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The War to Defend the Dollar

The Coalition of the Willing

Shield of Achilles

Shiite Politics

Looting and the USA

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George Galloway

George Galloway is the only leader who has emerged from the Anti-war movement with a deadly combination of charisma married to a deep sense of political reality. The only one with the potential political clout of a Nelson Mandela. And his was a lone voice that refused (like this magazine) to take the weak way out and jump on the "let's demonise Saddam" bandwagon.

He is in total contrast to Tony Blair whose personality is the ultimate triumph of the passive-aggressive principle in British politics. It is no surprise that Blair hates and is out to destroy him.

We suspect this will prove to be a mistake, which the Government will live to regret. For like Nelson Mandela, persecution will only make George stronger.

The immediate test for the Anti-war opposition, if it is to become a political force, will be, to what extent is it prepared to defend him.

Iraq has been "liberated", but what is going to happen now?

The US fully expected that its troops would be warmly welcomed by the Iraqi people, and that in the warm glow of liberation it would be relatively easy to establish a successor state friendly to the US; a state that would permit a large US military base on its territory so that the US could dominate the region and threaten Iran and Syria; a state that would, like Venezuela before Chavez, sabotage OPEC and drive down the price of oil.

It was never obvious that this could be achieved. Iraq is a wholly artificial state carved out of the Ottoman Empire by British imperialism 80 years ago. It is not obvious that it can be kept together except by authoritarian rule from the centre, as Saddam Hussein and his Baathist regime did for the past 25 years. Yet keeping it together is said to an immutable policy objective.

At the end of the first Gulf war, a leading member of the US administration set out the difficulties of establishing a successor regime to Saddam Hussein in a interview in the New York Times on 13 April 1991:

"If you're going to go in and try to topple Saddam Hussein, you have to go to Baghdad. Once you've got Baghdad, it's not clear what you will do with it.

"It's not clear what kind of government you would put in place of the one that's currently there now. Is it going to be a Shia regime, a Sunni regime or a Kurdish regime? Or one that tilts toward the Ba'athists, or one that tilts toward the Islamic fundamentalists.

"How much credibility is that government going to have if it's set up by the United States military when it's there? How long does the United States military have to stay to protect the people that sign on for the government, and what happens to it once we leave?"

Those awkward questions were posed by Dick Cheney, who was then the top man in the Pentagon. He was explaining why the US army didn't go to Baghdad in 1991. One wonders if Jay Garner, the retired general who is the Pentagon's man on the ground in Iraq today, read those words before he accepted the job.

INDEFINITE OCCUPATION ?

Administration spokesmen at every level, including Garner himself, keep on saying that the US wants to end its occupation of Iraq as soon as possible, and to hand over the government of Iraq to the Iraqi people. That has been said so often that it is difficult to see how there could be a reversal of policy, with the erstwhile army of "liberation" becoming an army of indefinite occupation. It is unlikely for another reason: indefinite occupation would eventually be met with

armed resistance and American blood would be spilt.

The US may not or may not be able to determine events on the ground in Iraq if it remains in occupation, but it certainly won't be able to do so if it leaves. Therein lies a contradiction, which is daily evident: on the one hand US spokesman say they want to leave, but on the other hand they say certain things will not happen.

The same Jay Garner who keeps saying that US occupation will be of strictly limited duration also said the other day:

"It concerns me the role I heard Iran is playing. I will be candid. I do not think the coalition will accept out-of-region influence." (*Guardian*, 25 April)

Likewise his boss, Donald Rumsfeld, said:

"If you're [asking] how would we feel about an Iranian-type government with a few clerics running everything in the country, the answer is: that isn't going to happen." [*ibid*]

But, how can the US prevent it if its forces are no longer on the ground? In any case, isn't it up to the Iraqis themselves to decide these things now that Operation Iraqi Freedom has succeeded?

Will the US be able to put together an interim government? That is an open question. It is certainly possible that representative Arab figures will refuse to co-operate with Garner in setting up an interim administration. It may become too dangerous for them to do so even if they have a mind to. The Kurdish leadership will co-operate, but that is of no consequence.

REMARKABLE RESTRAINT

It should be said that Garner is not the ideal American to win Arab co-operation. In October 2000, just after the outbreak of the second intifada in Palestine, along with 42 retired senior US military men, he visited Israel under the auspices of the Washington-based Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA), of which Richard Perle is a prominent member. And along with his 42 colleagues he put his name to a JINSA statement praising the restraint

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of the Israeli Defense Forces. It began:

"We, the undersigned, believe that during the current upheavals in Israel, the Israel Defense Forces have exercised remarkable restraint in the face of lethal violence orchestrated by the leadership of a Palestinian Authority that deliberately pushes civilians and young people to the front lines. Ö

"The behavior of those Palestinians, who use civilians as soldiers in a war, is a perversion of military ethics."

It won't be long before these words are thrown in his face in Iraq. And it may not be long before the US occupying forces in Iraq meet with similar problems as the Israeli occupying forces in Palestine – and exercise similar restraint.

If the US were concerned only with handing over power to the Iraqi people, and withdrawing its forces, then it should obviously look to the UN to put together, and give its blessing to, an interim Iraqi administration, and gradually allow its troops to be replaced by UN troops. An international body, with substantial Arab representation, would be much better placed to do the job than the US with its history of backing Israel's occupation of Arab lands. That looks a very remote possibility at the moment. US spokesmen constantly repeat the mantra that they are going to hand Iraq over to the Iraqi people, and not to the UN which refused to endorse their "liberation". However, there may come a time when the US looks for international help to extricate itself. Time will tell.

TITLE TO OIL

The establishment of an Iraqi government with some claim to legitimacy is important, especially for the sale of oil, which was owned by the state under the old regime. This begs the questions: who has legal title to it now that the old regime has gone and no successor regime is in place; can oil be sold without legal title?

The Fourth Geneva Convention (on the protection of civilians in time of war) requires the occupying power to protect civilian lives and to see that they are fed and have access to medical care, amongst other things. But under the

Convention the theft of property by the occupying power is forbidden, and for the US to sell state owned Iraqi oil would be theft. Of course, there is no power in this world that can stop the US doing what it likes with Iraqi oil. But if they do, it can hardly fail to increase the antagonism against US forces on the ground in Iraq.

Until there is an Iraqi government in place which has the blessing of the UN, any sale of Iraqi oil or other state assets should be under the control of the UN, not of the occupying power.

OIL-FOR-FOOD PROGRAMME

Around 60% of Iraqis have to rely for food on the Oil-for-Food programme, which is the only legal form of international trade Iraq is allowed to engage in. Under it, the Iraqi state sold oil and the proceeds were put in a UN bank account, out of which the Iraqi state bought food and other goods approved of by the Security Council (in practice, by the US). (The proceeds were also used to pay reparations for the first Gulf War, and to pay for weapons inspections). The food was distributed by the Iraqi state through a network of 45,000 centres in a manner that the UN regarded as both fair and effective. A separate procurement and distribution system exists in Kurdish areas, but it was also paid for out of the same oil revenue.

Obviously, this procurement and distribution system has largely disappeared along with the Iraqi state. Also, although food and other goods are in the pipeline, oil will have to be sold if the scheme is to continue. The scheme was modified by Security Council resolution 1472 on 28 March to give the UN Secretary General the temporary power to try to re-establish a distribution system in Iraq and to purchase food using existing oil money, but that is only a temporary expedient. Since the UN can act in a humanitarian role anywhere in the world without specific Security Council mandate, it has the power to provide food and other aid paid for from other sources as well, and it has set up a separate fund for Iraq to which it is asking states to contribute.

ENDING SANCTIONS ?

As this is written, it is reported that the US is to propose to the Security Council that economic sanctions against

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Iraq be ended, and Iraq be allowed to trade freely. Of itself, this will do nothing in the short run for the people who now rely on the Oil-for-Food programme, since they had no money to buy food before Iraq was invaded, and they have even less now that economic activity has been severely reduced. So there is going to have to be an Oil-for-Food programme or an equivalent for some time to come.

In any case, there is a complication about abolishing the Oil-for-Food programme: oil proceeds are not only used for food they are also used to pay reparations arising from Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. And the outstanding claims for reparations before the UN Compensation Commission are enormous.

The Commission has received a total of \$320 billion in claims since it was set up in 1991. These are from individu-

als, companies, governments, and international organisations. To date, only individual and family claims have been settled – claims totaling \$148 billion were made, and the Commission awarded about 30% of this, that is, about \$43 billion. Of that amount, \$16 billion has already been paid, leaving \$27 billion theoretically owed by Iraq. In addition, government, corporate and other claims amounting to \$172 billion have yet to be dealt with, which if proceeded with might require another \$50 billion to settle.

The question arises: is the post-Saddam Iraq going to be lumbered with these claims for compensation against the old regime?

The same question arises with regard to the outstanding debts of the old regime, which amount to well around \$130 billion. At the end of the Iran-Iraq war, Iraq owed around \$100 billion, and

interest has accumulated on that since. \$30 billion of this was paid by the Gulf states to assist with the war against Iran. Iraq has always regarded these as grants, not loans, since it was paying in blood to resist the Islamic revolution in Iran, which threatened not just Iraq but all the regimes in the Gulf, including Kuwait.

To put these enormous figures in perspective, Iraqi oil exports in 2001 amounted to only \$12.7 billion, according to OPEC figures. Oil production would be expected to increase over time as production facilities are refurbished. But oil revenue will not increase in proportion unless there is effective OPEC system to control production, and keep prices up. Nevertheless, if Iraq were required to pay off all this, it would be a heavy burden on the Iraqi economy for decades to come.

Who's Who of the Coalition of the Willing

by David Morrison

Some 30 countries were part of the Coalition against Iraq in the first Gulf War. The Coalition against Iraq is much larger this time.

A White House statement of 21 March informed the world that:

"President Bush is assembling a Coalition that has already begun military operations to disarm Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction, and enforce 17 UNSC resolutions."

and that already 48 countries, all of whom "understand the threat Saddam Hussein's weapons pose to the world", were "publicly committed to the Coalition", including:

Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria,

Colombia, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Georgia, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Mongolia, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Palau, Panama, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Rwanda, Singapore, Slovakia, Solomon Islands, South Korea, Spain, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, Uzbekistan

On 3 April, the number of Coalition members rose to 49 with the addition of Tonga, and that's where it stands at the time of writing.

The White House boasts that this Coalition is drawn from every corner of

the world, with every major race, religion and ethnicity in the world represented in it, with a total population of around 1.23 billion and a combined GDP of approximately \$22 trillion. (It doesn't mention that almost 50% of the latter is due to the US economy).

The next time you hear a Coalition spokesman from Qatar, remember s/he is speaking on behalf of all these 49 countries. The fact that spokesmen for the Coalition have always been either American or British up to now is sheer coincidence: Palau will get its turn shortly.

WHAT CONTRIBUTION ?

Scanning through the list of Coalition countries, an obvious question springs to mind: what contribution does a country have to make in order to qualify for inclusion in the list? The answer is:

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The War to Preserve Dollar Supremacy

by John Martin

There may be even more at stake than Oil in the current Middle Eastern crisis. There is some evidence that the American conflict with Iraq is about nothing less than the preservation of the Dollar as the World's reserve currency.

The USA precipitated the collapse of the Bretton Woods system in 1971 by ending the dollar link with gold. This enabled it to print money to finance the Vietnam war. An effect of this was to devalue dollar reserves all around the world, particularly affecting the oil trade. Yet, when OPEC put up its prices in the early seventies, it had nowhere to put its newfound gains but with American banks, and such money was transferred to dollar denominated assets such as US treasury bills and American real estate and the stock market. All sales of Oil were in dollars meaning that all buyers of Oil had to buy dollars to purchase Oil, which is of course a key commodity for all industrialised countries.

The dollar's strength has a momentum of its own, which is almost independent of its trading performance. Because it has been for historical reasons the strongest currency, Central Banks around the world buy US treasury Bills as a hedge against speculative attacks against its currency. Exporters regardless of what country they are from insist on dollar receipts for their products. By the late 1990s more than four fifths of all foreign exchange transactions and half of all world exports were denominated in dollars.

The dominance of the dollar is also maintained by the International Monetary Fund, which insists that developing countries hold reserves of US treasury bills in order to trade with the rest of the world (see Nobel prize winner Joseph Stiglitz's book *Globalisation And Its Discontents*).

The position of the dollar is way in excess of the value of goods and services produced by the USA. It has a record trade deficit of 5% of GDP and a national debt of 55% of GDP (\$6.3 trillion dollars). If the foreign income from US banks, which rely on the dominance of the dollar, were taken out of the equation the situation would be far worse. Up until very recently the western

world had been quite happy for the USA to be consuming far more than it produces because it provided a market for the rest of the world to sell its wares; it was a bulwark against communism; and more important, there was no alternative world currency.

But the Communist system has collapsed and the Euro has the potential to replace the Dollar as the world currency.

Also, the US economy will become increasingly vulnerable as its own Oil reserves run out. According to a report commissioned by Vice President Cheney and published in May 2001, the US will import 90% of its Oil by the year 2020. The report recommended tapping in to the vast reserves in the Caspian Sea region, which according to a feasibility study conducted by that well known company Enron had reserves that were comparable to those of Saudi Arabia. The plan was to build a pipeline from Kazakhstan through Afghanistan and the US's dependency on other unstable Middle Eastern Countries' oil would be a thing of the past.

Unfortunately, the Taliban regime in Afghanistan were proving particularly uncooperative, but the September 11th attack in New York gave the US the perfect excuse to invade Afghanistan. Bush and his cronies must have thought, "happy days", when the pro-Western Karzai government replaced the Taliban. Unfortunately, further exploratory wells in early 2002 indicated that Enron's initial study had proved to be wildly optimistic (now there's a surprise). The true extent of Oil was between 5 and 10% of Enron's estimates and the oil was of poor quality with a high sulphur content. No wonder Bush was upset at poor Corporate standards. He had fought a war based on false information.

It was then that the US renewed its interest in Iraq. That country had the temerity to switch its Oil prices from dollars to Euros in November 2000, thereby attacking the US economy's Achilles heel: its position as the world reserve currency. Although Iraq's current production of Oil is not that significant it has the second largest proven Oil reserves in the World representing about 11% of the world's total. Also, the Washington Adminis-

tration must have thought that this was the thin end of the wedge. Iran the second largest producer of Oil and another element in the axis of evil is in the process of following Iraq's lead. Most of its Central Bank reserves are already denominated in Euros. Most galling for the US is that the dollar depreciated against the Euro by 17% during 2002.

Venezuela the fourth largest Oil producer has also been shifting its reserves towards the Euro and has been avoiding currency transactions completely by bartering with countries such as Cuba (Oil in exchange for medical expertise). US support for the failed coup attempt against Chavez should be seen in the context of its activities in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The US must be worried about the stability of Saudi Arabia. What if a reconstituted OPEC were to decide to denominate all its Oil prices in Euros? Such a move would be a disaster for the US economy as well as its political influence in the World.

It would appear that the USA's objective is to control Iraq's Oil reserves. It would then be in a position to massively increase production from this country. The effect of this would be to depress Oil prices and maybe even smash OPEC.

While high oil prices are not in the interests of Europe, it is by no means clear that an Iraq controlled by the United States will serve its interests either. It would appear that, for the French and Germans, the overriding economic interest is the position of the Euro within the World economic system—which explains why a corrupt former Mayor of Paris almost sounds like another Charles De Gaulle.

Note: I found useful information about the conflict between the Dollar and the Euro on <rawnews@btpopenworld.com>

which carries an article called, *The Real Reasons For The Upcoming War in Iraq* by W. Clark (<wrc92@aol.com>) with *Some In-*

Reprinted from our sister paper Irish Political Review

Thaw Wars and Vanishing Iraqis

By Gwydion M Williams

The war on Iraq was so uneven, it's surprising Iraq lasted as long as it did. It was a war of some 300 million rich people against 24 million poor people who are also fragmented, defending a state that has had less than a century of coherent existence since it was carved out of the Ottoman Empire.

The resistance of the first couple of weeks might have led the US to seek a compromise, or to retrench and consolidate in the south. Instead the US gambled on a quick advance to Baghdad, risking disaster but hoping for a collapse.

"Military professionals attribute the success to three key elements: a seasoned and well-equipped military, a surprisingly inept Iraqi response, and the decision of the Bush administration at the end of March, when the U.S. and British attack seemed to be faltering in southern Iraq, to keep the Army and Marines focused on Baghdad. At the end of March, with U.S. and British forces being subjected to guerrilla-style attacks in cities along the invasion route from Kuwait to Baghdad, there was some question inside and outside the U.S. government about whether the Pentagon should turn its attention to consolidating the gains in the south before advancing on the capital. On March 29, President Bush convened a teleconference call from Camp David with his senior national security advisers and decided to keep the military's sights fixed on Baghdad, calculating that the Iraqi capital remained the primary objective in the war.

"That final leap to Baghdad was in some ways the most difficult move of the ground war to date. U.S. commanders already were worried about their strained and vulnerable supply lines. And they expected to be confronted by the Iraqi military's best fighters, the Republican Guard, and perhaps to be attacked

with chemical weapons. One of the most puzzling aspects of the Iraqi counterattack was their failure to execute any of a dozen strategies that had troubled U.S. officials before the war. Few oil wells were torched, partly because of a pre-emptive U.S. ground attack in the south. As U.S. forces moved north, the bridges across the Euphrates River weren't dynamited, even though Iraqi combat engineers have demonstrated the ability to do so. Nor were dams blown up to flood the roads." (*What Counted: People, Plan, Inept Enemy*. Washington Post, Thursday, April 10, 2003)

The Baath regime stopped fighting a regular war, long before their military potential was finished. Why? Could they have decided not to waste lives, now that the war was lost? Baath ruthlessness has always been directed to a coherent end, making Iraq into a modern nation. Defeat was certain by 9th April: the agony might have been prolonged for a week or two, but for what end?

But the Baath leadership have not surrendered either. Some fighting continued, and as of the 21st April there is not yet an official victory. The cities were yielded to the invader, but what's going on in the countryside?

Urban guerrilla warfare had been tried, and had not worked well. The Coalition is being surprisingly slow to reveal specific military details, but the *Washington Post* for April 20th has an account of a key fight that took place in Baghdad on the 7th:

"Looking back on the battles, commanders said they realized that in the irregular Iraqi forces, they faced a more committed enemy than they had seen before, more persistent than the Republican Guard divisions that were supposed to be the most potent in the Iraqi defences. They also saw signs of a strat-

egy based on the success of Somali militiamen against Army Rangers a decade earlier: cut off the attacking U.S. troops from behind, isolate them on city streets and pour in reinforcements to inflict maximum casualties.

"But this time the U.S. troops had armor, and it proved more than a match for the ubiquitous rocket-propelled grenade, the Hussein loyalists' weapon of choice. The supply line held, and the swarming irregulars were beaten back by superior firepower. Months of training for urban combat paid off. The losses among the Hussein loyalists — a combination of Special Republican Guards, Saddam's Fedayeen militiamen and volunteers from neighboring Syria — were much heavier. Dozens of their vehicles were destroyed and an estimated 350 to 500 fighters were killed." (*3 Key Battles Turned Tide of Invasion*.)

As I recall, there was no hint of this battle at the time. The news media gave the impression of Iraqi defences just melting away, which was far from the truth. I assume that the US victors are now keen to get their write-up. But how much else has been concealed?

We do now know that the 'Basra Rising' never happened. "There was nothing resembling a popular uprising against the Iraqi militiamen who controlled this city during its 13-day siege by British forces. Life continued largely as normal in many neighborhoods, with police directing traffic and residents doing their best to avoid fighting.

"According to one Iraqi resident familiar with their tactics, the Fedayeen members would typically go in a group of 20 to the southern edge of Basra. British return fire was so accurate that out of those teams of 20 fighters, typically only three would return.

"The British entered Basra that day with little resistance, finding most of the Iraqi fighters had abandoned the sand-bagged emplacements they had built at government buildings throughout the city. Coates and others said Iraqis may have concluded that continued resistance was futile. Other accounts suggest that the Iraqi withdrawal was an organized retreat, not a last-minute flight. Several Iraqis who claim to have friends in the militia said an order went around early on April 6 that the fighters should stop resisting. Several people said the looting began even before the British entered, indicating that police, government security guards and militiamen had already left their posts." (*People in Basra Contest Official View of Siege*. Washington Post, Tuesday, April 15, 2003)

All of this matches the accounts posted at <http://www1.iraqwar.ru/?userlang=en>, which stressed the fierce nature of the battles. But the *Washington Post* ignores the odd little detail that there were people who knew it was safe to start looting as soon as the Iraqi authorities were gone. It is normal for an invading army to impose a curfew to prevent disorder, and there is an obligation under the Laws of War to prevent looting. Yet in Basra, Baghdad and elsewhere, the troops viewed it as none of their business, and there were people who knew this in advance.

The few sources who've mentioned the Russian site agree it was much the most accurate. An article posted at <http://prorev.com/forbesrussia.htm> draws attention to the second of two postings on the 27th March, which predicted the attempt to capture the Saddam Hussein Airport near Baghdad. They later reported that an Iraqi counter-attack retook part of it, on a day when the 'embedded' reporters were showing just interior shots.

The First Gulf War was fought by coalition forces of half a million, one well-equipped warrior for every 50 Iraqis, children included. This time it was a rather smaller force, too small for safety. It needed skill, luck and a lot of sometimes-accurate bombing to bring about another Iraqi collapse.

Anyone who's worked with automated systems knows that they are some-

times brilliantly accurate, but also sometimes way off beam. With 'dumb' bombs, you might drop hundreds and none of them would hit. With smart weaponry, you could try half a dozen and be sure that one or two would be spot on.

Whatever was not spot on could go anywhere. Cruise missiles ended up in Turkey and in Saudi Arabia, and it has been suggested that the 'Scuds' that hit Kuwait were short-dropping cruise missiles from US ships. It is generally agreed now that they were not Scuds, which Iraq was not supposed to have and does not seem to have had.

The Coalition conquest was done on the basis of a lie. The 'weapons of mass destruction' were indeed gone. The US still says they will find them, but are currently refusing to let the UN inspectors back in. And the alleged humanitarian concern is disproved by the indifference to looting, only the Oil Ministry received any protection. And by the refusal to hand over to the United Nations, which would give the best prospect of peace and democracy.

Iraq is being treated like a conquered country, not a liberated country. The US seem to figure they own it now, and that the Iraqis should be grateful.

The US do indeed own it, by right of force and violence. But whether the Iraqis will be grateful or respectful is much more moot. The comments from Iraqi city residents indicate that some of them still regard themselves as 'liberated' and are wondering why it is taking the US so long to leave. And that's just the people who will talk to Western reporters. The 'war for hearts and minds' is not exactly going well.

In the last issue of this magazine, I said "So ends Friday the 28th". A lot will more surely have happened by the time you read this, possibly even an Iraqi collapse. Regardless, I take the long view." I also quoted Wordsworth's *The Convention of Cintra*, a pamphlet produced in the early stages of Napoleon's war in Spain, which correctly noted that something new had begun. Previously the French army had been fighting other armies, and won easy victories. Now they were fighting a whole people, and such a war was almost impossible to

win. "It is manifest that, though a great army may easily defeat or disperse another army, less or greater, yet it is not in a like degree formidable to a determined people, nor efficient in a like degree to subdue them, or to keep them in subjugation"

Iraqis are not, so far, united against the invader. The three main population groups, Kurds and Sunni Arabs and Shia Arabs, each want to pull in different directions. That's why it was run as a dictatorship, and why it is particularly unsuitable for multi-party democracy.

Significantly, the current US plan calls for elections in two years time, after the US elections. If the net result was a Shia-Islamist government in coalition with surviving Baathists, the entire war would look like a piece of brutal stupidity. But with Bush Junior back in the White House, it would be a 'FailSoft' position, something less than a complete disaster.

We've not yet seen any detailed military histories. As I read it from the scattered details we have:

- a) Bush and Rumsfeld badly underestimated the strength and effectiveness of Iraq resistance.
- b) They then chose to gamble on a 'dash to Baghdad'. A highly risky strategy, but the only thing that could save them politically.
- c) When it became apparent that the US gamble had succeeded and must win in the long run, the Iraqi regime chose to 'fold', give up rather than fight to the bitter end.

I'd also assume that the military impulse from the men on the spot would have been to gamble rather than be bogged down in a long war. But also a lot of people must know it was a gamble that might easily not have come off.

Bush probably could have produced a smoother collapse by agreeing to delay the war for a few months for more inspections. He might then have got a second resolution, France has been sympathetic to the general notion of the West imposing itself on soft targets in the Third World. With more troops and clear legitimacy, the actual invasion of Iraq might have been much easier and less destructive.

Despite 'embedding', journalists are noticing some significant details, including 'cluster bombs' in residential areas, where children pick them up or play with them. Given that cluster bombs do not all explode when dropped, why not mark each and every one of them with a skull-and-crossbones? And maybe also a diagram of a little stick-man being blown up?

They don't bother because it's only going to be used in foreign countries, I figure. The US are feeling so wonderful after the end of the Cold War that they just don't care, not even to sensibly protect their own reputation.

These are the 'Thaw Wars', a set of small conflicts following the end of the Cold War. There was no World War Three, and it may have been lucky for the US that there was not. The only significant military victory on the pro-US side was the Israelis in the Six Day War, which did a lot to boost the position of Jews in the USA. Before then they were supposed to pretend not to be Jewish and hope this was accepted, and the US was willing to see Israel go under rather than annoy conservative Arabs who were key allies.

The US since Vietnam have adopted the tactic of their enemies, concentrating on disruption and hit-and-run rather than solidly holding places. Sponsoring their own guerrilla movements in unfriendly countries. Also global terrorism based on their air and naval power. This helped in the final decade of the Cold War, and it has been the basis of their Thaw Wars strategy.

Despite talk of 'liberation', the Western media's reports mostly spoke casually of a war against *Iraqis*, not Saddam's people as such. Kurds were treated as something other than Iraqis, as indeed the fighters wish to be.

The US has installed an arbitrary military government run by a US general noted for his friendly feelings towards Israel. Iraqis are supposed to accept it in return for hazy promises of their own government later on. After the first meeting, the assembled 'leaders' agreed to meet in 10 days time, or else were told that they were to meet then. There was also a 13-point plan that has not yet appeared in English, not that I've

seen.

Mr Jack Straw thinks protests against this set-up are a sign of healthy democracy. He sees to see it as a kind of 'Neasden-on-the-Tigris', not suspecting how alien a society it actually is. A healthy democracy is where people can oppose the *government* without denying the authority of the *state*. At the moment Iraq has neither, and protestors are vehemently rejecting the US military administration in Iraq.

The US has encouraged a nihilistic element that is the least likely to be fitted into any sort of US-run order in the long run. Interestingly, even Mr Chalabi has backed away from being part of an Interim Administration. He was supposed to be the Pentagon's man, but now he's back in Iraq and is getting some direct input from his own people.

Mr Chalabi has also said that only an elected Iraqi government could denationalist Iraq's oil. That will not suit Washington. It was the Iraqi Baath who nationalised oil back in the early 1970s, setting an example for others. Saddam Hussein was not yet boss, but played a big role in the process, that did give Iraq an excellent health and education system. Personal corruption was no worse than in other Arab countries, or than it was in Britain or the USA when they were engaged in fast internal change. Both Britain and the USA also had protectionist trade policies in those days, as has every nation that ever successfully industrialised. 'Free Trade' under existing conditions means becoming a dependency of the USA.

The lack of an alternative government is a result of muddle and deception. I always figured that the idea was to 'decapitate' the Baath and use the existing state machinery to run the country in the Western interest. But so far they've not found any significant number of Baathists willing to do this, not to run a pro-US government, as distinct from keeping life going. They fell for a fairly routine trick, a dummy opposition run by the enemy intelligence forces and that persuaded the US that Saddam would be overthrown just as soon as the invasion began.

The wave of Iraqi patriotism and early success must have convinced any

Baath opportunists that the Allies are a bad bet. Maybe some military commanders betrayed their men and then emigrated with a suitcase-full of dollars—it's been alleged that this happened, though so far without anyone naming names. But there is no one of substance from the old administration ready to take orders from the USA.

Keep the web, throw away the spider? Easier said than done.

The problem in Iraq is finding anything coherent besides Saddam. Sunnis have been tied to the Iraqi state ever since British days, and were absorbed into the Baath political machine. The Shiites, in as far as they are not Baathists, are split between traditional passive obedience and a militant faction who would like something close to Iran's Islamic Republic. The Kurds don't like being ruled by anyone, not even fellow-Kurds from too far away.

The Iraqi Kurds have been divided between two claimants to Overlordship. But that's just the top layer: different Kurdish groups may accept a particular claimant to Overlordship but also go on fighting their own little wars. Or else refuse to fight, when it suits them. The 'terrorists' who were destroyed in the early days of the invasion were armed Islamists operating freely in their own little patch of Kurdistan, outside of Saddam's control.

To have democracy, you need to have a *demos*, an entity that people are willing to make sacrifices for. The Iraqi *demos* was centred on Saddam's people, but could include all sorts. Neither Kurds nor Iraqi Shiites currently have a *demos* of their own.

Iraq: the next generation of vipers? A legitimate government is very likely to be anti-American, which is why the US wants to delay it. But they have no right, because their excuse was to free the Iraqi people. The US hopes to hammer something different into the Iraqis and then let them vote. But I doubt it will work.

Democracy in the Western tradition grew by an extension of constitutional government. The American Revolution was the local government of the colonies taking over and running things their way.

It needed a second and bloodless revolution by Jefferson and the Democratic-Republican Party to establish that power belonged to the *people*. Or at least to *white* people, Jefferson was a slave-owner and de Tocqueville noted in the 1830s that free blacks were mostly intimidated out of voting even where they were legally entitled to a vote. A system that lasted up until the 1960s and might never have ended without the USA's Cold-War need to be attractive to Third World and non-white people.

But Iraq collapsed in the third week of war. Doesn't that prove that Saddam's system was bad and unpopular?

Actually it collapsed after twelve years of resistance against the dominant world powers, with Arab 'friends' doing nothing important. On the 8th, I was expecting Iraqi regular-army resistance to last maybe another week or two, given that it was being battered down. But what would be gained by further resistance? The US was then saying that it might be a long fight for Baghdad. They had painfully learned that no one complains if you do *better* than you forecast, and the incursion into central Baghdad could have been withdrawn if it had not gone well. The majority of the British and US public were ready for a long hard war if necessary, ready for hundreds or even thousands of casualties in the mistaken belief that Saddam was somehow responsible for the 3000 US deaths that occurred on the 11th September 2001.

On the 9th, the Iraqi leadership must have decided to abandon Baghdad and to accept that they were no longer a functional government. The US forces pushed into the centre of Baghdad for a kind of 'armed photo-opportunity'. They toppled a statue of Saddam, and arranged for it to be celebrated by people who then went round looting anything they could grab.

Did this vindicate Rumsfeld? If someone walks away unhurt after smashing up their car, you do not say they were a good driver. You say that they were lucky, and also maybe that a good machine will take a lot of abuse.

If the Iraqi Baath were still thinking about an eventual return to power—as I think they were and are, since there have been no significant surrenders—then

there were good reasons not to fight to the bitter end. To discredit Rumsfeld would benefit Colin Powell and the State Department, who would be the logical alternative to run the war and occupation. And their approach is believed to be much subtler and more political, whereas Rumsfeld and the Pentagon see no reason to change their original plans to act as 'owners of Iraq'.

On the 10th April, with the Iraqi collapse dominating the news, we were told that Concorde is being grounded in the autumn by both Britain and France. A great day to bury bad news? But the same day saw a major outbreak of factionalism among the rival Shiites, no longer inhibited by fear of Saddam. The *Times* for Friday 11th April reported this as *Murder at Iraq's holiest shrine*, but insensitively put the headline right above a large picture of an anonymous fellow carrying an armful of looted money. It created a very false impression, since the late Mr al-Khoi seems to have been honest and brave, though naive. Just last Saturday he said he had 'never felt safer' after his return to Najaf. He must have picked up the Neasden-on-the-Tigris viewpoint from his British friends. But Najaf is not Neasden, nor does it wish to become Neasden.

That same issue of *The Times* reported that the British had flown home one of their three field hospitals, which British forces clearly will not be needing. But what about the Iraqis? There once-excellent medical system had been damaged by twelve years of sanctions and now by lack of water and electricity. But though there were a few well-reported cases of charity to individuals spotted by the British media, there was a basic lack of concern.

Also on the evening of the 11th, there was a brief report that ten suspects in an attack on the USS Cole had escaped from their prison in Aden. Coincidence? Some of you may remember that Aden was a former British colony that defeated the British army in urban guerrilla warfare and went its own way for a while, before being worn down and made conformist to British and US interests.

The war effectively ended on the 9th, though no official victory has yet been declared. Still, I'd count the 10th

April as the first day of Occupied Iraq, likely to be a much longer story.

The US forces are comparing it to Germany and Japan, but these were both inherently orderly societies. When one authority fell, a fair number of them were ready to be remoulded by another. Besides, the visible alternative was Global Communism, then spreading fast and an incentive for former Fascists to go along with US designs.

The mix of peoples who were lumped together as Iraq are anything but orderly. They can be ruled by fear, or else left along to make their own arrangements, which be highly disorderly. And just as brutal as Saddam's methods, most likely.

In Iraq, the US guarded and preserved the Oil Ministry, the rest was neglected. Was there some sort of connection through professional criminals? The role of the mafia in the World War Two US invasion of Sicily is well documented, and it is clear now that the Soviet Union was collapsed by members of the *nomenklatura*, who then profited at the expense of ordinary citizens. While in Iraq, the connection between celebrating 'citizens' and well-organised looting is too regular to be an accident.

Did the US decide to seek support from some 'Popular Front for Looters & Crooks'? It cannot be disputed that it was permitted, with troops acting on clear orders from above. Yet even allowing people to loot Baathist headquarters and palaces was not legal. And it went much further, including museums whose priceless artefacts have now been dispersed and are likely to end up in private collections. No museum would buy what was obviously stolen stuff, so neither the experts nor the public will get another look for decades.

It is also well documented that hospitals and ordinary government functions have suffered. And the media showed a striking lack of suspicion as people passed with looted electronics in neat cardboard boxes, suggesting that this was stuff stolen from shops or warehouses.

While not arresting thieves till much later on, the US was quickly able to arrest Abu Abbas, a former Palestin-

ian leader who was no more or less of a terrorist than the rest of them. Another insult to Arab opinion, another sign that the US accepts the Israeli view of all Palestinian nationalism as criminal. It seems that a 1995 peace agreement means that Abu Abbas could not have been arrested in Israel or Palestine, but the US considers that he was fair game in Iraq, where he had been living quite openly.

Then there were the threats against Syria. I suspect that there was an element of 'shadow-boxing' in the round of warnings and qualifications. Although the US President can safely ignore the United Nations, he cannot ignore the US Constitution, which does not allow him to go to war without Congressional approval. And this in turn would be unlikely without some sort of UN approval. The UN was unwise enough to give an open-ended authorisation in the case of Iraq, not just to quit Kuwait but also to disarm to some unspecified standard. I doubt that such a thing will ever happen again.

I am also encouraged by reports of large numbers of ex-Trotskyists advising the US government in its global strategy. Trotskyists have wrecked everything else they've been involved in, as did Communists of the Khrushchev-Brezhnev era. First the Far Left, including the hopeful ideas of a New Left. Then the traditional Labour Party in Britain, and the Democrats in the USA. Now they are brains of the 'Neo-Conservatives' movement!

Meantime the Baathist hard core must have noticed that it is ex-Communists who are mostly running the former Soviet Block. The mystery of the sudden Iraqi collapse is not yet resolved, but some interesting suggestions have been made. It looks as if there was a deliberate decision to pull back from the south, particularly at Basra, which became untenable in the light of gradually increasing pressure. But also some sort of collapse and betrayal, with the US aware that things would not be easy if the Iraqi forces did decide to fight.

In the First World War, the British went on fighting long past the point at which it was in their own interests to stop. Including the campaign in Mesopotamia, which led to the creation of Iraq as a 'front' for British oil inter-

ests. But also 1914-18 was the beginning of the end for the British Empire, one of many wars in history where the victors lose almost as much as the vanquished.

Talk about a 'Stalingrad on the Tigris' was not unreasonable, given the quality of Iraqi resistance in the first two weeks. But Saddam and the Baath are fighting basically for survival, and did not choose to go down in any blaze of glory. In the case of Stalingrad—and the equally heroic defence of Leningrad—the war was visibly winnable for the defenders, and was in fact won. While in the case of the German defence of Germany after being driven out of France and Russia, they had been offered nothing better than unconditional surrender. There was also a continuing possibility that the mismatched alliance of the West and the Soviet Union would fall apart.

In the case of the Japanese surrender, there was the lack of any hope of victory, plus the demonstration that the US was willing to kill vast numbers of civilians so as to spare the lives of its soldiers. Nuclear holocausts probably wouldn't have applied in Germany, had the US got the bomb sooner, because the US back then was far more strongly racist than it is today. Maybe one-third of the US front-line forces were of German origin, whereas Americans of Japanese origin had been locked up, that was how things were in the 1940s. The 'land of the free' was implicitly the land of whites-only.

Arab expectations for an heroic last stand at Baghdad or Tikrit were unreasonable, since it would have been doomed and most Arabs were doing nothing. So the Baath have stopped trying to be the government, but remain a force. Can the US actually govern without them?

Iraqis knew that the US would go on killing them until they gave up. Whereas wearing down the US was possibly, though difficult for as long as the Baath were the government and the inherent foe of both Kurd and Shiite-Islamist.

I've not heard anyone suggest that some Iraqi leaders might have taken refuge in Iran. But past hostility is not

much greater than with Syria, and the pro-Iranian Shias would have a much better chance if they were in alliance with religious Sunni and with a Baath Party that can bridge the gap. Such an alliance could not include Saddam or his sons, presumably. But then just what has happened to Saddam?

The three main theories is that the US killed him with their bombings, that he has been flown out of Iraq or that he is still in Iraq and organising resistance. And one of these could be true, but there is at least one more possibility that I'd like to float.

Supposing Saddam or one of his sons wanted to give up and was killed by Baath hard-liners? Or killed despite still being militant, since the Baath can only hope to return in partnership with the Shiite-Islamists for whom he is the most bitter enemy? Of course anyone planning anything against either Saddam or one of his sons would logically be out to kill them all, that's the way Arab families work. And surviving relatives might reckon that US captivity was the safest option.

The US designated 55 key targets among the Iraqi Baath leadership. At the time of writing (21st April) they have caught six. Remarkably, three of them have been personally close to Saddam, two half-brothers and a son-in-law.

Whatever about that, there is now an emerging consensus among Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds that the US must get out quickly and allow the different elements of Iraq to form some sort of coalition. Or possibly another dictatorship, but Iraq is not Neasden-on-the-Tigris, nor Smallville, Mesopotamia. News reports show that there is continuing violence and a general unwillingness to accept that the US now owns them.

Who's who in the Coalition of the Willing

Continued from page 4

absolutely none. When an initial list was announced by the State Department a few days earlier on 18 March, spokesman Richard Boucher, admitted this:

"I'd have to say these are countries that we have gone to and said, 'Do you want to be listed?' and they have said, 'Yes'"

This implies that around 140 countries said No. Given the possible negative consequences of saying No to any request from the US (as Yemen found out to its cost in 1990 when it voted against Security Council resolution 678 authorising the use of force to expel Iraq from Kuwait), it is remarkable that so many said No – particularly since saying Yes didn't involve doing anything.

ACTUAL CONTRIBUTION

What did Coalition members actually contribute? Australia was the only country, apart from the US/UK, to provide combat troops. A few other countries, including Poland and Spain, provided non-combatant military personnel.

Only Kuwait allowed the US/UK to use its territory as a launching pad for their aggression against Iraq; Turkey famously resisted enormous US pressure to do likewise. Other US/UK Coalition "partners", if they provided anything at all, provided overflying rights only; none of them was prepared to allow Iraq to be attacked by aircraft taking off from their territory (or if they did they kept very quiet about it). On one occasion, Italy did allow US paratroops to embark in Vicenza en route to Iraqi Kurdistan, but to quieten public controversy the Italian government was at pains to re-emphasise that Italian airbases were

not available for bombing Iraq. The end result was that, apart from Kuwait, the US/UK had to rely on carrier-based aircraft, plus long range missions from Fairford in Gloucestershire and Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

(Ireland is not on the President's list even though, by allowing Shannon to be used for refuelling military aircraft, it contributed more to the war effort than the vast majority of the countries on the list. It obviously said No, when asked.)

BIZARRE LIST

Why the US President should go to the trouble of assembling this bizarre list, let alone describe it as a Coalition and boast about it, is a mystery, since it shows a lack of support around the world for the US/UK aggression against Iraq. (Although, like the Americans, the UK government always refers to what is going on in Iraq as Coalition action, it seems to be embarrassed by the makeup of the Coalition, since there is no mention of its membership on any UK government website.)

The makeup of the Coalition is a reflection of the remarkable difficulty that the US has had in browbeating states into doing its bidding about Iraq in the past six months. This has been constantly demonstrated at the UN, where there have been four open meetings of the Security Council on Iraq since last autumn, and on each occasion there was little support for the US/UK position (see www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide):

At the first, on 16-17 October, when the US/UK was trying to pressurise the Security Council into passing a resolution giving them a free hand to make war on Iraq, of the 65 states which spoke only two – Australia and Albania – were unequivocally on their side. The vast majority sided with the other three permanent members of the Council, France, Russia and China. On 18-19

February after the second Blix report, when the US/UK were demanding military action against Iraq rather than the continuation of inspections, they did a little better: Australia and Albania were joined by Nicaragua, Uzbekistan, the Marshall Islands, Georgia and Latvia, but around 50 states sided with France. Two more meetings were held in March, one on 11-12 March the week before the US/UK attacked Iraq and the other on 26-27 March the week after, and again a large majority of states were opposed to the use of force.

NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT

These open meetings took place at the request of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Not much is heard of the Non-Aligned Movement these days. It was founded in 1961 as a grouping of "neutral" states during the Cold War and Tito was its principal architect (see www.nam.gov.za). It has had a continuous existence since then, and held its 13th summit in Kuala Lumpur in late February. It now has 116 member states out a total of 193 UN member states. Nearly all states in Africa, Asia and Latin America are members. All Arab states including Iraq are members.

Insofar as it functions as an organisation, it seems to be primarily as a lobby group at the UN. Thus, for example, there is a NAM caucus within the Security Council, through which NAM states on the Council attempt to reach a common position on issues before the Council. Six out of the 10 current non-permanent members of the Security Council are NAM members – Angola, Cameroon, Chile, Guinea, Pakistan, Syria – and they all sided with France throughout (although Angola ended up on the President's list).

South Africa was the chair of NAM for five years up to February, and tried to make it into an organisation that speaks with one voice on world issues, most recently over Iraq, and this should continue under Malaysia's leadership. At its February summit, it passed a resolution against US/UK military action against Iraq. However, not all NAM members held to that position, and 13

(out of 116) appear on the President's list:

Afghanistan, Angola, Dominican Republic, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Honduras, Kuwait, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Panama, Rwanda, Singapore, Uganda

But, apart from Kuwait, none of them contributed anything to the action in Iraq.

Afghanistan is the only Moslem member of the Coalition, apart from Kuwait. This is hardly surprising, since the US is in a uniquely powerful position to influence Afghan affairs, providing as it does Hamid Karzai's bodyguards, local Afghan bodyguards having proved to be untrustworthy. For Karzai to oppose the US would be, literally, suicidal.

LATIN AMERICA

In the past, the US could normally rely on Latin America for support in international affairs. But on this occasion the major Latin American states, including Mexico and Chile who are on the security Council, sided with France, as did Canada. Only Colombia, which is heavily dependent on the US for military and economic aid, and six Central American states – Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama – are on the President's list.

A striking feature of the list is how few Commonwealth countries are on it. Of the 54 members of the Commonwealth, there are only 4 apart from the UK itself – Australia, Singapore, Solomon Islands and Uganda. By contrast, all the Francophone countries in the world sided with France.

There is a Francophone organisation, similar to the Commonwealth, called International Organization of la Francophonie, which like the Commonwealth has observer status at the UN. It has over 50 members, mostly

former French colonies in Africa, but also including Canada, Vietnam and Lebanon. Its Secretary-General is Boutros Boutros-Ghali, whose tenure as UN Secretary-General was not renewed because he wasn't sufficiently co-operative with the US. Coincidentally, last autumn when a heated debate was going on in the Security Council over 1441, it held its 9th summit in Beirut, and unanimously supported the French position on Iraq.

France also holds regular France/Africa summits to consolidate its influence, most recently on 19-21 February. This one, the 22nd to be held, attracted the wrath of Britain because Robert Mugabe was invited. Every African state apart from Somalia was represented, and here again there was near unanimous support for the French position on Iraq. There are, however, 5 African states on the list – Angola, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Uganda.

MISERABLE FAILURE

The plain fact is that Bush and Blair failed, to a remarkable degree, to get the support of the world's governments for their use of force against Iraq, and failed miserably to get the support of the world's people. When they embarked upon it, there wasn't a state in the world, not excepting the US and Israel, in which popular support for war exceeded that for the continuation of inspections.

In so far as Bush and Blair got support from countries for the war, it was contrary to the wishes of the people in those countries. Much has been made of the difference between "old" Europe and "new" Europe on this issue, but in one respect there was no difference – popular opinion in both was overwhelmingly opposed to war. In this respect, Poland was little different from Spain or Italy (or France): according to a Pew poll of opinion in eight European countries published on 18 March, there was a majority of 73/21 against war in

Poland, 81/13 in Spain, 81/17 in Italy (and 75/20 in France)

Commenting on its findings, the Pew organisation said:

"Anti-war sentiment and disapproval of President Bush's international policies continue to erode America's image among the publics of its allies. US favorability ratings have plummeted in the past six months in countries actively opposing war – France, Germany and Russia – as well as in countries that are part of the 'coalition of the willing'. In Great Britain, favorable views of the US have declined from 75% to 48% since mid-2002.

"In Poland, positive views of the US have fallen to 50% from nearly 80% six months ago; in Italy, the proportion of respondents holding favourable views of the US has declined by half over the same period (from 70% to 34%). In Spain, fewer than one-in-five (14%) have a favorable opinion of the United States. Views of the US in Russia, which had taken a dramatically positive turn after Sept. 11, 2001, are now more negative than they were prior to the terrorist attacks.

"More generally, criticisms of US foreign policy are almost universal. Overwhelming majorities disapprove of President Bush's foreign policy and the small boost he received in the wake of Sept. 11 has disappeared. As a consequence, publics in seven of the eight nations surveyed believe that American policies have a negative effect on their country. Only the British are divided on

the impact of American foreign policy on their country."

BRITISH SPIN

The British spin on the road to war is that the international consensus on Iraq last autumn expressed in Security Council resolution 1441 was sabotaged by France, thereby making war unavoidable. This ignores the fact that the consensus in the Security Council last November was not for war. Quite the contrary: the unanimity was achieved because the US/UK backed down on their attempt to get the Council to vote for war. The unanimity was for inspection, followed by assessment of inspection reports by the Council, on the basis of which the Council would decide on further action.

France has been demonised by the US/UK for refusing to vote for war, and a pretence is made that by so doing they reversed their position of last autumn. In fact, France maintained a consistent position throughout, a consistent position with which a large majority of the Security Council, and the states of the world, agreed.

CHIRAC GODSEND

Of course, the story put about by the British Government was that France sabotaged support on the Council for a second resolution authorising war by stating that it would use its veto. In that regard, President Chirac's remarks in a TV interview on 10 March were a godsend to the British Government. What he actually said was:

"My position is that, regardless of the circumstances, France will vote 'no' because she considers this evening that there are no grounds for waging war in order to achieve the goal we have set ourselves, that is to say, to disarm Iraq."

What he clearly meant was that, in the circumstances existing at that time

France would use its veto. But the use of the phrase "regardless of the circumstances" allowed the Government to pretend that he had ruled out force for all time – and by so doing had torpedoed a second resolution.

In fact, Blair and Bush didn't come within an ass's roar of convincing a majority on the Security Council to vote for war – and France's opposition had little to do with it. After Hans Blix's report on 14 February only two non-permanent members – Bulgaria and Spain – were willing to vote for war and a month later on 17 March when Britain gave up trying to get a vote for war the US/UK still had only two supporters.

(Also, there is real doubt about the constitutional validity of Bulgaria's support for war in the Council, and subsequently as part of the Coalition. The Prime Minister, Simeon Saxecoburggotski, was responsible for this, but the President Georgi Parvanov opposed Bulgaria's participation, and queried whether the decision to participate in the Coalition had proper parliamentary approval, as the Prime Minister asserted.)

Chirac's remarks provided the basis for the remarkable proposition advanced by the British Government that France as responsible for the war, even though it was opposed to it. Repeated at nauseam wrapped in anti-French hysteria in the week up the Commons vote for war on 18 March, this proposition kept the Labour rebellion in the Commons within bounds. Blair and Straw are still advancing this proposition today.

DAFT PROPOSITION

The proposition is, of course, daft. It begins with the assumption that, had France voted to threaten imminent war if Iraq did not account for its "weapons of mass destruction" within a few days, there would have been a majority on the

Security Council for it. It continues with Iraq, faced with this united front in the Council, coughing up weapons that probably don't exist, or in a few days proving to the satisfaction of the US/UK that they had been destroyed, something which Iraq has tried and failed to do for the past five years.

But let us suppose that this highly unlikely sequence of events did occur. To believe that war could have been avoided, we have to believe that at this point George Bush would have reversed gear, and taken his troops home, leaving Saddam Hussein in power, having spent the past year telling the American people that he was a dangerous tyrant who had to be removed (and whom around 50% of the US electorate believe was responsible for 9/11). That would not have been a sensible move for a President seeking re-election next year, and it's an absolutely safe bet he would not have made it.

It is absurd to believe that, if France supported the US/UK in the Security Council, war could have been avoided. Yet that is what Blair and Straw continue to tell us.

Achilles Westphalia and Iraq

Gwydion M Williams reviews Philip Bobbitt's *The Shield Of Achilles*

"Among Britain's most powerful, one book has become required reading. And its thesis is grim". So runs the *Guardian* review (Jan 13 2003). But *grimness* is not the same as realism, and Bobbitt's neat little diagrams have no real relationship to the historic development of European nations. It's part of a school of 'Ex-Cathedra Rationalism', stuff that claims to be rational and rigorous, but includes beliefs that have no coherent basis.

No coherent basis in past history, that is. There has always been scope for praising the currently dominant power as 'the empire on which the sun never sets'. Yet when in history has it been the currently dominant power that controlled the next stage of human history?

It's moot, in fact, if the US controlled the *prior* stage of human history. During the Cold War, America sought as many different allies as possible. This even extended to Mao's China, which had been alienated by Khrushchev and Brezhnev and saw the Soviet Union as a more immediate threat than the USA. And the need to lure the Third World away from Communism led to them discrediting Britain and France over the Suez crisis. Even their own internal politics were affected: the denial of voting rights to free blacks was noted by De Tocqueville in the 1820s, lasted till the 1960s and was dropped because it embarrassed the USA in its claim to global virtue. Likewise feminism and sexual liberation ripped apart a 1950s culture that had the potential for propagating itself indefinitely.

Bobbitt's thesis ignores the messiness of real history, in which no two European states arrived at their modern form in quite the same way, and some were wildly different. In Bobbitt-Land, you have a series of different sorts of state popping up automatically, with the Nation-State now due for replacement by the Market-State, a submission to

Globalisation. *Shield Of Achilles* has the appearance of scholarship, but is in fact a junk-heap of misunderstanding and bad sources. A lot of the evidence against Germany is based on quotations from British books written in the late 1940s, not the best time for objective judgement. And it flatters the dominant power, which guarantees short-run success.

The USA has been expansionist and aggressive ever since its origins as 13 small colonies on the Atlantic coast of North America. The bulk of the modern USA belonged to other people in 1776, mostly Native Americans, but the US also stole Texas and California from the Mexicans.

In the 20th century, the USA was able to lever itself to world dominance. This began with joining the Great War in 1917, preventing a German victory. Under the 'notorious' treaty of Brest-Litovsk, in 1918, Russia ceded Finland, Poland, Estonia, Lithuania, Ukraine, and portions of Latvia and Moldavia. All of which were fought over several times over the next 70-plus years, before finally separating themselves from Russia in 1991. The net result of the USA's various interventions wasted decades and cost tens of millions of European lives.

Modern Americans are crediting themselves for the spread of global democracy. But it had been spreading in Europe throughout the 19th century, and would probably have spread faster if the US had stayed out in 1917 and let Germany win. Democracy in crude sense, at least 50% of adult males having at least 50% of the political power, had been tried in various Republics and Free Cities across the ages. The US constitution failed to guarantee it for the constituent states, whereas a clause compelling all states to return fugitive slaves was a requirement for the South to join. The US kept chattel slavery for even longer than Tsarist Russia, and might never

have abolished it if the South had not foolishly tried to secede from the Union.

Germany from 1871 gave the vote to all adult males, which Britain did not have until 1917, and never extended to the vast empire it ruled. Meantime China had tried Western-style democracy after their 1911 revolution, and it had quickly led to chaos and dictatorship, with the West mostly backing the warlords against Chinese who wanted to live in a Western way.

In the Second World War, the USA as a whole wanted to keep out of it. But Roosevelt successfully lured Japan and Germany into declaring war in 1941—Congress would almost certainly have prevented Roosevelt from initiating either conflict. This was fortunate, it would definitely be a worse world today if the USA had not been pulled into the World War in 1941. But it would also be a much better world had they stayed out in 1917.

Every aggressor must find an immediate threat to justify the war. Germany in 1914 was not an aggressor and had no wish to claim any part of metropolitan France, never mind Britain. The occasion for the war was the Serbian claim to Bosnia-Herzegovina, not something that present-day Anglos can safely point to, given the way they treated Serbia in the 1990s. So now you find people reviving the idea that Germany emerged in 1871 as a voraciously expansionist state. The failure of Germany to do anything expansionist in the two generations between 1871 and 1914 is glossed over.

Germany in 1871 had taken Alsace-Lorraine, predominantly ethnic-German and traditionally part of the Germanic Realm (Reich). France wanted them back, this was the cause of the strange alliance between France and Russia, which wanted to take away the Slavonic territories of Austria-Hungary. No one

then was much concerned with ethnic self-determination: Alsace-Lorraine had become solidly German by 1914, while Poland at least considered that Russian rule was much worse than being ruled by Prussians or Austrians. The main logic for Britain fighting Germany in 1914 was the prospect of Germany becoming richer than Britain by peaceful competition, and displacing the British Empire as the world's top nation.

The reality of power-politics spoils the USA's image as a nation that just accidentally became the world's only superpower in the course of Doing Good Deeds. So some reason has to be found why German had become evil in 1914—or better 1871, since it was visibly the same place between those two dates. And yet it couldn't have been evil in 1815, because Blucher and the Prussians were Britain's allies against Napoleon. Therefore:

"Not until the middle of the nineteenth century did one German state, Prussia, impose its rule on the other and create the first European nation-state. From its beginning the German state was hostile to the prevailing international system of German nationalism program that held that a state was legitimised by service to a pre-eminent ethnic nation—was the prototype for fascism, as its expression in the Constitution." (*The Shield Of Achilles*, chapter 2.)

What was there in German nationalism of the 19th century that wasn't also expressed by Anglo-Scottish nationalism in *Rule, Britannia* in the 18th century? Britons affirmed then that the would never be slaves, but a lot of the wealth came from *owning* slaves, in the West Indies and in the Southern states of America, then still British colonies. The only things that the Kaiser's Germany shared with Hitler's realm and did not share with pre-1914 Britain was an opposition to British interests and the use of the German language.

Identifying the Kaiser's Constitutional Monarch with Hitler's dictatorship is on a level with saying that the 1865-71 unification was in the *middle* of the 19th century. Middles usually have an equal portion of something either side of them, and unification began two-thirds of the way through the 19th century. Can the man not do simple arithmetic?

Bobbitt is a messy writer, littering his text with footnotes and end-notes that would have been much better digested into the main text. In this case you are sent off on three threads to seek justification for the notion of Germans inventing Fascism 12 years before the birth of Benito Mussolini.

The first thread is a footnote that quotes another book that says "Since Germany has been united by force and through union had achieved a predominant position in Europe, other nationalities aspired to reunite their peoples in the state by similar means." (Ibid., quotation in the second of two footnotes.) But no other state besides Italy was split into small sovereign states within the nationality, and they unified at much the same time as Germany, a culmination to the struggle of decades. Elsewhere it was *liberation*, setting up a state in defiance of one or more foreign rulers. And affirming a struggle for independence that had been happening since at least 1848, sometimes for very much longer.

The second thread takes you to Chapter 8. This explains Bobbitt's puzzling statement that Germany in 1871 was Europe's first nation-state: before that you had state-nations, which Bobbitt sees as something complete different. History as told by the *Monty Python* team was more logical than Bobbitt's pompous empty categories. He also complains about Prussia having 17 votes in an assembly of 61, without bothering to check whether or not it was a fair reflection of populations

The third thread is an end-note citing a British book about Germany published in 1946 (not the best of times for an objective view.) This complains that the Germany chancellor could rule without parliament, and calls this "a veiled form of monarchical absolutism". Which would be something very different from Fascism, a populist movement whose leaders were mostly of lower-middle-class origins. In any case, the simple existence of a multi-party chamber with a role in government was significant.

Germany also had universal suffrage in 1871, an equal vote for all adult males, which Britain did not acquire till 1917. The House of Commons had extensive powers and privileges, a heritage of its successful struggles against the monarchy. But only after the Third Reform Act in 1884 was it elected by

more than half of adult males in the British Isles—the Empire had no share in the 'Imperial Parliament', though white colonies had extensive self-government.

Bobbitt's understand of history is sketchy. He intermittently refers to the Netherlands as 'Holland'. He speaks of "Austria-Hungary and France, the two states had dominated German politics since Westphalia". (Ibid.) Never mind that Prussia was regularly an equal competitor in 18th century wars, or that the Austrian Empire only became Austria-Hungary in 1867. Sweden was another influence at the time, though the successors of Gustavus Adolphus let this slip.

Bobbitt's vision stretches far back into European history, but without understanding. Did you know that state sovereignty did not exist until it was invented by the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648? If you didn't, you're right, it's a nonsense idea, lawyer-talk that ignores actual history in favour of a few doubtful technicalities. But this babble about Westphalia is part of the Hard-Right world view that has fuelled the war on Iraq. History is being re-interpreted to say that sovereign states are a recent and unimportant creation.

Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev invented 'Limited Sovereignty' to justify his crushing of Reformed Communism in Czechoslovakia in 1968. Affirmed it by sending his tanks against hostile populations, with great success in the sort term, even lower and more crushed than Iraq seems to be. But we can now see that this breach of accepted norms started the process ending with the Soviet collapse of 1989-91.

This also happened because Russians and Eastern Europeans found that they were falling behind the West, having been roughly equal in the 1960s. Stalinist socialism was a viable alternative system, as was Mao's China. So too is state-regulated and protectionist India and the more Westernised socialism of China today. But Russian leaders from Khrushchev down to Gorbachev wrecked a viable system in a foolish attempt to copy the strengths of the USA.

The New Right reading of history makes no attempt to explain why the USA and USSR were roughly equal in the 1960s. They draw lessons just from the data that suits them, the decline of a

Leninist ideological system that had discredited itself. They take it as proof of the enormous virtue of the current US way of life, rather than noting that the West adjusted to greater working-class individualism whereas the Soviets tried to suppress it.

The US saved itself from the Great Depression with a semi-Socialist system introduced by Roosevelt. It grew more slowly than Western Europe up until the 1970s. The small US advantage since the 1970s is due to the US being willing to take huge numbers of energetic immigrants, while Europe is basically full. Moreover, the policies that the US is pushing is not what it does at home, but an ideological schema that opens up foreign countries in a way that the US itself has never been open. The demand is 'market yourself, while the US nobly assumes the burden of protectionism for its own vital industries'.

Current US policies are being justified by 'Post-Westphalianism', the idea that separate countries running their own lives is an oddity that began in 1648. Bobbitt says "We usually date the origin of the nation-state to the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. The nation-state is dying, but this only means that, as in the past, a new form is being born the market-state." (Page 17, hard-back edition.) Real history shows nothing of the sort: nation-states have multiplied since the 1960s, with multi-national states fragmented. And for all of recorded history, tribes and kingdoms and city-republics treat each other as sovereign entities, entitled to be different.

If you've got a weak argument, pretend that the main point is already proven. The 'Holy Roman Empire' had a nominal authority over the whole of Christendom—over the whole world, theoretically, because Latin-Catholic theology did not accept that anything could be valid without papal endorsement. But the Papacy had also stopped the Emperors from having real authority, not even as mediators between nations. It was the Papacy that authorised William of Normandy to conquer Anglo-Saxon England, and later authorised the Anglo-Norman kings to conquer Ireland. It was also the Papacy that tried to split the non-Christian world between Spain and Portugal, thought the Dutch, English and French successfully undermined it.

The Treaty of Westphalia ended the possibility of Germany becoming a nation-state in the normal manner, with state power accumulating around the power of a traditional monarch. It confirmed the permanence of the divisions made by the Wars of Religion, a division into some 300 states of various sizes. Whereas a similar process in France was to end with a solid reunification under Louis 14th.

The entity within which the Thirty Years War was fought was the *Holy Roman Empire Of The Germanic People*. The last part of the name is often omitted, as with the United States or United Kingdom. But it had been centuries since Charlemagne's unsuccessful attempt to recreate the Roman Empire. His kingdom included about half of Latin-Christian Europe—the lands that became France, Germany and the Benelux countries, along with northern Italy. He then felt strong enough to claim the vacant title of Emperor of the West, but the Pope outwitted him by crowning Charlemagne as if it were a papal gift, an act for which there was no real precedent.

Most monarchs were crowned by the most senior religious dignitary they could lay hands on, but that did not imply anything more than recognising and sanctioning someone else's decision. No Archbishop of Canterbury every dared refuse to crown the next claimant to the English throne—the closest was King Stephen being crowned by his half-brother in preference to Queen Matilda, and this led to a civil war that eventually ended with Matilda's son becoming the heir and ancestor of subsequent English monarchs. But in the case of the Holy Roman Empire, the papacy did manage to wangle itself the right to say who was or wasn't emperor.

When Charlemagne was made Emperor, the rest of Latin-Christian Europe was not at all inclined to obey this new Supreme Lord. They would call him Emperor, since the Pope endorsed it, but most of them were rulers of kingdoms with their own ancient traditions. And Charlemagne's realm fragmented between his various successors, with France eventually emerging as a distinct kingdom whose monarch was often more powerful than the German Emperor.

Human politics began with a huge number of separate political entities that

each recognised the others as valid, sovereign in the modern sense of the term. The Roman Empire absorbed or destroyed many of them in Europe, West Asia and North Africa, but when the Empire fell, new principalities and kingdoms took shape. Portugal achieved its present frontiers before any other modern nation-state. But some other European kingdoms were recognisable by the year 1000: England, Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Arguably Scotland, and the Hungarians and several other nations in Middle-Europe had a shape not unlike the shape they have today, after many ups and downs.

The authentic Roman Empire had been a political-military machine, funded by taxes and ruled by an Emperor whose power depended on holding the office of Emperor. Sometimes the official Emperor was a puppet and someone else ran the machine. But it was a functional state system, which collapsed in the West in the 4th century and lasted in Byzantium for many more centuries.

For Bobbitt, "from the fall of Rome in AD 476 to the crowning of the Frankish leader Charlemagne by the pope on Christmas day 800, the former territory of the Roman Empire was successively flooded by waves of barbarian invaders from eastern and central Europe." (Ibid, Chapter 6, page 75.) Nice prose, shame about the facts. The *Western Roman Empire* had been suffering major raids by Germanic tribes since the Allemanni in 259, a process partly reversed by strong emperors like Diocletian and Constantine, with Germans settled on nominally Roman lands and used as buffers against other rival Germans. There was a gradual loss of control, culminating in the sack of Rome by Visigoths in 410, and again by Vandals in 455.

Well before the formal end of the Western Roman Empire, it had in practice become a mass of independent realms with a fairly nominal role for the Emperor. The Roman state, with its complex bureaucracy, taxes and professional armies had been whittled away to nothing by the migration of Germanic tribes into Britain, France, Spain and North Italy. The main event of 476 was the formal deposition of a puppet Emperor and the creation of a short-lived Kingdom of Italy by the Vandals (who were actually quite cultured). Odoacer King of the Vandals stopped pretending to

control the Western Roman Empire, which the other Germanic kings would not accept. He did still recognise the Empire, but only the Byzantine Emperor, who had no real control in Italy at that time.

The Byzantines asserted real power later on, with the conquest of Italy in 534-5 under the famous General Belisarius. But the Byzantines were gradually driven out by the Germanic-ruled Lombard kingdom, who in turn were conquered by Charlemagne.

It was Byzantium that kept Roman and Imperial-Greek traditions alive. Charlemagne was notable as the first German king who had comparable power and could claim to be a real Emperor. But he and his heirs remained Germanic kings with a fancy title, there was no state machine such as Rome had created and such as persisted in Byzantium (not to mention other gigantic Empires unrelated to the Romano-Greek and Christian tradition).

Charlemagne's attempt to re-found the Western Roman Empire failed, in part because the Papacy had gone way beyond its original role as the most senior of the five Christian patriarchies. The Bishop of Rome was trying to become a kind of Emperor, but successive popes also felt the need to bestow the title of Emperor on some hereditary ruler whom they felt they could work with.

And that's just Western Europe. The parochial Latin-Christian viewpoint thinks of the Roman Empire 'ruling the world'. But the Empire at the height of its power ran into the deserts in North Africa, and met an equally powerful state in Persia or Parthia in the Middle East. Most critically, the Roman Empire failed to conquer the Germanic tribes, who in the end broke into the Empire instead, and split it into kingdoms. Charlemagne's dynasty were the most successful of these dynasties—actually usurpers who replaced the more ancient Merovingian dynasty, with Papal approval.

At its height, the Roman Empire controlled no more than one-quarter of the world's population. It was probably less rich and powerful than the distant Chinese Empire, which definitely drained it of wealth via the silk trade. And the Western Roman Empire was brought down by nomadic Huns whom

the Han-dynasty Chinese had successfully driven westwards.

The Holy Roman Empire was a weak attempt to revive the Roman state, not comparable to the successful revival of the Han-dynasty Chinese Empire by the Tang dynasty, Sung Dynasty, Ming dynasty and the Sinified-nomad Manchus. China was dominated by scholar-gentry who always worked for a unification of the realm under a single supreme Emperor. In Europe, the papacy was always a disruptive force. Europe divided into a mass of kingdoms and smaller units, many of which had existed as pagan tribal entities and kept those forms when they became Christian. England and the several Scandinavian kingdoms kept continuity and were never under any sort of Imperial authority, as did Hungary, Poland and other places.

The Emperor who signed the Westphalia treaty styled himself "Ferdinand the Third, elected Roman Emperor, always August, King of Germany, Hungary, Bohemia, Dalmatia, Croatia, Slavonia, Arch-Duke of Austria, Duke of Burgundy" and quite a lot more. (See <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/westphal.htm> for a full English translation.) It had become a tradition that the Emperor was also King of Germany, but this had become an empty title. The core of Hapsburg power was as Arch-Duke of Austria, which they held by solid hereditary right and which gave them the military power to acquire their various kingdoms.

The titles of Emperor and King of Germany were subject to election by other German rulers, who had every interest in keeping it as an empty name. And the Hapsburgs themselves had no reason to create a Roman-style Imperial State that might then be seized by one of their rivals. Although an elected monarchy sounds like a good idea, it has always been fatal for the unity of any state that tried it. Poland had been strong under its hereditary monarchs and declined rapidly when the title was made electoral.

Germany after Westphalia became a set of small states, each intent on being a state, and most quite successful at living well and producing art and science. But first France and then Britain became centralising states that were much better at accumulating power. And

it was power that had the last word in the immediacy of politics and war.

Geography also matters. The Rhine does not enter the sea in one grand estuary, as does the Thames and as most rivers do. Instead it breaks up into several smaller rivers known technically as 'distributaries'. And over the centuries a variety of sea-port cities on these fragments of the Rhine rose and declined in a confused political-economic pattern; Bruges, Antwerp, Amsterdam etc. While London retained its unquestioned predominance in England, the focus of a Kingdom that began much poorer and became much richer and stronger through the stability of a strong state with London as its normal centre.

In Germany, Westphalia was an acknowledgment that the House of Austria had failed to become real Kings of Germany, in the way that the Kings of France were able to reassert themselves thanks to Richelieu and Mazarin. The vicer powers briefly enjoyed by Emperor Charles was by a dynastic accident which gave him the heritage of Spain and Burgundy, and he chose to split them again when the whole heritage became too complex to manage.

The real Roman Emperors were real Heads of State with a single army and bureaucracy. The Hapsburg rulers were content to be heads of several different governments which each had its own system. At the time of the Spanish Armada, there was no actual King of Spain, but just a single individual who was king of the distinct kingdoms of Aragon and Castile, with power in the Netherlands by inheritance from the Dukes of Burgundy.

In the modern world, the Holy Christian President of the USA is running his country as a Terrorist Superpower. The USA is functioning like the classical Abusive Patriarch, whose punishments are harsh but inconsistent. The *Simpsons* are a true representation of its values.

The USA has no aspiration to become any sort of 'United States of Everywhere': it does not even seek to merge with like-minded neighbors, in the way the European Union has done. Rather, it seeks endless disruption. Third-world countries are sovereign, which means that their troubles can be blamed on them. Yet they are strongly discouraged from going their own way. Denied dol-

lar loans, and it is well-known that a lot gets siphoned off, giving the US local supporters who don't mind messing up their own nations if they can get enough into their own pockets.

Why does the world still have numbered Swiss bank accounts and similar? Because it suits the Overclass. Nor should you expect a serious crack down on money laundering, drugs money and stuff that does not suit them.

After the successful invasion of Iraq, the US forces secured the Oil Ministry and let everything else be looted. Not just the personal wealth of Saddam's supporters, but shops and ordinary property. Not to mention museums, where the public property of the Iraqi people was broken or stolen, with increasing reports that well-organised gangs 'stole to order', possibly with some private purchaser already lined up.

Just how could a criminal gang know that the US military would stand by benevolently while they 'stole to order'? Think about it.

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Shiite Religious Parties Fill Vacuum in Southern Iraq

Juan Cole

April 22, 2002

(Juan Cole is professor of Middle Eastern and South Asian History at the University of Michigan and author of *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shiite Islam* [I.B. Tauris, 2002]. His weblog is www.juancole.com.)

Religious Shiite parties and militias in Iraq have recently stepped into the gap resulting from the collapse of the Baath Party, especially in the sacred shrine cities. This development must have come as a shock to Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, who in early March preferred Iraqis as US allies to Saudis, saying that they are secular and "overwhelmingly Shia, which is different from the Wahhabis of the peninsula, and they don't bring the sensitivity of having the holy cities of Islam being on their territory." Wolfowitz and other pro-war policymakers were right that large numbers of Shiites, from the educated middle class to factory workers, are secular Iraqi nationalists. But they were dead wrong to discount the power of the religious forces, and seem ignorant of the centrality of the shrine cities of Najaf and Karbala. The neo-conservative fantasy of Iraq is now meeting the real Iraq, on the ground, in the shrine cities as well as in the smaller, mostly Shiite towns in the south of the country. Western audiences are discovering that Iraqi Shiites, while perhaps unified in their hatred for the dissipated Baathist regime, are not unified in their vision for a post-war Iraq.

NAJAF RIVALRIES

The leading cleric at Najaf — shrine city of holy figure Ali b. Abi Talib, nephew of the prophet Muhammad — is Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, age 73. Born in Mashhad, Iran, he came to Najaf (pop. 560,000) in 1952 and settled permanently. Like most of the Najaf establishment, he rejects Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's theory of clerical rule or the "guardianship of the jurist" — the doctrine by which Khomeini overturned centuries of quietism among Shiite clergy, helping to fuel the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Sistani and his circles have also been critical of human rights abuses in post-revolutionary Iran. Not long after US troops entered Najaf on April 8, 2003, he was reported to have made an oral proclamation urging Shiites not to interfere with the soldiers, a statement eagerly cited by Wolfowitz as the "first pro-American fatwa." (The statement was not actually a fatwa.)

The following week, however, Sistani insisted that Iraq must be ruled "by the best of its children." His spokesman and eldest son, Muhammad Rida Sistani, probably distilled his father's thoughts when he said, "The Americans are welcome, but I don't think that it's a good thing that they stay for long."

When the US military apparently briefly arrested Sheikh Muhammad al-Fartusi and two

other clerics who had been sent to Baghdad by the Najaf establishment on April 21, it immediately provoked a protest of 5,000 angry Shiites across from the downtown Palestine Hotel. Al-Fartusi had been dispatched to the capital to preach the Friday prayer sermon at the al-Hikma mosque to a congregation of 50,000. His sermon said in part that the US could not impose a formal "democracy" on Iraq that allowed freedom of individual speech but denied Iraqis the ability to shape their own government.

Sistani emerged as the most senior ayatollah in Najaf after the 1999 assassination of Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, killed on the orders of Saddam

Hussein's elder son Uday for defying the deposed Iraqi dictator. Today Muqtada al-Sadr, the 30 year-old son of the martyred cleric, is among Sistani's most important rivals in Najaf. In 1999, after his father was killed, Muqtada went underground. He organized the desperately poor Shiites of Najaf and nearby Kufa, and established authority, as well, in the Shiite slums of eastern Baghdad, home to 2 to 3 million people. The Sadr movement that he leads insists that only the rulings of Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr may be followed, and is opposed to immigrant Iranian clerics like Sistani having authority in Iraq. These ideas are unorthodox in the mainstream Usuli Shiism which predominates in Iraq and Iran. According to these mainstream teachings, it is forbidden to follow the rulings of a deceased jurist, and it is recognized that Shiites may follow any learned, upright jurist they choose. Muqtada is young to gain such authority.

SADDAM CITY RENAMED

The Sadr movement appears to be intolerant and authoritarian, and to have a class base in the poverty-stricken neighborhoods brutalized by Baath Party goons. Eyewitness accounts of the mob killing on April 10 of an American-backed rival ayatollah, Abd al-Majid al-Khoei, flown into Najaf from a decade-long exile in London, implicate the Sadr movement. Members of this movement then surrounded the houses of Sistani and Ayatollah Said al-Hakim, nephew of Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, leader of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), demanding that these two leave Najaf immediately. This attempt at a coup in the clerical leadership of the shrine city was forestalled when 1,500 Shiite tribesmen came in from the countryside to protect Sistani and al-Hakim.

Muqtada views Sistani as spineless for having refused to step out of his quietism and oppose Saddam Hussein. He views expatriate politicians and clerics now returning to Iraq in the same light, heaping abuse on Ahmad Chalabi and the secular-leaning Iraqi National Congress, for instance. The Sadr movement wants an Islamic republic in Iraq,

even if not one exactly like the one Khomeini built in Iran. Press reports from the slums of Baghdad suggest that Muqtada is idolized there and that most of the armed militiamen now patrolling the neighborhoods of the renamed Sadr City (formerly Saddam City) are his followers. One report said that they had repelled an attempt to infiltrate the city by a rival Shiite militia, the Tehran-based Badr Brigade of SCIRI. Like most other Iraqi Shiite clerics, Muqtada wants the Americans out of Iraq on a short timetable.

TO KARBALA

SCIRI, headed by Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, is in essence an offshoot of the revolutionary al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya Party founded in the late 1950s. Al-Hakim was forced abroad to Tehran in 1982 by Saddam's persecution of key al-Da'wa figures. SCIRI has a paramilitary wing of 10,000 to 15,000 armed fighters, likely trained by Iran's Revolutionary Guards and commanded by Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim. The al-Hakims are said to be close to hardliners like Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Khomeini's successor as Supreme Leader in Iran.

SCIRI formed part of the Iraqi National Congress and was given 15 out of 65 seats on the provisional governing council formed at the Iraqi opposition meeting in London in December 2002. SCIRI figures attended State Department meetings about overthrowing Saddam, and spoke to the press about their negotiations with the office of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld about a role for the Badr Brigade in fighting alongside US troops during an invasion. Since the Bush administration had labeled SCIRI's backers in Iran part of the "axis of evil," this initial willingness to cooperate with them was breathtaking in its cynicism.

From January of 2003, however, ideology asserted itself over pragmatism, and the Bush administration suddenly broke with SCIRI. Attempts were made by US National Security Adviser Zalmay Khalilzad, reportedly in coordination with the office of Vice President Dick Cheney, to dilute SCIRI influence within the INC. Then, at meetings with the opposition groups in Turkey in late January, Khalilzad made it known that the US intended to administer Iraq itself for some time after "regime change," instead of working through an Iraqi provisional government. Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim immediately denounced this plan as equivalent to a US colonial occupation, and threatened that the Badr Brigade would attack US troops if they overstayed their welcome. He clearly felt betrayed by this dramatic turnabout in US policy.

The US warned Iran not to allow Badr Brigade forces into Iraq during the US invasion. Al-Hakim maintains that they slipped into the country even so. As of April 17, Badr Brigade gunmen controlled the town of Baquba (pop. 163,000) near the Iranian border, and a Badr Brigade force allowed SCIRI cleric Sayyid Abbas to occupy the mayor's mansion in Kut (pop. 360,000). When Marines attempted to intervene, a crowd of 1,200 townspeople gathered, chanting slogans against INC leader Ahmad Chalabi, and the soldiers decided to back off. US officers marginalized Abbas at a town hall meeting on April 19, but afterward,

the cleric held an afternoon rally that was reported to be "bigger than ever." According to the Daily Telegraph's correspondent,

"Mr. Abbas voiced what are quickly becoming the standard demands: an Islamic, Shia-dominated state for Iraq, and an end to American occupation."

Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim, deputy head of SCIRI, returned to Iraq on April 16, arriving at Kut to cheers, presumably preparing the way for his older brother to do the same. In a press interview, the younger al-Hakim pledged that SCIRI would work together with other parties in the new Iraq. In Kut on April 18, he gave an interview with Iranian television in which he said, "we will first opt for a national political system, but eventually the Iraqi people will seek an Islamic republic system." He added that the will of Shiites for an Islamic system would prevail in democratic elections, since they are 60 percent of the population.

On April 18 Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim, still in Tehran, called upon Shiites to converge on the shrine city of Karbala on April 22 "to oppose a US-led interim administration and defend Iraq's independence." SCIRI spokesman Abu Islam al-Saqir added, "To the Iraqi people, US domination is no better than the dictatorship of the ousted brutal regime of Saddam Hussein." Hundreds of thousands of Iraqi Shiites are currently in the city to commemorate the martyrdom of the prophet Muhammad's grandson Hussein, who died in a battle on the Karbala plain in the seventh century. Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim's appeal to the symbolism of Karbala for political purposes is an attempt to depict the US military as equivalent to Yazid, viewed by Shiites as the martyred imam's oppressor in the epochal battle.

"NO ONE REPRESENTS US"

Despite having birthed SCIRI, the al-Da'wa al-Islamiyya Party itself remains a separate organization, with a commitment to Islamic government. It has London, Tehran and Iraq-based factions, of which only the London representatives have been willing to talk to the Americans. Some reports say many in the Iraqi al-Da'wa are loyal to Lebanese Hizballah leader Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah. Fadlallah was born and educated in Najaf, going to Lebanon only in 1965. Hizballah has threatened violence against US troops in Iraq. Other than its Tehran branch, al-Da'wa, like the Sadr movement, is oriented toward an indigenous Iraqi politics and rejects Khomeini's "guardianship of the jurist" in favor of the theories of Islamic government developed by Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, who was killed by Saddam Hussein's regime in 1980. (This figure is the uncle of Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, eponymous founder of the al-Sadr movement, also murdered by the late regime.)

A somewhat more moderate al-Da'wa leader, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, refused to attend the US-sponsored leadership meeting near Nasiriyah on April 16, saying he objected to cooperating with a US military administration. His view seems to have predominated in the party. Al-Da'wa organized the demonstration held on April 15 at Nasiriyah

(pop. 535,000) to protest the conference being presided over by retired Lt. Gen. Jay Garner, head of the Office of Humanitarian Aid and Reconstruction charged by Washington with administering post-war Iraq. Press reports said "thousands" demonstrated.

They chanted, "No, no Saddam! No, no United States!" and "Yes, yes for Freedom! Yes, Yes for Islam." Their placards read: "No one represents us in the conference." On April 19, al-Jaafari signed a letter to a meeting of countries neighboring Iraq, calling for the immediate establishment of a technocratic provisional government, suggesting that al-Da'wa remains less clerically oriented than other Shiite factions. Among the al-Da'wa leaders in Nasiriyah is the newly returned former exile, Muhammad Bakr al-Nasri, a prominent cleric. He is said to be the party's "philosophical guide."

Al-Da'wa Party officials fear that they will be locked out of political competition by the superior paramilitary capabilities of SCIRI and the Sadr movement.

VACUUM FILLED

Among the big surprises of the two weeks following the fall of the Baath Party in Iraq is the way in which Shiite religious leaders and parties moved immediately into the vacuum. This process was facilitated by the thinness on the ground of US troops, in accordance with the Rumsfeld military plan that rejected Pentagon requests for larger military forces. Eastern cities like Baqubah and Sadra are reportedly under Shiite control with apparent backing from Iran. Some Failis or Shiite Kurds, who largely emigrated to Iran under Saddam Hussein's regime, are now coming back to Iraq with Iranian backing (a Faili militia from Iran is reported to have recently taken over the eastern city of Badra). SCIRI has also attempted to assert itself in Kut, and has stymied the Marines there because of popular support. Nasiriyah appears to be virtually ruled by the al-Da'wa Party. Sadr City is patrolled by militias of the Sadr movement, and it is powerful in Najaf and Kufa. The other sacred city, Karbala, has also established a council of clerics and tribal sheikhs for self-rule.

Among major Shiite population centers, only Basra appears to have resisted this trend, in part perhaps because of different policies pursued by the British commanders there, and in part because of the influence of the secular Shiite middle and working classes. Outside Basra, secular-leaning Shiites have been hampered in asserting themselves by their lack of organization and lack of any paramilitary force. It may be that many are also stunned by the humiliating defeat of an avowed champion of secular Arab nationalism by a Western power.

It remains to be seen if the US interim administration can disarm the Shiite religious militias and recover enough control of the Shiite urban areas to allow something like free multi-party politics to emerge. Certainly, the Sadr movement mobs in Najaf would not countenance such a thing if they can stop it. Nor is SCIRI probably interested in genuine popular politics. The Shiite religious political parties and movements tend to be hierarchical and authoritarian despite their popular appeal, in

accordance with Usuli convictions about the need to give blind obedience to trained jurisprudents. Shiite religious demands for an Islamic state are foredoomed to created conflict with Sunni Arabs and Kurds, who will not tolerate rule by ayatollahs or imposition on everyone of strict Shiite law. The Kurds, of course, have their own militias. Historian Ervand Abrahamian has compared the ideology of Khomeini's Iran to the corporatism that prevailed in the Argentina of Peron. At least initially, the neo-conservatives, who hoped in vain for a Shiite uprising during the war, may have unleashed this sort of mass politics in the formerly rigidly controlled Iraq.

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TO THE YUGOSLAV AND INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC

My struggle here is about the truth and freedom. The whole planet knows that.

This illegal court undergoes its everyday fiasco. And it happens in their own half-time. In the half time when their false prosecution and false witnesses appear. It lasts the second year already. They are afraid even to think how my half time will look like, when I will speak and when my witnesses will speak.

Against me they have applied all the means of the political, media, psychological and physical pressure. WITH NO SUCCESS.

Now they have started the brutal persecution using the vicious lies. That persecution is also physical and is followed by a media campaign.

And the whole public sees that the perpetrators of the crimes whom they have arrested are the very same ones who were praised by the actual regime for they're "contribution" to the October 5th coup. The very same ones who were, with covered faces, jumping into yard of my residence, the ones who arrested and kidnapped me for their account.

They have launched a brutal persecution of my wife and my son only because of me. Because they can't brake me. Because I am a moral winner in any case. Because the truth is on my side.

Due to that persecution I haven't seen my son for three years already and since recently I can't see my wife. It is their real goal to block all my contacts. For that right nobody here is not, nor can be deprived. That's exactly why they decided to deprive me in such a dishonest way.

I demand stop of the persecution of my wife and of my son since it is purely politically motivated against my struggle and in favor of justification of the crime against Yugoslavia and its citizens.

The Hague, April 23rd, 2003

Slobodan Milosevic

<http://www.icdsm.org/> (the international committee to defend Slobodan Milosevic)
 icdsm temporary address:

"US FORCES ENCOURAGE LOOTING"

By Ole Rothenborg

An Article from Sweden's largest circulation daily, Dagens Nyheter, Friday April 11, 2003

Khaled Bayomi looks a bit surprised when he looks at the American office on TV regret that they don't have any resources to stop the looting in Baghdad.

I happened to be there just as the US forces told people to commence looting.

Khaled Bayomi departed from Malmö to Baghdad, as a human shield, and arrived on the same day the fighting begun. About this he can tell us plenty and for a long time, but the most interesting part of his story is his witness-account about the great surge of looting now taking place. I had visited a few friends that live in a worn-down area just beyond the Haifa Avenue, on the west bank of the Tigris River. It was April 8 and the fighting was so heavy I couldn't make it over to the other side of the river. On the afternoon it became perfectly quit, and four American tanks pulled up in position on the outskirts of the slum area. From these tanks we heard anxious calls in Arabic, which told the population to come closer.

During the morning everybody that tried to cross the streets had been fired upon. But during this strange silence people eventually became curious. After three-quarters of an hour the first Baghdad citizens dared to come forward. At that moment the US soldiers shot two Sudanese guards, who were posted in front of a local administrative building, on the other side of the Haifa Avenue.

I was just 300 meters away when the guards were murdered. Then they shot the building entrance to pieces, and their Arabic translators in the tanks told people to run for grabs inside the building. Rumours spread rapidly and the house was cleaned out. Moments later tanks broke down the doors to the Justice Department, residing in the neighbouring building, and the looting was carried on to there. I was standing in a big crowd of civilians that saw all this together with me. They did not take any part in the looting, but were to afraid to take any action against it. Many of them had tears of shame in their eyes.

The next morning looting spread to the Museum of Modern Art, which lies another 500 meters to the north. There was also two crowds in place, one that was looting and another one that disgracefully saw it happen.

Do you mean to say that it was the US troops that initiated the looting?

Absolutely. The lack of scenes of joy had the US

forces in need of images on Iraqi's who in different ways demonstrated their disgust with Saddam's regime.

But people in Baghdad tore down a big statue of Saddam?

They did? It was a US tank that did this, close to the hotel where all the journalists live. Until noon on the 9th of April, I didn't see a single torn picture of Saddam anywhere. If people had wanted to turn over statues they could have gone for some of the many smaller ones, without the help of an American tank. Had this been a political uproar then people would have turned over statues first and looted afterwards. Home in Sweden Khaled

Bayomi is a PhD student at the University of Lund, where he since ten years both teaches and researches about conflicts in the Middle East. He is very well informed about the conflicts, as well as he is on the propaganda war.

Isn't it good that Saddam is gone?

He is not gone. He has dissolved his army in tiny, tiny groups. This is why there never was any big battle. Saddam dissolved Iraq as a state already in 1992 and have since had a parallel tribal structure in place, which has been altogether decisive for the country. When USA begun the war Saddam completely abandoned the state, and now depends on this tribal structure. This is why he left the big cities without any battles.

Now USA are forced to do everything themselves, because there is no political force from within that would challenge the structure in place. The two challengers who came in from the outside were immediately lynched.

Khaled Bayomi refers to what happened with general Nazar al-Khazraji, who escaped from Denmark, and Shia-muslim leader Abdul Majid al-Khoei. Both men were chopped to pieces by a raging crowd in Najaf, because they were perceived to be American marionettes. According to Danish newspaper BT, al-Khazraji was picked up by the CIA in Denmark and brought to Iraq.

Now we have an occupation force in Iraq, that has not said how long it will stay, not brought forward any time-plan for civilian rule and not yet set a date for general elections. Now awaits only a big chaos.

<http://www.dn.se/DNet/jsp/polopoly.jsp?d=1435&a=129852&previousRenderType=1>

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