoided – conferring enough credit to Blix’s personal assessment. Only a joint international position – as said before – will be capable of forcing Saddam to accept the UNSC conditions.

In the end, however, there may be no alternative to using force where international law, diplomatic pressure, economic sanctions and military threats have been to no avail.

If it comes to that, as seen before, the Europeans will have no choice other than to support it – even by playing a marginal military role.

Therefore, it is in Europe’s interest that such a military operation, if it has to occur, be understood as the inevitable result of a collective political strategy pursued to the very end and in an honest manner; not as the unilateral choice of the superpower that cannot be refused. In this scenario – as hinted above – a fresh UNSC mandate would be preferable in my view; but it will not prove to be indispensable.

Supporting the use of force against Saddam will not be easy for European leaders who share with their voters – as seen before – a deep scepticism towards the use of force for political ends.

Yet, this two-fold strategy is clearly in Europe’s best interests at least for two reasons: first, because it puts any eventual use of force within an international framework – however uncertain its configuration may be; and, second, because it allows European governments to shape the issue in their respective domestic context, instead of appearing hypnotised by what the US might or might not do.

### **Implications for US-European Relations**

Showing that they take the threat posed by WMD in Iraq seriously, Europeans could also reasonably claim a right to discuss preventively the costs and implications of forceful action against Iraq. Such consequences and costs will obviously affect different European interests, from the strategic balance in the Middle East to economic repercussions of an armed clash. From this latter perspective, Europeans will likely argue for an “economy-first” approach to security, cautioning against the economic implications of a conflict (surge in oil prices, inflationary pressures) in rather fragile economic times.

We cannot in fact entirely dismiss a scenario in which President Bush simply postpones the military stage through the winter, while pressing for UN inspections and getting something also thanks to Russian and European mediation. If we reach the spring of 2003 with no massive military offensive ready to start, a focus on the economy might prevail in Washington too, in order to ensure that Bush comes out as a good domestic President while the 2004 Presidential campaign enters its active phase. This delay option, justified with economy-first reasons, would certainly be supported by the Europeans – as mentioned above. Indeed, European reserves could in the end offer President Bush a hand in devising a face-saving line (from overexposure on Iraq).

Again in terms of economic costs, post-conflict management would in any case require a strong European contribution both in financial terms and in terms of providing troops for

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reason that before [such an understanding] we need to see what changes have occurred on the ground in Iraq since the end of 1998” – according to the Resolution creating his inspection team.

peacekeeping tasks: according to some forecasts, an international force able to guarantee a post-Saddan stability would need at least 75,000 troops. This would be needed at a time when the Europeans are showing clear signs of dissatisfaction (see Schroeder's statements mentioned above) with a division of labour where their role is confined to that of the transatlantic "cleaning lady" – an expensive role in the long run.

Even recognising that the US is now willing and able to conduct large-scale operations on its own and that Europe is becoming superfluous in this context, the implications of an Iraqi military conflict will be measured by a significant level of tension across the Atlantic should substantive preventive consultations be lacking on conflict and post-conflict scenarios.

A situation of "polite mutiny" on the part of European allies, as suggested by Pfaff, would also be very grave for future relations: it would amount, in practice, to a "no" to a US attack on Iraq regardless of circumstances.<sup>33</sup> This scenario, however, is most improbable: as we have seen, politically, the major partners (possibly including a post-electoral Germany) will end up supporting an American action in some way, though not necessarily taking part in it. NATO's European facilities, moreover, are useful but not indispensable: which European country is ready to risk the US' political wrath by moving first, when in practice a large-scale military offensive would still be conducted, thanks (worst of all) to the last-minute concession by some other European country, coupled with availability from Turkey and a few Arab countries?

Barring a speak-up (i.e. positive) scenario or a polite mutiny (negative), Europe would in the end remain taking a purely reactive posture, subordinated to American choices that are still in the making. At that point, only the level of public relations and communications efforts, along with the form and duration of the military phase, would determine the higher or lower level of tension in domestic opinion across the continent. Most of the governments will likely fall into line.

In conclusion, while America debates the how and when of going to war with Iraq, Europe has to go back to reality. In all the possible scenarios, Europe will in any case be involved: to stay on the sidelines will only be a temporary illusion. It is wiser, then, to try something else first – make a credible renewed international attempt to force Baghdad to accept intrusive inspections. If that fails, regime change may become a Western – more than an American – security choice.

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<sup>33</sup> William Pfaff, "Nato's Europeans could say no", *International Herald Tribune*, 25 July 2002, p. 6.

# AN INVASION OF IRAQ? REFLECTIONS ON A POSSIBLE ACTION BY RUSSIA

ANDREI ZAGORSKI\*

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## I. Preliminary Remarks

This paper discusses eventual action that can be taken by Moscow provided that the military invasion of Iraq has started. Although it does not address the issue of what Russia could undertake before the invasion, the second part of the memo does discuss scenarios preceding the actual beginning of the war for a simple reason that any Russian action, feasible or desired, largely depends on the way the war begins.

## II. Russia's Interests

Moscow certainly does not belong to the champions of the idea to kick out Saddam Hussein by a military action of either the US and Britain, or of a larger coalition. It is important to note, however that, most recently, Russia has demonstrated much greater restraint in public criticism of the US plans to strike against Iraq than many of the traditional US allies. All in all, though not being enthusiastic about US intentions, Moscow seems prepared for an easy, if not a cooperative response.

The overwhelming interest of Russia is to sustain the momentum of the recent developments in US-Russian relations since the beginning of the war on terror. It is against the Russian interest to endanger further improvement of cooperation with the US. Moreover, even though Moscow is not supportive of the eventual strike against Iraq, a benevolent reaction to it could significantly boost Russian-American cooperation.

Indeed, eventually, Russia can extract political benefits from a benevolent reaction to US strikes in the same way as it did from its boldly cooperative participation in the war on terror.

There isn't any (politically) strong economic pro-Iraqi lobby in Moscow although several sectors of the Russian economy have interests in the country. The usual economic argument in favour of closer cooperation with Iraq is the multi-billion dollar debt of the latter accumulated over the Soviet years in the course of intensive arms sales to Iraq. Since then, however, the military cooperation has been curbed, and, under current circumstances, the Russian military industrial complex no longer perceives the Iraqi regime as an important client.

Russian companies have been actively engaged in the implementation of the oil-for-food programme and, indeed, have been successful in processing up to one-third of Iraq's allowed oil exports over the last years. Russian companies are also active in reconstruction, or in construction of power plants in Iraq. However, this programme is largely funded by the Russian governmental credits (Iraq is the 6<sup>th</sup> biggest recipient of the credits provided by the Russian government).

In fact, there isn't any powerful pro-Iraqi political-economic lobby in Moscow that could be compared to the pro-Iranian one. And an eventual normalisation of the situation around Iraq could even open new business opportunities in the country.

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Moscow seems to have made the choice between the Iranian and the Iraqi cases in favour of the former several months ago while recognising that it can (and should) not sustain two major issues of controversy overshadowing its relations with the US.

An invasion of Iraq of any sort certainly will strengthen anti-American sentiment in the Russian political class and, probably, for another short period, in Russian public opinion. In the absence of any real political opposition to Putin, however, this is going to pose only a limited problem to the Russian leader.

Still, though any controversy over Iraq is unlikely to affect the outcome of the presidential election in Russia in 2004, the closer to the election the invasion starts and/or lasts, the more restricted will be the Russian leadership's response and the more rhetoric it can apply to appease public opinion and neutralise the opponents.

For this purpose, however, Moscow can fully enjoy its privilege of not being a formal ally of the US and thus not being pushed into the need to formally approve or disapprove of US action. The only exception – and the significant one – is going to be any vote that takes place in the UN Security Council.

The single most important dilemma posed to Russia by an eventual invasion of Iraq is the legitimisation of such an action by the UN Security Council.

There is a very strong feeling in Moscow, especially after the Kosovo war, that any military intervention in a third country must receive the formal approval of the UNSC. This has been Moscow's major preoccupation since 1999, when it saw the danger of undermining the UN and the relevance of Russia's status of a permanent UNSC member.

This explains the strong desire on the Russian side that any US action against Iraq must go through the Security Council.

On the other hand, it is exactly this demand that puts Moscow into a very unpleasant situation of being forced to either support (by voting for or abstaining) or veto US intervention.

The way this dilemma is solved will largely determine the official reaction in Moscow to the strikes.

Russian Middle East experts emphasise the domestic complications of any attempt to remove Hussein, and the wider collateral damage in the region. The demise of Hussein's regime may result in the destabilisation of the country with regional consequences not just in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict but with regard to other countries (the problem of the Kurds, for instance, which may have a destabilising effect on both Turkey and Iran).

Those problems, however, do not appear to be of immediate concern to the Russian leadership. They imply little direct impact on Russia, and remain remote secondary issues. They are rather seen as US business and none (or almost none) of Russia's.

Furthermore, Russia could indirectly benefit from mid-term destabilisation in the region generated by the US invasion. Those problems may keep Turkey busy – a country which, rightly or wrongly, is perceived as a country of concern in Moscow. They also could divert much of the international community's attention from controversial issues of Russian politics (Chechnya), or from the regions where Russian policy is perceived in the West as ambivalent (i.e. Georgia).

Therefore, the eventual "collateral damage" is rather an argument to caution the US than an expression of direct concern of Russia.

While considering its response to the invasion, Moscow certainly will have to consider not only the eventual impact of its action on US-Russian relations but also its impact on the current US administration.

Moscow would like to see a strong president in the US, but Putin apparently has learned to go along with Bush. Since there is no really strong alternative candidate in sight (though this may be a premature judgement at this stage), the preference of Moscow should be the re-election of Bush in 2004.

Therefore, Moscow's interest would be that any US invasion of Iraq, once it happens, is as short and as successful as possible, and that it does not turn into a disaster for Bush.

The bottom line:

- Should the US decide to invade Iraq, there is no strong reason for Moscow to take any action against it. The demonstration of reasonable cooperativeness could help to further improve relations with the US.
- The strike should be legitimised by a UNSC resolution rather than be a unilateral action. It should take place sooner rather than later and be as short and as successful as possible.

### **III. Short of War Problem**

The major preoccupation of Russia is whether or not the US is going to seek UNSC legitimisation for its eventual strike against Iraq or not.

The benefits of a cooperative approach to the US action should overrule the hesitation of the Russian side to appear as a proponent of the strikes by endorsing the resolution effectively empowering the US to go ahead.

Therefore, Russian diplomacy should seek an early resolution by the UNSC which would imply the option of use of force against Iraq and would avoid laying out precise criteria for doing so. Since any other reason may not be perceived as a legitimate rationale for the use of force, this option shall be linked to the sanctions against Iraq to be applied in case of the latter's refusal to readmit UN weapons inspectors unconditionally.

Turning to the language of the resolution, Moscow would acquiesce to whatever language would be acceptable to France (and Germany). It would have to play a key role, however, in convincing the Chinese to at least abstain from voting on the resolution.

The adoption of a UNSC resolution authorising the use of force option is the key to any Russian action after the invasion begins. Should there be no such a resolution, the options available for Russia's action are going to be very limited.

### **IV. What role for Russia?**

Any discussion of Russia's action after the war begins should be based on a realistic assessment of any eventual role the country would play in the further developments.

1. Moscow can and shall not prevent the US decision to go to war with Iraq. Nor can it stop the invasion once it has started. Any action against the invasion (political and especially military) would be neither successful nor helpful in the context of US-Russian relations. This implies that *the role of an active opponent of the invasion is not a good option* for Russia.

2. *The role of an advocate of the Iraqi regime*, based on existing contacts with the leaders of the country at different levels, is also not available to Moscow. Russia does not have the

leverage to influence the US policy and to force it into a compromise with Hussein. Nor would such role be in the interest of Moscow.

3. Any attempt to take over *the role of an advocate of the West* vis-à-vis Iraqi leadership is also highly unlikely to be successful. Russia does not have sufficient leverage with Iraq, nor can it force the US to compromise on the objectives of the invasion. It could have some role, however, if the US wanted to make a deal with any groups within the current regime to replace Hussein. Here Russian contacts may prove helpful.

4. Russia can hardly be expected to be an *active participant of the anti-Hussein coalition*.

5. The most reasonable role for Russia would be, therefore, that of a *critical "positively neutral" party* which would not exclude tacit cooperation with the US.

This 5<sup>th</sup> option would also imply that cooperation with the US on the Iraqi problem would mainly go through bilateral channels while the multilateral track should be concentrated in the UNSC.

In order to avoid giving the impression of being part of the anti-Iraqi coalition, Moscow should prevent the issue being placed on the agenda of the Russia-NATO Council of 20.

## V. What action by Russia?

The response of Moscow to the invasion, in any case, will consist of a mix of criticism of war as a means of solving problems, and of tacit or explicit cooperation with the US. The intensity of both elements would depend primarily of whether or not the strike against Iraq can be justified, at least to some extent, by a UNSC resolution.

1. Should there be *no UNSC resolution* providing some sort of legitimisation for the US action, the major objective of Moscow would be to bring the case back to the UN Security Council.

In this case, the public criticism of the invasion would be most sound in Moscow. The major focus of the criticism would be the need to restore international law and order, and to enact the Security Council.

The lack of legitimisation from the UNSC would reduce options for cooperation with the US to a political minimum. Moscow would have to reassure Washington that, despite public criticism, it is not going to be a trouble-maker. And it would have to work intensively on a UNSC resolution to address the post-war settlement in Iraq.

Should, however, Iraq use or try to use weapons of mass destruction against any targets in the region, this can help to reverse the official position of Moscow and to improve cooperation with the US, especially if such a development would lead to a UNSC resolution that could be regarded in Moscow as an important step to bring the case back into the UN tube.

To accelerate the political process, and in exchange for the US cooperation in working on a UNSC resolution, Moscow can offer Washington its good services in contacting relevant figures in the Iraqi elite who would be prepared to make a deal with the US at the expense of Hussein.

Should the war against Iraq result in a major increase of oil prices, Russia certainly would be cooperative in increasing its exports of crude oil in an attempt to balance the markets. However, the capacity of Russia to have a major impact on the oil markets is very limited, and it can not replace Saudi Arabia which is going to be the crucial actor in this respect.

2. Should the strike against Iraq be at least to some extent *legitimised by a UNSC resolution*, the response of Moscow would be to cooperate to the extent possible (within the “positive neutrality” notion).

There certainly will be some criticism of using coercive power to solve problems, as well as calls for restoring peace as soon as possible. This public criticism, however, would be balanced by blaming Hussein’s regime for the lack of cooperativeness, and for the plans of obtaining weapons of mass destruction. Should the Iraqi regime use or try to use weapons of mass destruction against any targets in the region, this can result in pulling Russia explicitly to the side with the US, especially if European allies do the same.

Political cooperation with the US within the UNSC as well as within the bilateral framework (including offering good services in contacting relevant figures from the Iraqi elite), as well as responsiveness with regard to keeping oil prices at a reasonable level may be occasionally complemented by some cooperation related to the military operation as such.

Military cooperation could primarily include intelligence-sharing and/or sharing the data from the Russian over-the-horizon ground-based early warning stations, especially from those in Mukachevo and probably Gabala (to the extent the latter would matter).

Although direct participation of Russia in any invasion would be excluded, the exchange of relevant information related to tracing Iraqi weapons of mass destruction as well as monitoring the eventual use of Iraqi missiles could be a reasonable element of cooperation between Russia and the US.

3. Though it is difficult to foresee the length and the final outcome of the invasion, Russia certainly would draw attention to the need of an international effort to help the Iraqi people to *reconstruct and to develop the country*. International assistance and investment would be needed to achieve that goal.

It would certainly be of interest to Russia that it is rewarded for its cooperation during the war by obtaining relevant contracts within the reconstruction programmes, at least in the areas it has been active in Iraq until now, such as oil fields development and the development of the energy sector.

4. Any particular action to be taken by Moscow shall be *determined by the following considerations*:

- the extent to which it helps to keep the case within (or to return the case to) the UNSC framework,
- it does not overstretch US-Russian relations;
- Moscow does not need to compete with the UK for cooperativeness, but
- it shall not drop its level of cooperation with the US below that eventually provided by France and Germany.



# UNITED STATES POLICY TOWARDS IRAQ

EDWARD P. DJEREJIAN\*

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The US decision to refocus the world's attention on Iraq and the threat it poses to international peace and security under Saddam Hussein results from the ongoing adjustment of US strategy as a consequence of the attacks of 11 September 2001. The US is leading the campaign against global terrorism – a campaign that can only be won by successful international coalition-building. For some time before September 11<sup>th</sup>, the nexus between weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and terrorist groups and states that support terrorism had been identified as the major strategic threat. This definition is at the core of the new US strategy. Due to the nature of this threat, this definition has also given rise to the concept of pre-emptive strikes, and it has implications for the established policies of containment and deterrence. For building and sustaining effective coalitions, the US will have to work with its allies and partners to build on these changes of its national security strategy for the needed elaboration of an international strategic framework and agreed policy for dealing with the threat.

## The Bush Administration

As the formulation of the administration's policy on Iraq was evolving, a range of positions on the approach to Iraq has been expressed up to the summer of 2002 among Bush administration officials. President George W. Bush himself established the link between Iraq and terrorism by stressing the need to deny sanctuary to terrorists anywhere in the world<sup>1</sup> and pointing to the totalitarian threat posed by state sponsors of terrorism with potential access to weapons of mass destruction.<sup>2</sup> He also declared that it was the stated policy of his government to have a regime change in Iraq,<sup>3</sup> as US legislation indeed had called for since 1998, believing that unlawful aggression and the pursuit of weapons of mass destruction are the essence of Saddam Hussein's rule and would not end as long as he was in power. However, Bush put the issue of full compliance with UN decisions on the dismantlement of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programmes at the centre of his international efforts vis-à-vis Iraq, insisting that the issue here is not inspections but disarmament.<sup>4</sup> On September 15<sup>th</sup>, President Bush addressed the subject of Iraq in a major speech at the United Nations.

At the same time, Vice-President Richard Cheney advocated determined US leadership to force Saddam Hussein from power in his remarks before a veterans group in Nashville in August 2002. Cheney said that old security doctrines did not apply in the new strategic

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<sup>1</sup> “We have entered the second stage of the war on terror – a sustained campaign to deny sanctuary to terrorists who would threaten our citizens from anywhere in the world.” (remarks by President Bush at The White House, 11 March 2002).

<sup>2</sup> “The evil that has formed against us has been termed the new totalitarian threat. The authors of terror are seeking nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Regimes that sponsor terror are developing these weapons and the missiles to deliver them. If these regimes and their terrorist allies were to perfect these capabilities, no inner voice of reason, no hint of conscience would prevent their use.” (Speech by President Bush at the German Bundestag, 23 May 2002.)

<sup>3</sup> Press conference by President Bush, 8 July 2002.

<sup>4</sup> President Bush speaking to congressional leaders on Iraq, 4 September 2002.

environment. Containment was not possible when dictators obtained weapons of mass destruction and were prepared to share them with terrorists who intend to inflict catastrophic casualties on the United States. He also claimed that “many of us are convinced that Saddam Hussein will acquire nuclear weapons fairly soon”. A tentative US approach to Iraq would mean that Saddam would simply be emboldened, and it would be even harder to assemble friends and allies to oppose him. In a post-Saddam world, however, moderates in the region would take heart and extremists would rethink their commitment to Jihad, and the broader cause of Middle East peace would be advanced. Cheney assured his audience that the Bush administration would not simply look away, hope for the best and leave the matter for some future administration. He also promised that the US would not turn its back on Iraq after Saddam's departure but would stay to help it rebuild with “territorial integrity” and to craft a democratic, pluralistic, ethnically representative government.

Secretary of State Colin Powell highlighted the need for the United States to lead the international community in its approach toward Iraq and build international support. He stressed the role of the UN Security Council and WMD inspectors as a first step toward enforcing compliance and disarmament on Saddam Hussein and his regime, with serious consequences if he does not comply.

### **The debate**

These positions reflect a debate in the US over the right strategy that continues in certain aspects and includes the following issues:

- What is the clear and present threat to US security interests that justifies going to war?
- Why abandon the proven policies of containment and deterrence, which worked in 1991 (cf. James A. Baker III's ultimatum to Tarik Aziz before Desert Storm)?
- Should the US, as an historically “benign power”, move towards a paradigm shift to pre-emptive war without the elaboration of an international strategic context and policy?
- What are the consequences and implications of the US going it alone if there is little international support for military action?
- What is the role of Congress and American public opinion?
- What is the role of the United Nations and a new UNSC resolution on disarmament of WMD through inspections? Shall the US build a unified position within the UN that provides international legitimacy and political force?
- Does a policy of both WMD inspections and regime change establish disincentives for Saddam Hussein?
- Will a military attack in which his regime's survival is at stake result in the use of chemical and biological weapons against US military and/or neighbouring states?

A number of respected Republicans such as James A. Baker III, Henry Kissinger, Brent Scowcroft, Lawrence Eagleburger and Chuck Hagel have spoken out in recent months reminding the administration of the need to reflect on these questions, as have leading Democrats such as Zbigniew Brzezinski, Joseph Biden, Richard Holbrooke and Samuel Berger. European views pointed in the same direction, even if the positions expressed cover a wide spectrum from Blair and Straw, Chirac and Villepin to Schröder at the other end. Relevant contributions to the debate have also come from Arab and Israeli political leaders.

### **The Critical Issue: After Saddam, What?**

The US must be clear in its policy about its own strategic objectives. Is the major goal to have an Iraq without weapons of mass destruction? In this respect, the US must determine whether it views WMD inspections and disarmament as an end in itself or not. If so, will it agree that UN Security Council sanctions related to WMD are lifted in due course?

What would be the political nature of the Iraqi regime and its military force structure in terms of the stated US goal that Iraq no longer be a threat to its neighbours? If the territorial integrity of Iraq is a major objective, how will this be assured in a post-Saddam scenario? In terms of a government in Iraq that is broadly representative of Iraq's diverse population, will such a government emerge as an "Iraqi political solution" not imposed from outside and, conceivably, including Iraqi insiders and outsiders?

The notion of regime change raises three controversial questions in this context:

- Is regime change a necessary step in the effort to eliminate WMD in Iraq?
- Is regime change in Iraq a precedent for action towards other states with WMD programmes?
- Is it meant to lead to "democratisation" in the Middle East?

In trying to answer these questions, it is helpful to consider what would be the likely outcome of regime change in Iraq. Would we be trading Saddam for another Saddam? A Musharraf? A Karzai? Or a broadly based and representative leadership?

This leads immediately to the key question: What would be the nature, extent and duration of the US commitment to a post-Saddam Iraq in terms of military presence and provision of security, economic development and assistance, as well as policy coordination with allies and regional countries?

In both too little and too much commitment, there are potential issues of unintended consequences. In designing the proper strategy, the US needs to consider likely consequences of available courses of action in a number of dimensions:

- Arab and Muslim world reaction,
- Israeli-initiated action in case of war or in reaction to specific threats to Israel,
- impact on European allies and their long-term relationship with the US,
- impact on the prospects for Arab-Israeli peace,
- economic repercussions and the extent of an oil-price spike and energy supply and security.

In my view, the essential evaluation must be to keep Iraq's territorial integrity intact after Saddam. The stakes are high because the dismemberment of Iraq would have serious geopolitical consequences in the Middle East. Kurdish separatism would have a direct impact on key states such as Turkey, Syria and Iran, which have important Kurdish minorities. The creation of an independent Kurdish entity in Iraq could lead to a quest to establish a greater Kurdistan. The ensuing political destabilisation could lead to regional conflict. Differences between Iraqi Sunnis and Shiites could impel the Shiites to go their own way and thereby destabilise Iraq's southern borders with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and its eastern border with Iran.

Given these potential consequences, it is important that whichever group comes to power in Baghdad that it is able to maintain the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq. The best way to

ensure that outcome is for a successor regime to provide the broadest political participation possible for the diverse ethnic and religious groups in Iraq so that they can share power and meet the political, economic and social needs of their constituencies.

There is reason to believe, for example, that the two major Kurdish factions in Iraq – the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Kurdish Democratic Party – would opt to remain in a united Iraq if they were able to share national political and economic power effectively in a central government in Baghdad. This key requirement would apply also to the other groups in Iraq, especially the Shiites.

But in anticipation of political change and given the stakes involved, we should actively promote among the Iraqi civilian and military opposition the United States' strong commitment to the territorial integrity of Iraq and underscore and encourage the need for broadened political participation there after Saddam Hussein.

### **Concluding Comments**

The combination of the urgent need to address an existential threat and the complicated nature of the international strategic environment in the Middle East and the Gulf leads to a recommendation to act along the lines of *festina lente* (“to make haste slowly”) and deliberately to assure that there is sufficient domestic and international support for actions decided upon so that the outcome is successful and enhances Persian Gulf security and US global interests for peace and security.

# About the European Security Forum

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The Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) and the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) joined forces late in the year 2000, to launch a new forum on European security policy in Brussels. The objective of this *European Security Forum* is to bring together senior officials and experts from EU and Euro-Atlantic Partnership countries, including the United States and Russia, to discuss security issues of strategic importance to Europe. The Forum is jointly directed by CEPS and the IISS and is hosted by CEPS in Brussels.

The Forum brings together a select group of personalities from the Brussels institutions (EU, NATO and diplomatic missions), national governments, parliaments, business, media and independent experts. The informal and confidential character of the Forum enables participants to exchange ideas freely.

The aim of the initiative is to think ahead about the strategic security agenda for Europe, treating both its European and transatlantic implications. The topics to be addressed are selected from an open list that includes crisis management, defence capabilities, security concepts, defence industries and institutional developments (including enlargement) of the EU and NATO.

The Forum has about 60 members, who are invited to all meetings and receive current information on the activities of the Forum. This group meets every other month in a closed session to discuss a pre-arranged topic under Chatham House rules. The Forum meetings are presided over by François Heisbourg, Chairman of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy. As a general rule, three short issue papers are commissioned from independent experts for each session presenting EU, US and Russian viewpoints on the topic.

**The Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS)** is an independent policy research institute founded in Brussels in 1983, with the aim of producing sound policy research leading to constructive solutions to the challenges facing Europe.

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